

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research



Mentouri University – Constantine
Faculty of Letters and Languages
Department of Foreign Languages



N°.....

Serie:.....

**The Policy of Détente and the Neoconservative Agenda:
Undermining the 1970s United States' Foreign Policy**

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the
Magister Degree in American History and Political Institutions

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June 2007

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To the memory of my father.

To my beloved family.

Acknowledgements

I wish to extend my sincere thanks to the Department of Foreign Languages at Mentouri University, Constantine. I also want to show gratitude to Pr. Abdelkrim Kibeche, Department of Political Sciences and International Relations.

A special and heartfelt note of gratitude must go to Dr. Brahim Harouni who guided me with his outstanding intellectual knowledge and incredible patience and insight.

I wish to thank my family for their constant support and encouragement.

I would also like to express my gratitude to every single person who – in a way or another – backed me up.

Abstract

The present dissertation looks into the attitude of the American neoconservative movement towards the policy of Détente in the 1970s. That policy – based on pragmatism and real politic – was undertaken by the successive American administrations to reduce tensions with the former Soviet Union and impose the United States’ role in the international scene. Strategic Arms Limitation Talks were a significant achievement of that policy.

The neoconservative movement was a newly born current which did not accept the policy of Détente and the way the Nixon-Ford-Carter administrations were pursuing arms limitation negotiations with the Soviet Union. Relying on an ideology deriving from the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr and the philosopher Leo Strauss, they believed in the moral superiority of Western values and in the role of the United States as a benign imperial power. They considered that the policy of Détente was the antithesis of the global mission of the United States.

The neoconservatives exploited the political malaise of the mid-1970s, and they allied to other rightist and militarist pressure groups to systematically criticize and question the official policy of the United States. They asserted that Détente and SALTs were a failure since the Soviet Union was inherently wicked, did not believe in deterrence, and had hostile objectives. They went further to affirm that the Soviet Union was arming and exceeding the United States’ military capabilities. To them, it was the “Present Danger.”

This dissertation explores the validity of the neoconservatives' assertions and arguments regarding Détente and the Soviet capabilities and intentions, and their ability to reverse the American national trend which was broadly in favour of Détente and the SALT process by creating a perception of imminent Soviet threat.

In the present study, I propose the hypothesis that the neoconservatives based their attacks on Détente on wrong assertions. In the 1970s, the USSR had neither the capabilities, nor the intentions to come into conflict with the USA. In addition, my opinion is that the neoconservatives could exploit specific opportunities and – relying on the Straussian good-versus-evil dichotomy – employed the pretext of the Soviet imminent threat to shape the public opinion, to kill Détente, theorize and elaborate a massive military build up under the first Reagan administration, and restore a tough, aggressively interventionist foreign policy.

Key Words

United States of America – Soviet Union – Neoconservatism – Détente – SALT – foreign policy – present danger – military capabilities – strategic intentions.

ملخص

يفحص هذا البحث موقف حركة المحافظين الجدد الأمريكية تجاه سياسة الانفراج خلال فترة السبعينيات من القرن الماضي، وهي سياسة قوامها البراغماتية و الواقعية السياسية، طبقت من قبل الإدارات الأمريكية المتتالية بغية تقليص التوترات مع الاتحاد السوفيتي سابقا، و لإعادة تنظيم دور الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية في الساحة السياسية الدولية، وقد كانت مفاوضات الحد من الأسلحة الإستراتيجية SALT ثمرة من ثمرات هذه السياسة.

كانت حركة المحافظين الجدد آنذاك مولودا فتيا رافضا لسياسة الانفراج و التهدئة مع الاتحاد السوفيتي، و للطريقة المتبعة في التفاوض معه من قبل الإدارات الأمريكية المتعاقبة (نيكسون، فورد، كارتر)، وبنى المحافظون الجدد أفكارهم على أيديولوجية العالم الديني راينهولد نيبور، و أفكار الفيلسوف ليو شتراوس، فكانوا يؤمنون بالتفوق الأخلاقي للقيم الغربية و بدور الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية بوصفها قوة إمبريالية حميدة، ورأوا أن سياسة الانفراج نقيض للمهمة العالمية للولايات المتحدة.

إستغل المحافظون الجدد ذلك الوهن السياسي الذي ساد منتصف السبعينيات وتحالفوا مع مجموعات ضاغطة ذات ميولات عسكرية ويمينية، فانتقدوا السياسة الأمريكية الرسمية ونددوا بها، مؤكدين أن سياسة الانفراج ومفاوضات SALT كانت فاشلة لأن الاتحاد السوفيتي شرير بطبعه و لا يؤمن بمفهوم الردع، و ذو نوايا عدائية، بل ذهبوا إلى أن قدرته العسكرية - حسبهم - تفوق قدرة الولايات المتحدة.

هذا البحث يستكشف صحة تأكيدات المحافظين الجدد وحججهم ضد سياسة الانفراج و القدرات والنوايا السوفيتية، كذلك يتفحص قدرتهم على قلب التيار الوطني العام المؤيد لسياسة الانفراج وعملية SALT ، وقدرتهم على خلق شعور بخطر سوفياتي وشيك آنذاك.

في هذه الدراسة اقترحنا فرضية أن المحافظين الجدد أسسوا هجوماتهم ضد سياسة الانفراج على تأكيدات واهية، فخلال السبعينيات لم تكن للاتحاد السوفيتي القدرة و لا النية للدخول في صراع مع الولايات المتحدة.

ونحن نرى إضافة إلى ذلك أن المحافظين الجدد استطاعوا استغلال فرص خاصة معتمدين على فلسفة شتراوس القائمة على ثنائية الصراع بين الخير و الشر لتشكيل الرأي العام من أجل وأد سياسة الانفراج و التنظير والتخطيط لبناء قدرات عسكرية هائلة تحت إدارة الرئيس رونالد ريغان و إعادة هيكلة سياسة خارجية تدخلية حازمة.

Acronyms

ABM:	Anti Ballistic Missile
ACDA:	Arms Control and Disarmament Agency
ASC:	American Security Council
CDM:	Coalition for a Democratic Majority
CIA:	Central Intelligence Agency
CPTS:	Coalition for Peace Through Strength
CPD:	Committee on the Present Danger
ICBM:	Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
NMD:	National Missile Defence
MIRV:	Multiple Independent Re-entry Vehicles
MAD:	Mutually Assured Destruction
PFIAB:	President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board
NIE:	National Intelligence Estimates
NSC:	National Security Council
SLBM:	Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile
SALT:	Strategic Arms Limitation Talks
USA:	United States of America
USSR:	Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics (the former)

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Introduction

Our government has kept us in a perpetual state of fear—kept us in a continuous stampede of patriotic fervor—with the cry of grave national emergency. Always there has been some terrible evil at home or some monstrous foreign power that was going to gobble us up if we did not blindly rally behind it by furnishing the exorbitant funds demanded. Yet, in retrospect, these disasters seem never to have happened, seem never to have been quite real.¹

These words from General Douglas MacArthur – commander of the Allied troops in the Pacific during World War II, and later of the United Nations forces during the Korean War – plainly illustrate the recurrent problem the United States has while perceiving nations that do not belong to the American format. Rivals have always been considered as enemies, and enemies have always been considered as direct threats to American security. This misperception often led – and still leads – to overestimations, worst-case security assessments and therefore disproportionate defence spending with possible military interventions. Moreover, it also generated the mobilization of a methodically moulded public opinion to unite against a “perceived”, “possible” or “probable” foreign threat.

As a matter of fact, the controversy concerning the resolution of tensions in world politics has always been the same: the carrot or the baton?

¹ Douglas MacArthur. A Soldier Speaks: Public Papers and Speeches of General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, ed. Vorin E. Whan, Jr., New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1965, p. 333.

Whether to use negotiations, appeasement in order to fulfil mutual achievements and interests, or to employ force and coercion to overwhelm the adversary to reach the desired objectives via confrontation? That debate shook up the American intellectual and political scene in the mid-1970s. The policy of Détente put into action by the United States during that period was at the heart of the storm.

The debate over the rightness of the policy of Détente included issues such as whether it was wise or not to set up negotiations leading to accords with the Communist Block; whether the USSR was militarily superior to the United States or not, and whether it had hostile objectives towards the United States. That debate opposed proponents of a foreign policy oriented towards more real politick, and ideological opponents of such a policy and advocates of a hard line posture vis-à-vis the former Soviet Union. The first faction realistic in its approach included Presidents Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford and policy makers as Henry Kissinger. The second group hard liners was composed of politicians and intellectuals coming from various currents and having sometimes different political and even philosophical tendencies. Among these “hawks,” defence analyst and former Director of Policy Planning Staff Paul Nitze, strategist Albert Wohlstetter, Historian Richard Pipes, Democratic Senator Henry Jackson, former Republican Governor and would-be President of the United States Ronald Reagan, and most of his campaigners who would later hold important political and bureaucratic posts in his administration. Neoconservative intellectuals such as Norman Podhoretz and Irving Kristol were also key players in that superheated debate.

Everything started in the first half of the 1970s. President Richard Nixon and his State Secretary Henry Kissinger were the architects of the policy of Détente between the United States of America and the former Soviet Union. That policy advocated an approach of appeasement and stability after the eager arms race between the two countries. SALT I and SALT II (Strategic Arms Limitation Talks) were to be the implementation on the ground of this policy. The political outcome of Détente was also a warming of tensions that had been running international relations for more than two decades. In addition, in the economic field, the policy of Détente was to promote commercial ties and scientific cooperation between the two blocks.

However by the mid-1970s, some voices among the American intelligentsia, intellectuals and politicians started to condemn the policy of Détente that was undertaken by the successive administrations at that time. Some intellectuals and political leaders belonging to both major political parties (Republican and Democratic) started to challenge the validity and the rightness of the policy of Détente. Some personalities belonging to the neoconservative trend, the New Right and close to the military-industrial establishment advocated a complete renouncement of Détente. They asserted that the Soviet Union was in fact arming and that its strategic objectives toward the United States were aggressive. They went further in their judgment and criticized the estimates of the Central Intelligence Agency. The role of militarist and neoconservative pressure groups such as the American Security Council (ASC), the Committee on the Present Danger (CPD) and the Coalition for a Democratic Majority (CDM) were crucial in the creation and communication of this idea. Alarming phrases as “present danger,” “first

nuclear strike” and “window of vulnerability” spread in the media, in the scientific community as well as in the political circles.

The continuous and extensive work of right wing and neoconservative intellectuals and politicians inside and outside the backstage of the executive and legislative machineries during the Ford and Carter terms of office took shape with the Reagan Administration. The upshot was the collapse of the Détente policy and the return to the multi-dimensional confrontation with the Soviet Union, generating a vast military build-up theorized and requested by the neoconservative –militarist coalition, and realized by the first Reagan administration (1981-1984). This re-orientation in foreign and defence policies brought about the largest peace-time defence expenditures ever spent up to then in American history.

Whereas leftist liberals and radicals continuously criticized the Nixon, Ford and the Carter Administrations for doing too little to cut the defence budget, and make succeed arms limitation talks with the USSR, the military-industrial establishment, right-oriented intellectuals, politicians and security analysts, undertook a massive political, academic and communicative campaign to undermine all efforts regarding arms control and any attempt of appeasement with the Soviet block.

The present dissertation explores a possible domestic actor that led to the failure of Détente in a critical period of World history. A breakdown followed by an amplification of tensions between the USA and the USSR that could have led to a nuclear holocaust. In that sense, this dissertation probes the role played by the neoconservatives as an emerging pole of influence in American politics, and examines their responsibility in the demise of Détente.

It should be noted that the present dissertation does not intend to detail the various domestic and international factors that shattered the policy of Détente. Neither does it intend to explore the respective responsibilities of the United States or the Soviet Union. It does neither put blame nor defend one of the adversaries. Indeed, a large number of scholars have written and rewritten papers and books on this issue. Hypotheses and assertions have been made on the question of Détente, its achievements and the different causes of its demise. Some even wonder if Détente had actually been put into practice. So, the demise of Détente in world politics is not the core subject of this work, even if it deals with some aspects of it in the first chapter of the dissertation.

This work is intended to examine crucial research questions on the domestic dispute over the issue of Détente and SALT, and especially the position of the newly born neoconservative movement. This dissertation attempts to answer questions such as: did Détente fail because the USSR really had aggressive strategic objectives towards the USA? Or was it because an alliance of interests and ideologies inside the U.S. political and intellectual arenas were aiming at an American military build-up and more confrontation regardless of the capabilities and intentions of the Soviet Union? How were the neoconservatives able to impose their ideological view of the issue on the American mainstream and put remarkable pressures on the successive 1970s United States administrations?

In the present dissertation, I propose to probe the arguments developed by the opponents of Détente and arms control in the American intellectual and political arena over the United States' foreign policy and its

defence strategy vis-à-vis its enemy of the day, the former Soviet Union. In this research, I shall particularly focus on the role of the neoconservatives, a strong rising current in American politics.

Neoconservatives' hard line posture with regard to the policy of Détente and arms control negotiations was based on two lines of arguments. The first was the nature of the Communist regime; their refusal to put up with an ideology and a system they qualified as undemocratic and oppressive. The second was much less abstract and much less valid, but found better echo in the American public opinion since it directly affected the rank-and-file citizen's security: neoconservatives and other militarist entities from the American Right asserted that America was in danger of a Soviet nuclear strike.

We may wonder if the neoconservatives and their allies asked for an uncompromising conduct towards the Soviet block, and ultimately for significant increases in defence spending, because the former Soviet Union represented a direct and real menace to the United States, or because these American hard-liners were aware of the Russians' impeding economic and social crises, and therefore of the latter's incapacity to wage and 'win' a war against the United States.

Indeed the hypothesis that is discussed in this dissertation is that the neoconservatives who criticized Détente and arms control negotiations with the former Soviet Union did so relying on wrong assertions which presented the Soviet Union far superior to the United States and having very bellicose intentions. Part of this hypothesis is that the American neoconservatives attacked the policy of Détente and arms control perhaps more for ideological reasons and imperial ambitions than because of imminent security concern. A

further important point examined in this study is the philosophical principle on which the neoconservative rested to undermine the official policy of the United States; and how they could, in half a decade (1974-1980), reverse the American national trend which was broadly in favour of Détente, arms control and less world affairs interventionism.

Neoconservative figures and scholars still argue that their assessment of the Soviet Union was justified at that time. They even claim that the 1.5 trillion dollar increase in U.S. military spending¹ during the Reagan administrations (1981-1988) was worthy and helped defeat the Soviet Union. On the other hand, many historians and specialists in the field of armament and world politics disagree with the idea that the USSR constituted a direct menace to the USA. They argue that the early 1980s American policy makers – backed by the neoconservative machinery – actually embarked on colossal defence expenditures to counter the threat of a country that was collapsing.

The focus on that period of history is interesting for pedagogical reasons in the sense that it helps history and international relations students to understand better the current US foreign and defence policies. Indeed, the same personalities are nowadays major players in the shaping of American foreign policy, and the same approach towards defence and international relations is maintained by the Bush Administration.

The present dissertation is divided into five chapters, this introduction and a conclusion. In the first chapter, I present a historical background of the problem and focus on the policy of Détente within the Cold War perspective. I

¹ John Prados. "Team B: The Trillion Dollar Experiment, Part 2," Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, April 1993, pp. 29-30.

also probe the reasons put forward by American policy planners, especially Henry Kissinger, to support a more lenient conduct toward the former Soviet Union and their arguments and line of reasoning based on a realistic approach. Accordingly, this part of the work covers the milieu in which the option of Détente emerged: the spiralling arms race that was underway, the United States' military problems in Southeast Asia, and the arrival of a new administration led by the Nixon-Kissinger duo with their new approach to diplomacy. Then, I examine the major achievements and failures of the Nixon-Kissinger policy.

The second chapter of this work is devoted to the critics of the policy of appeasement or peaceful coexistence with the Soviet Union. Working on the neoconservatives' attitude regarding Détente, we found it essential to examine their origins as well as their philosophical and ideological foundations. In that sense, we found it necessary to devote an entire chapter to probe the views of some academics – neoconservatives and others – on the neoconservative ideology. In addition, since the neoconservatives essentially relied on the teachings of Leo Strauss and Reinhold Niebuhr to attack the policy of Détente, we hence look into the philosophical principles of these two thinkers regarding politics and foreign affairs.

The third chapter probes the assessments made by some leading neoconservatives and their arguments against Détente, the SALT process, the military capabilities of the Soviet Union and the latter's strategic objectives towards the United States.

The fourth chapter of this dissertation looks at the different domestic attacks on the policy of Détente. It examines the origins of these offensives

and the mechanisms with which the neoconservatives attacked this policy at different levels of the American public scene. The research sheds light on the role played by some influential pressure groups, the media, the scientific community and the atmosphere of the dispute which a journalist at that time qualified as ideological and “vicious.”¹ In addition, we also examine, in the fourth chapter, NIO M 76-021J, the 1976 CIA’s controversial competitive assessment of Soviet capabilities and strategic objectives, better known as the “Team B Report.”

The last chapter focuses on the Soviet Union and sheds light on the Russian real military capabilities and intentions in the 1970s. This is carried out through the examination of works by American scholars and assessments of the United States National Intelligence Estimates and reports on the Soviet Union. The hypothesis is that the USSR – due to major economic and social difficulties – had neither the capability nor the intentions to come into conflict with the United States. The question whether the neoconservatives really believed in an imminent Soviet threat is debatable.

It should also be worth mentioning that some academic and thorough sources helped us to understand the neoconservative view of world affairs. We relied on John Ehrman’s The Rise of Neoconservatism: Intellectuals and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1994 (Yale University Press, 1995). The works of Richard Crockatt, The Fifty Years War: the United States and the Soviet Union in World Politics, 1941-1991, (London, 2002), of Anne Hessing Cahn, Killing Détente: the Right Attacks the CIA (Pennsylvania State University Press,

¹ Joseph Fromm, a senior journalist with U.S. News and World Report as quoted in Anne Hessing Cahn, Killing Détente: the Right Attacks the CIA, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998, p. 10.

1998), and of Alain Frachon and Daniel Vernet, L’Amérique méssianique (Paris, 2003) were also of great helpfulness.

Before, examining the domestic actors that destabilized the American administrations in the mid-1970s over their controversial policy towards the former Soviet Union, an overview of the environment in which Détente emerged is useful for a good understanding of this question. It is going to be the concern of Chapter One of this dissertation.

Chapter One:

The Policy of Détente

1.1. Introduction

Before examining the hard debate over the United States' foreign and security policy that dominated the American public and academic scene, the present chapter looks at the American policy of Détente with the Soviet Union in the late 1960s-early 1970s, in the midst of the Cold War confrontation.

Observers of American politics may wonder why American policy planners shifted, between 1969 and 1972, from a militarist containment of the Soviet Union to a more moderate posture. All the more as the Whitehouse newcomer – President Richard Nixon – was not considered a dove vis-à-vis the Communist Block. The question may seem incongruous and the answer obvious if one considers the chasm the United States was in with respect to war in Vietnam. But perhaps other factors such as the perilous arms race between the two superpowers and economic troubles came into play.

1.2. The Arms Race

Since George Keenan's Long Telegram in 1946¹ and the drafting of NSC-68 by Paul Nitze in 1950,² the United States' relations with the Soviet Union have basically relied on the perception that the USSR constituted a

¹ George Frost Keenan, American diplomat and scholar, is considered as the theorist of the policy of Containment. This policy was intended to hamper the Communist expansion during the Cold War. While in the United States Embassy in Moscow in 1946, he wrote and sent an analysis of the Soviet Union, the Long Telegram.

² Paul Nitze was an American security analyst. He also held important bureaucratic posts in the successive United States administrations. In 1950, he was the group leader of an assessment of the

threat to the United States. This belligerent perception of the Soviet Union was the basis for the development of an uncompromising foreign policy and a nuclear-based security strategy.

Therefore, for more than a quarter of a century, the policy of containment was the cornerstone of the American strategy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. However, the political, economic and regional military containment of the Soviet Union did not prevent the latter from engaging in a heated arms race with the United States.

The pinnacle of this strategic military competition culminated in 1969 with more than 10,000 American nuclear warheads and a little less in the Soviets' hands (see Table 1, next page). Still at that time, both American and Soviet policy makers – among them Anatoly Dobrynin, Soviet Ambassador to the USA from 1962 to 1986 – recognized that the United States had a huge nuclear superiority over the USSR.¹ Indeed, the offensive strategic forces of the United States relied on the three legs of the nuclear triad: land-, sea- and air-based nuclear weapons.

Table 1 (page 13) clearly shows an American nuclear advantage in 1969. It should be added that in 1970, the United States deployed MIRV (multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles) systems. MIRV technology multiplied the number of warheads by three for ICBMs and by ten for SLBMs. It could be noticed, however, that the Soviet Union was catching up US

Soviet Union, the National Security Council Resolution Number 68 or NSC-68. The document warned the Truman administration of the growing military expansion of the Soviet Union. The document asked for a significant increase in defence spending and laid the foundations of a militarist containment of the Soviet Union.

¹ Anatoly Dobrynin, interview by CNN, March 1997, www.cnn.com/SPECIAL/cold.war/episodes/, it should be noted that Dobrynin provides the number of 25,000 US nuclear warheads.

strategic capabilities. Indeed, the table shows a clear dynamic in Soviet weapons production as compared with virtual stasis in the American case.¹

Table 1: American and Soviet nuclear arsenals, 1967-1969²

	January 1967	September 1968	November 1969
United States			
ICBMs*	1,054	1,054	1,054
SLBMs*	576	656	656
Bombers	650	565	525
TOTAL	2,280	2,275	2,235
USSR			
ICBMs*	500	875	1,140
SLBMs*	100	110	185
Bombers	150	150	145
TOTAL	750	1,135	1,470

*ICBM: intercontinental ballistic missile (land-based missiles)

*SLBM: submarine-launched ballistic missile (sea-based missiles)

In 1967, Defence Secretary Robert McNamara described the United States' nuclear arsenal as immense, flexible, highly reliable, and able to penetrate Soviet defences. In addition, he reiterated that, while dealing with a possible Soviet threat, security estimates assumed all plausible worst cases. On the other hand, Robert McNamara declared that the Soviet Union neither

¹Richard Crockatt, The Fifty Years War: The United States and the Soviet Union in World Politics, 1941-1991, London: Routledge, 2002, p. 215.

² Ibid.

possessed nor would possess any “first strike capability”¹ against the United States. He also asserted that the Communist block was not attempting to acquire such potential.²

Indeed, because of economic and technical considerations, the Russian ABM (Anti Ballistic Missile) system which the Russians started to develop in 1962 – and designed to protect the Soviet Union against possible American nuclear strikes – was never completed, not reliable in the 1960s and 1970s, and to a great extent, vulnerable to United States’ ICBMs (Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles).³ We should also note that the American ABM system did not have a better effectiveness.⁴ The ABM treaty of 1972 limited development and improvement of national missile defence.

That American strategic self-confidence came out of the Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) doctrine. The United States overtly declared it would never undertake a first strike on the Soviet Union. It decided instead to develop a second-strike potential of such magnitude that no Soviet first strike would avoid retaliation.⁵ This strategy became known as Mutually Assured Destruction. Indeed, the development of a second-strike capability left the concept of first-strike capability pointless since any aggressor would be certain to endure nuclear reprisals.

¹ Robert McNamara, Mutual Deterrence, speech, September, 17, 1967.

By “first strike capability,” it should be understood the capability for a nation to launch a nuclear attack upon another, to destroy its retaliatory capacities, and thus, to be sheltered from any nuclear reprisal from its enemy. That was the case neither for the Soviet Union nor for the United States in the late 1960s.

¹⁰ Ibid.

³ Union of Concerned Scientists, “The History of Russia’s ABM System,” October, 27, 2002, www.ucsusa.org/global_security/missile_defense/

⁴ Union of Concerned Scientists, “From Nike-Zeus to Safeguard: US Defenses Against ICBMs, 1958-1976,” March 14, 2003, http://www.ucsusa.org/global_security/missile_defense/

⁵ Encarta Encyclopaedia, “Defense Systems,” article, Encarta CD-ROM, Microsoft Corporation, 2002.

By the late 1960s, Americans and Russians finally woke up to realize that they had, in that arms race, reached the terrifying point of being able to exterminate one another and the entire human race with them. They became conscious that a nuclear war meant their mutual suicide. This rude awakening and subsequent awareness of a suicidal policy helped convince the two superpowers to initiate a more rational approach to one another.

The ruinous Vietnam War was another element that convinced American decision makers to turn towards a more moderate posture.

1.3. The Vietnam Element

By the beginning of the 1970s, in addition to the escalating arms race, the United States was sinking in an endless, costly and unpopular war in Vietnam.

Since the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in 1964,¹ the Vietnam War was damaging the American economy, feeding inflation and driving up the budget deficit. In 1968, the US budget deficit reached \$24.2 billion, approximately the cost of the Vietnam War for that year. In addition, increased military spending fuelled inflation and the war's costs exacerbated the United States' balance of payments problems which put huge pressure on America's gold reserves. These problems did not reassure United States' allies and fed doubts about American foreign policy priorities.² Moreover, the fact that American troops

¹ The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution was passed by the United States' Congress in 1964. It gave President Lyndon B. Johnson the power to initiate a war against North Vietnam and send forces to South Vietnam. The resolution was passed after the United States claimed that North Vietnamese had attacked two American naval vessels. The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution provided the justification for the United States military involvement in the Vietnam War.

² David S. Painter, The Cold War: An International History, London: Routledge, 2002, p. 68.

were getting more and more involved in their vain attempt to contain Communist expansion in the Indochina Peninsula exacerbated the American problems.

In addition, it was clear that North Vietnam was getting much more aid from the Soviet Union than from China. The United States decided to play the Chinese card to make the Russians feel that a rapprochement with the Americans might lessen their isolation. In this way, the American leaders hoped that a rapprochement with the Russians would put pressure on the North Vietnamese leaders to bring them to adopt a compromise for the settlement and the ending of the war.¹ Such a design would benefit the USSR as well as the United States which was willing to end the war and disengage its weary troops from the Vietnam mess, but with some semblance of dignity.

1.4. The Economic Element

By the late 1960s, the United States endured severe economic and financial troubles in great part due to the Vietnam War as aforesaid, but also because of changing patterns in the World economy. The growing economic power of Japan and Europe had a great impact on the international trade and eroded the United States' position in the World market. As a result, the late 1960s witnessed an American economy much more vulnerable to external forces.² Richard Crockatt, of East Anglia University, notes that

[T]he United States and the Soviet Union were each subject to challenges within the spheres which until then they had

¹ William H. Chafe, The Unfinished Journey, America Since World War II, Oxford: 1990, pp 400-404.

² Richard Crockatt, The Fifty Years War, op.cit. pp 208-209.

dominated: the United States within the world capitalist system and the Soviet Union within the world communist system.¹

Thus, economic reasons also contributed significantly to have the United States seek alternative approaches to deal with a changing world in which it had to review and reorganize its world strategy.

1.5. Détente: a Realistic Approach to the Soviet Union

Before analysing the United States approach to Détente, a definition of the term is needed. Encarta Encyclopaedia defines Détente as

A policy toward a rival nation or alliance of nations characterized by increased diplomatic, commercial, and cultural contact and a desire to reduce tensions, as through negotiations or talks.²

Conversely, its opponents such as the neoconservatives considered Détente as a policy of accommodation and unilateral disarmament (see Chapters Three and Four). Advocates of Détente regarded it as another more realistic approach to deal with the Soviet Union. This was the belief of President Richard Nixon and his National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger who together put this policy into motion by the beginning of the 1970s.

By the late 1960s, American and Russian leaders subscribed to the view that it was no longer sensible or safe to conceive their nuclear relationship as a

¹ Ibid, p. 209.

² Encarta Encyclopedia, "Détente," Encarta CD-ROM, op.cit.

contest. They acknowledged that they had to stop that uncontrolled arms race.¹

Indeed, for Henry Kissinger, the fact of the matter was that the policy of Détente came from a realization that international tensions – and especially resentment between the United States and the Soviet Union – could not be relaxed should the two superpowers continue to follow the path of arms race. Henry Kissinger believed that the most important element of the United States policy towards the Soviet Block was to limit strategic weapons competition. He came to the realization that:

When nuclear arsenals reach levels involving thousands of launchers and over 10,000 warheads, and when the characteristics of the weapons of the two sides are so incommensurable, it becomes difficult to determine what combination of numbers of strategic weapons and performance capabilities would give one side a military and political superiority. ...The prospect of decisive military advantage, even if theoretically possible, is politically intolerable; neither side will passively permit a massive shift in the nuclear balance.²

¹ Anatoly Dobrynin, interview by CNN, op.cit.

² Henry Kissinger, statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, September, 19, 1974 in Thomas G. Paterson, Major Problems in American Foreign Policy, Volume II, 3rd edition, New York: Heath, 1989, pp 633-634.

Therefore, one of the main goals of the Nixon Administration was to get rid of the security dilemma that was confining the two superpowers in a spiralling and endless arms race.

According to political scientist Alan Collins, the 'security dilemma' occurs and dramatically develops when states – in this case the United States and the USSR – create insecurity in one another as they seek to gain security. The defence policies they therefore pursue consisting in accumulating arsenals paradoxically have the opposite effects to that intended; each one fearing the growing capabilities of the other; and rather than generating security, they fuel their own insecurity.¹

The Nixon-Kissinger's policy of arms control and political rapprochement with the Soviet Union aimed at breaking this security dilemma. Its objective was to create in the USSR a perception of "an equality of power." American leaders thought that if the Soviets perceived that parity in arms, they would less likely to pursue and develop an aggressive military build up, and hence, be more moderate.² If Kissinger's approach was this, it was perhaps because he admitted – as Robert McNamara before him – that the Russians were largely behind in technological military capacities. So, Kissinger supposed that a balance of power in which the USSR might get the "perception" of being militarily equal to the United States would prevent it from embarking on a build-up unnecessary and hazardous for both countries, and especially for the United States.

¹ Alan Collins, The Security Dilemma and the End of the Cold War, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997. p. 1.

² Stanley Hoffman, "Flawed Design and Diplomatic Disaster," in Thomas G. Paterson, Major Problems in American Foreign Policy, op.cit, p. 661. In this essay, historian Stanley Hoffman refutes Kissinger's approach to international diplomacy.

Politically, American decision takers considered that the core responsibility of the West – and especially the United States of America – was to hinder the Soviet expansionist opportunities. However, the problem, according to Kissinger, was that the United States was dealing with a “system too ideologically hostile for instant conciliation and militarily too powerful to destroy.”¹ However, Henry Kissinger still thought that the real threat was not the Soviet nuclear arsenal but the insidious expansion of the Soviet sphere and the growing influence it had on emerging nations of the Third World. To him, the actual menace was geopolitical, not military.²

For its American initiators, the policy of Détente was in no case meant to replace the long-lasting post-war American strategy of containment. Rather, it was intended to be a less hostile, less expensive and subtler method of containing Communist power.

1.6. Détente: the Practice

The successive American administrations – from Richard Nixon to Jimmy Carter – would implement the policy of Détente through political, military and economic agreements. United States policymakers wanted to link economic, political and strategic issues together. In other words, they wanted to elaborate a flexible system of rewards and punishments by which Washington could moderate Moscow’s behaviour and hamper its ambitions. This tactic was called “linkage.” In actual practice, the United States would link positive incentives as arms control technology transfers, economic

¹ Ibid.

² Henry Kissinger, interview by CNN, March-April 1997, www.cnn.com/SPECIAL/cold.war/episodes/

cooperation and grain sales to expected Soviet positive reciprocity in other areas.

This did not mean that trust and confidence would govern American-Soviet relations. On the contrary, American policymakers had no illusions that global competition between the two camps would fade away. As political scientist Keith A. Dunn noted, because of their obvious original historical and ideological divergences, both the Soviet Union and the United States had never accepted the concept of Détente as the elimination of all competition and disagreements between each others.¹ Nevertheless, Americans expected that such carrot-and-stick-based linkage method would set up new rules of the game and recognize spheres of influence of each. In addition, for pragmatic American policymakers including Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger, pulling the Soviet Union into a network of agreements, and therefore giving Russians a stake in the status quo, would create a more stable structure of peace. Finally, they presumed that getting the Soviet Union involved in a network of economic and cultural cooperation might reveal new horizons to the Russian society.²

Furthermore, the policy of Détente was not only meant to slow down the nuclear competition between the two global superpowers; it had also challenging geopolitical aims. Kissinger asserted that because of geopolitical and economic changes, Richard Nixon's aim was to conduct the transition of America's position in the world from "hegemony to leadership." Such a design

¹ Keith A. Dunn, "Détente and Deterrence: From Kissinger to Carter," Parameters, Vol. VII, n°4, 1977, p. 47.

² Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Nixon, Kissinger and the Détente Experiment," article, Britannica CD-ROM, 1999.

could be achieved only by building a consensus in the international political scene.¹ Henry Kissinger himself had this view before he assumed the post of National Security Advisor. In 1969, he asserted that

In the years ahead, the most profound challenge to American policy will be philosophical: to develop some concept of order in a world which is bipolar militarily but multipolar politically.²

He believed in a multipolar world in which the United States would exert more leadership than dominance.

The policy of Détente was thus put into motion to meet these challenges. It relaxed tensions between the two superpowers for a small decade, but international issues as well as domestic actors obstructed and capsized the bilateral rapprochement and arms control negotiations.

1.7. Détente: Achievements and Failures

What did Détente really bring to the United States, and to which extent was it valuable? Proponents of this policy look into the most significant accomplishments realized thanks to the Détente. The achievements of Détente according to them were the negotiations to limit the development of strategic weapons, the improvement of trade relations beneficial to the American economy together with a debatable progress regarding European security and human rights concerns.

The main accomplishment of Détente relates however to the issue of arms control. Strategic Arms Limitation Talks from 1969 to 1972 and from

¹ Henry Kissinger, "Between the Old Left and the New Right," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 1999, p. 99.

² Henry Kissinger as quoted in Richard Crockatt, *The Fifty Years War*, op.cit, p. 204.

1972 to 1979 realized important advances in restricting nuclear weapons development. The Nixon, Ford and Carter administrations took on a series of rounds with the Soviet Union in a wide range of issues from the BPA (Basic Principles Agreement) in May 1972, intended to warm tensions, limit conflicts, and pave the way to economic cooperation, to the SALT II Treaty signed in June 1979.

Table 2: A Comparison of US/USSR Strategic Forces in 1972 and 1979¹

Nuclear Strategic Forces at the time of SALT I, 1972		
	<u>USA</u>	<u>USSR</u>
ICBMs*	1054	1607
SLBMs*	656	740
Strategic bombers	450	200
Nuclear warheads	5700	2500
Nuclear Strategic Forces at the time of SALT II, 1979		
	<u>USA</u>	<u>USSR</u>
ICBMs*	1054	1400
SLBMs*	656	950
Strategic bombers	350	150
Nuclear warheads	9200	5000

*ICBM: intercontinental ballistic missile (land-based missiles)

*SLBM: submarine-launched ballistic missile (sea-based missiles)

Table 2 above shows two major points during the period in which Détente and arms control were criticized by a large part of the American intellectual and political scene: Firstly, by 1979, the SALT treaties (the Interim

¹Mary Beth Norton, David A. Katzman et al, A People and a Nation: a History of the USA, Volume 2, 2nd edition, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1986, p. 931.

Agreement and the ABM Treaty of 1972, the Vladivostok Accords of 1974, and SALT II in 1979) proved to be fruitful in the sense that they brought to a halt the production of ICBMs, SLBMs and nuclear bombers. It also permitted the Soviet Union to reach a “perceived” nuclear parity concerning the number of missiles.

Secondly, Table 2 also shows an unquestionable nuclear superiority of the United States over its rival in the total of warheads. This is explained by the increase of MIRVs deployed by the United States in the 1970s and not comprised in the SALT agreements. This second point also demonstrates that, despite the break in missiles and bombers production, SALTs did not effectively put an end to the arms race since the development and deployment of MIRVs, especially on the American side, continued and increased all along that period.

Also in the realm of defence, the ABM (Anti-Ballistic Missile) Treaty of 1972 illustrates a major achievement of Détente. The two superpowers designed the treaty to curb the deployment, testing, and use of national missile systems conceived to intercept incoming strategic or long-range missiles. The treaty banned National Missile Defence (NMD) systems i.e. ABM systems in the United States and Soviet Union. The two countries adopted this bilateral treaty to avoid a possible nuclear war and limit the nuclear arms race. Indeed, logic held that if each side remained defenceless to a nuclear attack and if nuclear retaliation to a first strike was guaranteed, then neither side would have any drive to consider launching a nuclear strike. In a certain

sense, the ABM Treaty codified the Mutually Assured Destruction doctrine that was dominating global security strategy.¹

In the political field, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe resulted in the Helsinki Accords of August 1975. These multilateral Accords smoothed away the fear of a nuclear conflict and recognized the post-war partition of Europe. They also focused on the respect of human rights, including freedom of expression, religion, and travel.²

For the United States, in the economic field, a rapprochement with the Soviet Union opened the way for economic opportunities. The two countries signed a wide range of economic and bilateral agreements. Trade improved greatly. The United States became the Soviet Union's leading trading partner. For instance, the two countries exchanged an estimated \$1.5 billion dollars worth of goods in 1973. And in 1974, Soviet-American trade totalled over \$1 billion dollars. The United States also granted loans to fund ambitious projects in the Soviet Union such as industrial complexes and pipelines.³

The aforementioned achievements should obviously not veil the failures of Détente in some areas of world politics. The rivalry between the two superpowers continued in the 1970s. Regional conflicts such as the 1973 Arab-Israeli war or the civil war in Angola in which both superpowers were involved testify that the struggle for power and influence lasted even while there was a will to diminish tensions.

¹ Mark A Ruse, "Reflections on the 1972 Antiballistic Missile Treaty and National Missile Defense," Aerospace Power Journal, spring 2002.

² Encarta Encyclopaedia, "Helsinki Accords," Encarta Encyclopaedia, op.cit.

³ Ibid, archive articles, "1973: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics," & "1974: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics."

1.8. The Demise of Détente: an International Explanation

Hence, why did Détente fail in the international political arena? Despite historical breakthroughs in arms control and wishes to make ‘a structure of peace,’ one of the main destructive forces behind the collapse of Détente was the diverging conceptions the United States and the Soviet Union had of this policy.

Rather than seeking appeasement for appeasement and beyond the achievement of specific agreements on arms control, the United States regarded Détente as a subtle global process with geopolitical objectives, the chief one being the moderation of the Soviet ambitions in the Third World. Thus, the United States devised conceptual tools as ‘Linkage’ to manage, on the one hand, the Soviet Union’s emergence as an actual nuclear superpower capable of matching American military power, and on the other, to control its political influence in Third World countries.

For its part, the Soviet Union viewed Détente as an opportunity to gain acknowledgement of its superpower status. What is more important, and what perhaps led Détente to a stalemate was that the Russians saw no contradiction between a warming of relations with the Americans and the continuation of geopolitical competition with an increase of influence in the Third World¹ which was the very opposite purpose Détente was intended from the viewpoint of the United States.

So, according to some Western historians,² Détente was inconsistent from the very outset because of “fundamental philosophical disjunction

¹ Richard Crockatt, The Fifty Years War, op.cit, p. 204.

² Richard Crockatt cites historians as Bowker, Williams and Raymond Garthoff.

between the two superpowers.”¹ Détente could not succeed in world politics since it was merely a new form of bilateral relationship between the USA and the USSR incompatible with the lasting global ambitions of the two superpowers.

1.9. Conclusion.

Thus, a combination of international factors ranging from the arms race to the ruinous Vietnam War, together with a growing geopolitical power of the Soviet Union and an erosion of American economy led Richard Nixon and his Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, and later Presidents Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter, to adopt and pursue a new strategy based on multipolarity, the balance of power and arms control. The objectives of this policy were the preservation of the United States world leadership and the containment of Communism through political and economic measures.

Yet, confining the causes of the demise of Détente to international relations factors seems perhaps too simplistic. Whether this policy was a success or not at the international level is still debatable and is not the core subject of this paper. What we can say is that in both camps, domestic factors came into play. In the United States, the debate over Détente and arms control took impressive proportions. The role of neoconservative and other right-oriented militarist pressure groups was decisive.

¹ Ibid.

Chapter Two:

The Neoconservatives: Origins and Ideology

2.1. Introduction

Who are the neoconservatives and where to place them in the American political spectrum? What regard did their ideology have on the 1970s American foreign policy? The guiding theme of this chapter is an analysis of the neoconservative current, of its philosophical and political foundations as well as of its place and influence regarding American foreign affairs. A study of the neoconservative mind enables us to understand why, in the 1970s, this movement – together with the New Right – systematically opposed Détente, criticized the rapprochement with the Soviet Union and arms control, and requested an excessive military build-up.

An understanding of the neoconservative political philosophy also permits to comprehend that the chief purpose of neoconservatism was perhaps – and still is – the establishment of an American global hegemony based on overall American military supremacy. The policy of Détente undertaken by the Nixon-Kissinger duo and carried on later by Presidents Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter implied more American world leadership than global dominance, and more restraint in defence expenditures than an escalation in military build up. This policy was, in the 1970s, the bête noire of the neoconservative leaders.

2.2. Neoconservatism: the Concept.

According to Harvard University professor, sociologist and leading neoconservative intellectual Nathan Glazer, “a neoconservative is someone who wasn’t a conservative.”¹ Indeed, neoconservatives are far from being conservatives. The label “neoconservative” may perhaps mislead the common foreign student in American politics, and the term may be misunderstood. Contrary to the general impression, the neoconservatives neither are nor were part of the United States traditional conservative movement. Their political philosophy as well as their vision of the role of the United States in the world greatly differ and most of time conflict with the philosophy and vision of traditional conservatives.²

So, if neoconservatism is not a variant of American conservatism, where does it come from? It could perhaps be surprising but the majority of neoconservatives are former leftists and liberals who refused the orientation in domestic and foreign policies the New Left³ took in the 1960s. Neoconservatism – as an independent current – emerged at the end of the 1960s out of the “the liberal split” over racial issues and President Lyndon B.

¹ Nathan Glazer quoted in Kevin Phillips, Post-conservative America: People, Politics, and Ideology in a Time of Crisis, New York: Vintage books, 1983, p. 44.

² A significant example of the conservative/neoconservative divergence is nowadays the question of the war on Iraq and the United States’ policy in the Middle East. See articles written by Patrick Buchanan on the question and especially, “The Cost of Empire,” the American Conservative, October 6, 2003 issue and “No end to War,” the American Conservative, March, 1, 2004.

³ The New Left was a political and cultural movement of the 1960s which rejected the system of representative democracy and asked for more popular participation to political decision taking. The New Left supported welfare politics, the Black civil right movement, opposed the Vietnam War, and advocated the idea of a “counter-culture.”

Johnson's Great Society program at home, and the Vietnam War and the American – Soviet conflict abroad.¹

Social scientists sometimes disagree on the concept and the condition of emergence of this ideology. The Public Interest editor, Adam Wolfson, for instance, sees in neoconservatism more a recurrent conservative revival in American democracy than a kind of political and intellectual reaction against the ideas advocated by the New Left in the 1960s.²

On the other hand, according to social scientist Kevin Phillips, the neoconservative movement mainly consists of a group of Democratic scholars belonging to the eastern coast intelligentsia. Kevin Phillips argues that neoconservatives (as well as New Rightists) were ex-liberals who had reformed their politics in reaction to what they regarded as “the incursions of the Left on traditional liberal policies and values.” In the 1970s, New Left intellectuals, in their turn, considered neoconservatism as a response of the dominant Jewish intelligentsia to the domestic threat of ethnic and racial quotas and the international menace of the Soviet and Arab leftist threat to Israel.³

This of course does not mean that all neoconservative figures are of Jewish origins; a few of them are not. But all give, according to Kevin McDonald – professor of psychology at California State University – a strong and unconditional support to Israel.⁴ Kevin McDonald also argues that

¹ Word IQ Dictionary and Encyclopaedia, article, “Neoconservatism – United States,” 2004, http://www.wordiq.com/definition/Neoconservatism_United_States/

² Adam Wolfson, “Conservatives and Neoconservatives,” (The) Public Interest, issue n°154, winter 2004, National Affairs, Inc.

³ Kevin Phillips, Post-conservative America, op.cit, p. 46.

⁴ Kevin MacDonald, “Thinking about Neoconservatism,” September, 18, 2003. http://www.vdare.com/misc/macdonald_neoconservatism.htm

neoconservatism fits into the common pattern of Jewish intellectual and political activism. He stresses the point that neoconservatives' early identity as radical or liberal leftist disciples shifted to become stalwartly anti-Russian as there began to be evidence of, according to them, a resurgence of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union.¹

John Ehrman, historian and foreign affairs analyst from George Washington University, also draws the link between neoconservatism and the Jewish identity. He observes that most intellectuals that would later be labelled as neoconservatives were Jews who disconnected from the Left and moved to the Right because they were worried about "what they saw as a sharp increase in Black anti-Semitism" and the anti-Zionist reaction of the New Left after the Arab-Israeli Six-Day War of June 1967.²

According to the New Republic Senior Editor John B. Judis, neoconservatism is a metamorphosis of the old ideas that dominated American Trotskyism in the 1930s and 1940s. John B. Judis – as well as political analyst Michael Lind and many others – argue that most neoconservative intellectuals were ancient interventionist Marxists who changed their ideas after the Second World War to become fierce anti-communists in the 1950s and 1960s.³ However, Michael Lind does not assimilate neoconservatism to a purely Jewish movement. He notes that while this new political current came to birth, it rallied Jewish as well as non-Jewish

¹ Ibid.

² John Ehrman, "The Rise of Neoconservatism: Intellectuals and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1994," New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995, pp 37- 41.

³ John B. Judis, "Trotskyism to Anachronism: the Neoconservative Revolution," Foreign Affairs, July/August 1995, Council of Foreign Relations.
See also Michael Lind, "A Tragedy of Errors," (The) Nation February 23, 2004.

supporters. Lind cites non-Jewish neoconservatives such as William Bennett (former Secretary of Education) and Michael Novak¹ as “liberal Catholics,” Jeane Kirkpatrick (former US Ambassador to the United Nations), James Woolsey (who has held important posts in the Defence Department and was Director of the Central Intelligence Agency). Lind does not forget to mention Donald Rumsfeld (Secretary of Defence under President Gerald Ford in 1976) and Richard (Dick) Cheney (President Gerald Ford’s Chief of Staff in the Whitehouse).² Rather, Lind incorporates the neoconservatives in a broad American Zionist coalition that gives an unconditional support to Israel.³ This study has referred to the Neoconservative-Israeli link because most neoconservatives such as Senator Henry Jackson and his congressional aide Richard Perle regarded the 1970s policy of Détente and the rapprochement of the United States and the Soviet Union as a threat to the interests of Israel.⁴

The “liberal split” of the late 1960s, cited by John Ehrman, was mainly due to the diverging attitudes the different liberal-to-radical American currents adopted towards the United States’ foreign policy at that time. Indeed, Post-war America witnessed a broad consensus on how to deal with

¹ According to the International Relations Centre, Michael Novak has helped create a religious common ground for social conservatives, neoconservatives, and the Christian right. He is a Catholic theologian and he has over the past three decades worked to bring Catholics into the neoconservative fold. For more information, see <http://rightweb.irc-online.org/ind/novak/novak.php>.

² The *Word IQ Encyclopaedia* and John Ehrman, *The Rise of Neoconservatism*, also mention many neoconservatives such as Norman Podhoretz, Elliott Abrams, Daniel Bell, Max Boot, Jeb Bush (Governor of Florida), Richard Pipes, Douglas Feith (Undersecretary of Defense), David Horowitz, David Frum, and Francis Fukuyama. *Eurolegal Service* website mentions John Bolton (currently United States Ambassador at the United Nations), Lynne Cheney (wife of Dick Cheney), Frank Gaffney (former Assistant Secretary of Defence for International Security Policy under the Reagan Administration), Newt Gingrich (former Speaker of the House of Representatives), Gertrude Himmelfarb (historian and wife of Irving Kristol) and Lewis Libby (former assistant of Paul Wolfowitz, and Richard Cheney’s Chief of Staff). See <http://www.eurolegal.org/useur/usneocon1.html>

³ Michael Lind, “A Tragedy of Errors,” op.cit.

⁴ Richard Perle, interview by CNN, March, 3, 1997, George Washington University, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/coldwar/interviews>

foreign affairs and especially with the Soviet Union. Global affairs interventionism and Containment were the motto. But by the late 1960s, the devastating effects of the Vietnam War – a war which was supposed to be waged to contain and roll back communist expansion in Southeast Asia – troubled the general judgment of most liberal intellectuals who did not recognize American principles in such issue. Hence, most anti-war voices came from the radical and liberal Left which was not comfortable with the United States foreign policy at that moment. However, a minority of liberal intellectuals and politicians did not accept this new stance of the American Left. They dissociated themselves from the traditional leftist liberals and joined the Right. Two main political currents emerged: the neoconservatives and the New Right.

2.3. The Neoconservatives and the New Right: Different and Alike

Despite many differences with regard to their respective members, the neoconservatives and the New Right have much in common.

First, it is essential to mention that the New Right and the neoconservatives go beyond the conventional Democratic-Republican political cleavage. Second, both have left liberal origins and a Democratic background. Their members even remained in the Democratic Party for years and paradoxically supported Ronald Reagan for presidency. This latter focused his 1976 and 1980 presidential campaigns on attacking Détente and arms control (see Chapter Three). Later, many neoconservatives held important posts in Ronald Reagan administration and they were commonly labelled as the

“Reagan’s Democrats.”¹ The New Right and the neoconservative movements also converged in having a strong anti-communist stance and contributed to the creation of influential pressure groups to oppose the policy of Détente (see Chapter Four). Finally, these two currents came formally into being nearly at the same time, by the mid-1970s.²

Structurally and individually, however, significant differences could be drawn from these two political currents. Neoconservatives are much more intellectuals and academics from the United States Eastern Coast. They have a great access to the opinion-moulding press such as the Wall Street Journal the New York Times or the Washington Post.³ They also possess and write in typical magazines as Commentary⁴, the Weekly Standard, or the National Interest.

Kevin Phillips makes a clear-cut difference between neoconservatives and the New Right. He sees the first as “anti-leftist upper-middle-class scholars,” the second as a “mass movement of lower-middle-class fundamentalists.” Whereas neoconservatives have no popular base, no electoral constituency and only a little number hold an elective office; most members of the New Right are politicians and enjoy an electoral support. While Neoconservatives tend to be intellectuals, thinkers and “reconstructors,” the New Right is essentially made of political activists.⁵ In addition, neoconservatives develop their ideas in think tanks, they think in

¹ The label “Reagan’s Democrats” refers to neoconservative figures such as Jeane Kirkpatrick, Richard Perle and more than thirty others who were Democrats but supported Ronald Reagan and held key posts during his first term of office.

² Kevin Phillips, Post-conservative America, op.cit, p. 46.

³ Ibid, p. 44.

⁴ Founders and theorists of the neoconservative movement such as writer and literary critic Norman Podhoretz founded Commentary magazine, funded by the American Jewish Committee.

⁵ Kevin Phillips, Post-conservative America, op.cit, p. 45.

terms of global strategies, and they communicate their ideas through books and articles in scholarly journals while the New Right aims at reaching grass-roots voters by the use of direct-mail solicitation or a variety of forums like church groups.¹ In other words, the New Right is parochially oriented whereas neoconservatives address the elites. Neoconservatives provide the intellectual grid work while the New Right provides the popular legitimacy.

In the 1970s, these two movements allied to constitute a powerful opposition to Presidents Nixon, Ford and Carter foreign and defence policies i.e. Détente and arms control. In 1980, they formed the backbone of Ronald Reagan presidential campaign and were the architects of his election. We should also mention here, that the same alchemy succeeded in bringing George W. Bush to the Whitehouse in 2001.

2.4. Neoconservatives and Traditional Conservatives

As aforementioned, except regarding their shared staunch opposition to communism, neoconservatives have little to do with the traditional American Right.

American traditional conservatism which is also labelled “paleo-conservatism,”² believes in isolationism as the sole way to preserve American interests. Paleo-conservatives are followers of Presidents Thomas Jefferson (1801-1809) and John Quincy Adams (1825-1829) who warned Americans against going abroad “in search of [foreign] monsters to destroy.” They

¹ George McKenna & Stanley Feingold, “Introduction: Labels and Alignments in American Politics,” in Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Political Issues, sixth edition, Guilford, CT: Dushkin Publishing Group, Inc, 1989, p. xvii.

² See a comparison of the different United States’ conservative movements in Adam Wolfson, “Conservatives and Neoconservatives,” op.cit.

traditionally belong to the Republican Party and are fiercely opposed to any kind of American imperialism.¹ Furthermore, it should be noted that at home, they oppose tolerant immigration policies, abortion and other liberal domestic issues.²

On the other side, neoconservatives hold quite opposed views. They are strong supporters of immigration, of the right to abortion, and are dyed-in-the-wool global affairs interventionists. Zachary Selden, Director of the Defence and Security Committee of the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) Parliamentary Assembly, thinks that the conservative-neoconservative divergence is a kind of contest between realists and idealists. He argues that the neoconservatives are idealists who want to extend liberal democratic values whereas traditional conservatives are generally realists in the true sense of the words; that is they are extremely reluctant in embarking on hazardous, expensive and long missions of spreading American ideals abroad.³ However, Zachary Selden's definition of neoconservatives as idealists looks incomplete or somehow incoherent. Indeed, it is hard to bring up idealism and the thoughts of two prominent twentieth century thinkers who greatly influenced the neoconservatives and their approach toward international relations, namely Reinhold Niebuhr and Leo Strauss.

¹ Alain Frachon and Daniel Vernet, *L'Amérique méssianique*, Paris : Seuil, 2004, p. 35.

² Adam Wolfson, "Conservatives and Neoconservatives," op.cit.

³ Zachary Selden, "Neoconservatism and the American Mainstream," *Policy Review* n°124, April 2004, the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

2.5. Neoconservatism: The Philosophical Roots

The Neoconservative political philosophy owes much to two thinkers, the Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr and the German-born Jewish philosopher Leo Strauss. An introduction to the political philosophies of these two thinkers is necessary to understand the motivation of the neoconservatives regarding the role of the United States in the world, and ultimately, the making of its foreign policy.

2.5.1. Reinhold Niebuhr: a Midway Between Idealism and Realism

The American Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr (1897-1971) had a great impact on contemporary American political thought. With the end of the Second World War, he advocated a new approach toward a national interest interventionist foreign policy. Reinhold Niebuhr was strongly pessimistic vis-à-vis collective human nature and believed in a “Christian Realism,” a realistic approach towards foreign affairs tinted with Christian values. John Ehrman argues that most of the neoconservative ideas had been developed by Niebuhr.¹

In his book The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness (1944), Reinhold Niebuhr conceives world politics as a realm in which “Children of Light” i.e. idealists, and “Children of Darkness” i.e. realists, have developed two opposed views as how to manage world affairs. The result, according to him, has been the spread of conflicts and chaos. Niebuhr criticizes both approaches and concludes that both have failed in finding a good solution for international problems.

¹ John Ehrman, The Rise of Neoconservatism, op.cit, pp viii, 11 and 184.

Therefore, Reinhold Niebuhr proposes a midway approach, an equilibrium between the naïve moral idealism of the “Children of Light” and the egoistic and cynical realism of the “Children of Darkness.” To him, the United States of America should find this midway solution. He states that America should abandon its fears from corrupted realism and should borrow from the “Children of Darkness” their political maturity. Reinhold Niebuhr also thinks that the United States should face the international world as it actually exists, a place where power and force play a predominant role. This is why he stresses the point that America should not be reluctant in using its power and strength to ensure the pursuit of its national interest with the general welfare of the international community.¹ Neoconservatives owe to this thinker in the sense that they believe in a global American hegemony with an emphasis on the military, in the use of force to achieve this supremacy, and they see the world’s interests personified in the United States’ interests.

Whereas neoconservatives espouse the interventionism and national interest-based realism of Reinhold Niebuhr, they are deeply influenced by the ideological and esoteric political foundations of Leo Strauss.

2.5.2. The Influence of Leo Strauss

The main intellectual inspiration on the neoconservative current has been the Jewish philosopher Leo Strauss (1899-1973). Strauss left Germany in 1938 and taught for many years at the University of Chicago. The intellectual Irving Kristol, founder and leading figure of neoconservatism, recognizes the

¹ Reinhold Niebuhr, excerpt from The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness, in Jack Lane and Maurice O’Sullivan, A Twentieth Century American Reader, Volume 1, Washington D.C: United States Information Agency, 1999, pp 495-503.

American philosopher Leo Strauss as the source of inspiration of most of the neoconservative ideology. Irving Kristol also acknowledges that Strauss' political philosophy has been significant in shaping neoconservative foreign policy principles.¹

Journalist and writer William Pfaff wrote that several of the prominent neoconservatives studied and took doctorates under him. He mentioned the names of Paul Wolfowitz (member of a panel of scientists who contributed to a controversial competitive assessment of the Soviet capabilities and intentions in 1976) and Abraham Shulsky, an influential top official at the Defence Department.² Moreover, Robert Loke, one of the self-proclaimed followers of Leo Strauss, mentions that prominent American opinion-makers and policymakers during Presidents Ronald Reagan (1981-1988) and George W. Bush (2001-) administrations were among his students.³

It is thus undeniable that the Straussian political philosophy had a huge impact on neoconservative ideology. What Strauss theorized, neoconservatives implemented.

Leo Strauss worked mainly on the ancient philosophers who, he asserted, founded the liberal ideals of political life. He also diagnosed two

¹ Irving Kristol, "The Neoconservative Persuasion: what it was and what it is," (the) Weekly Standard, Volume 008, Issue 47, August 25, 2003.

² William Pfaff, "The long reach of Leo Strauss," International Herald Tribune, Thursday, May 15, 2003.

Paul Wolfowitz has held key defence posts for twenty five years. He is currently Director of the World Bank. Abraham Shulsky was a Rand researcher and he worked under Richard Perle in the Defence Department under the Reagan administration. It should also be mentioned that A. Shulsky is presently the Director of the Department of Defence's Office of Special Plans. For more information see International Relations Centre, "Individual Profiles," <http://www.irc-online.org/>

³ Robert Loke, "Leo Strauss, Conservative Mastermind," FrontPage Magazine, May, 31, 2002, <http://www.frontpagemag.com>

types of liberalism: the one of the Classics, the true; and the modern one which has been corrupted by some kind of relativism.¹

Strauss argued that tolerance in liberal democracy not only hid possibilities of intolerance but also led to the abdication of the basis for defending its own principles. To him, when liberal democracy becomes relativistic it leads to an "abandonment of all standards including its own."² This is why Strauss believed that relativism ultimately leads to nihilism.³ And here, Strauss denounced relativism that, he thought, had led modern American society to the moral confusion that may prevent it from clearly identifying its real enemies. He gave the example of the interwar years German Weimar Republic which was an example of liberal democracy but whose tolerant principles allowed the rise of Nazism in the 1930s. Neoconservatives could easily make the analogy with the United States rapprochement with the Soviet Union.⁴ Commentary editor Norman Podhoretz, for instance, evoked the memory of the French and British governments' behaviours before the Second World War and their refusal to face up to the growing peril of Nazi Germany.⁵

Indeed, projected into the terms of political philosophy, the extreme outcome of relativism was seen by the neoconservatives in the Détente policy

¹ Relativism is the view that there is no universal truth; instead morality is relative to one's particular society or culture. The position of relativism is that no one should pass judgement on others with substantially different values. David Wong, "Relativism," in A Companion to Ethics, Oxford: edited by Peter Singer, Blackwell Publishers, 1997, pp xv and 447.

² Kenneth L. Deutsch, The Crisis of Liberal Democracy: a Straussian Perspective, Albany, N.Y: State University of New York Press, 1987, p. 70.

³ Nihilism – the belief in nothing – rejects all form of religion or moral authority. Its opponents define it as an advocacy of the resort to violence whereas its proponents see it as a necessary phase to reform any form of institution.

⁴ William Pfaff, "The long reach of Leo Strauss," op.cit.

See also Wikipédia Encyclopaedia, article, "Leo Strauss," <http://fr.wikipedia.org/>

⁵ John Ehrman, The Rise of Neoconservatism, op.cit. p. 108.

and the convergence between the United States of America and the Soviet Union in the 1970s. To Neoconservatives, this rapprochement implied the acknowledgement that there was a moral equivalence between the American democracy and the Soviet communism; intolerable for Leo Strauss' neoconservative disciples. For Leo Strauss as well as for the neoconservatives, there exist good and bad political regimes, and the greatest threat comes from states and cultures that do not share the values of American liberal democracy. Strauss' assumption was that political considerations and foreign policy priorities must not be dispossessed of vital guiding value judgments. Good regimes have the right and even the duty to defend themselves against wicked ones.¹

Moreover, from Leo Strauss' point of view, the implementation of his political ideals can only be achieved through deliberately veiled "esoteric meanings" whose truths can be comprehended only by a very few, an elite, and would be misunderstood by the masses, for the masses often seek 'Pleasure,' not 'Truth.' This of course implies that common citizens are incapable of understanding political objectives and thus inept in participating in political debates. Hence it has been essential – according to Strauss – to tell lies to common people about the nature of political reality. According to Shadia Drury, professor of philosophy and political science at Regina University (Canada), Strauss believed that in order to draw away "political decay," a society should be constituted of militant citizens fuelled with a radical nationalism. In addition, the best way to achieve a permanent national mobilisation is to be in a perpetual war against a threatening enemy. Of

¹ Alain Frachon, Daniel Vernet, "Le stratège et le philosophe," *Le Monde*, April, 15, 2003.

course, if the enemy cannot be found, then it must be invented.¹ Noble lies are therefore necessary for the survival of liberal democracy. Leo Strauss' writings in political philosophy are thus somehow deliberately ambiguous and unclear for common people.²

2.6. The Neoconservative View of Foreign Affairs

As aforesaid, neoconservatives are fervent foreign affairs interventionists and are inspired by Reinhold Niebuhr and the Straussian political philosophies. Rejecting moral and cultural relativism, neoconservatives believe that America personifies the Good. There is also the idea of a universal message held the United States of America, the sense of a mission to fulfil. These principles of course predispose to the belief in an American moral superiority.³ However in opposition to traditional conservative isolationists who believe that the United States has the moral obligation of being a model to be followed, not an exporter of values, neoconservatives want to intervene in a world they view full of problems. And thus the need to found an American empire that would establish a kind of "Pax Americana." In 1968, Irving Kristol asserted that the United States "would not cease being an imperial power" and warned that

If the nations of the world become persuaded that [America] can not be counted upon to do the kind of 'policeman's' work...

¹ Shadia B. Drury, "Leo Strauss and the Grand Inquisitor," Free Inquiry Magazine, Volume 4, n°4.

² William Pfaff, "The long reach of Leo Strauss," op.cit.

And Wikipédia Encyclopaedia, article, "Leo Strauss," <http://fr.wikipedia.org/>, op.cit. See also Shadia Drury, Leo Strauss and the American Right, St Martin's, 1999.

³ Alain Frachon, Daniel Vernet, L'Amérique méssianique, op.cit. p. 33.

[America] shall unquestionably witness an alarming upsurge in national delinquency and international disorder.”¹

This is why, in the 1970s, the policy of Détente that assumed a balance of power in a multipolar world and arms control that could keep a tight rein on the United States military strength perhaps hindered these global ambitions.

Although Irving Kristol had far-reaching opinions on foreign affairs issues, the chief theorists of the neoconservative approach on international relations were historians Robert W. Tucker and Walter Laqueur who opposed revisionist historians as Stanley Hoffman or William A. Williams in the 1970s. Tucker and Laqueur contested Hoffman’s and Williams’ view that the policy of Détente was the symptom of a changing world order. They rather considered it as the indication of the American foreign policy elite’s lost of will, a view which was shared by figures such as Norman Podhoretz.²

2.7. Neoconservatives and Defence policy

With regard to the military field and the United States’ national security, Paul Nitze and Albert Wohlstetter – two specialists in the spheres of strategy and defence – greatly influenced the neoconservatives.

Paul Nitze was one of the – if not the – most influential theorists of the militarist containment of the Soviet Union. As hard-liner, he was the drafter of the famous NSC-68 in 1950, and he advocated for about three decades, a strong military to oppose the Soviet Union. The views of Nitze against Détente are examined in the present dissertation (see page 51).

¹ Irving Kristol as quoted in John Ehrman, The Rise of Neoconservatism, op.cit., p. 49.

² John Ehrman, The Rise of Neoconservatism, op. cit., pp. 53 and 55.

Albert Wohlstetter was a Rand¹ strategist and a mathematician at the University of Chicago. He did not hold any official post but he remained an authority in the field of nuclear strategy all along the Cold War period. He greatly influenced the neoconservatives who were his protégés and who would hold top defence posts such as Richard Perle and Paul Wolfowitz.²

Albert Wohlstetter revolutionized the American strategic thinking of the Cold War. Early Cold War military strategy had been built on an assessment of the enemy's intentions and capabilities, and basically relied on secret intelligence and scholarly analysis of communist ideology. But as a mathematician, Wohlstetter relied on a new methodology to assess the intentions of the Soviet Union. It based on probabilistic reasoning that operated through systems analysis and game theory. The designs of the enemy were supposed, or believed as a future possibility. The result was that even a small probability of vulnerability, or a potential future vulnerability, could be presented as a virtual state of national emergency.³ Paul Nitze and Albert Wohlstetter's worst-case views were highly regarded in the 1950s and 1960s but began to lose influence with the arrival of Détente.

2.8. Conclusion

Hence, basing on the philosophical foundations of Leo Strauss, neoconservatives believed in a world divided into two camps, the camp of

¹ The Rand Corporation is a think tank which promotes and undertakes research in the field of security strategy and foreign affairs. It greatly influenced the United States' defence policy during the Cold War.

² Richard Perle, The Making of a Neoconservative, interview by Ben Wattenberg, <http://www.thinktank.org/>, 2003.

³ Husain Khurram, "Neocons: the Men Behind the Curtain," Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, Vol. 59, n° 06, November/December 2003, pp 62-71.

democracies and the camp of “barbarism and misery;” and the latter threatening the survival of the former.¹ They also had faith in an overall American moral supremacy, and the need to defend this superiority with a strong military. They did not accept the situation the United States was in, in the 1970s. They regarded the policy of Détente and Strategic Arms Limitations Talks as a symbol of the American decline and renouncement of its global mission. Moreover, neoconservatives regarded the 1970s American political ambience as a terrifying “culture of appeasement,” plagued by a “national mood of self-doubt and self-disgust.”²

This is why they committed themselves to what Anne Hessing Cahn – former member of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency – called “the remilitarization of American foreign policy.”³ Thus, they allied with other anti-communist movements situated at the right of the American political spectrum to systematically condemn and attack the policy undertaken by the 1970s United States’ administrations. The views of Paul Nitze and the theories of Albert Wohlstetter were to support the ideas that the Soviet Union was about to exceed the United States in all categories of conventional as well as strategic weapons. Besides, since the Soviet Union represented the antithesis of the American values of freedom and democracy, therefore, its strategic objectives were in the neoconservative view hostile.

¹ John Ehrman, “The Rise of Neoconservatism,” op.cit. pp 106 -108. The view of a world divided in Good and Evil is commonly shared by most neoconservatives such as Norman Podhoretz, Nathan Glazer, Walter Laqueur and Richard Perle.

² Norman Podhoretz as quoted in Edward Tabor Linenthal, “War and Sacrifice in the Nuclear Age: The Committee on the Present Danger and the Renewal of Martial Enthusiasm,” in Ira Chernus, A Shuddering Dawn: Religious Studies and the Nuclear Age, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989, p. 24.

³ Anne Hessing Cahn, Killing Détente: The Right Attacks the CIA, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998, p. 16.

Chapter Three:
The Neoconservatives Case Against Détente:
The Soviet Present Danger

3.1. Introduction

By the mid-1970s, the policy of Détente was underway and some analysts even made analyses for a post-Cold War American policy.¹ Why did a coalition of right wing pressure groups, intellectuals and politicians reject it and undertake all possible measures to derail it? What are the arguments the neoconservatives and their allies put forward to justify their opposition to any status quo with the Soviet Union?

This chapter presents the justifications raised by those who asked for a renouncement of Détente and arms control negotiations, their demand for significant increases in the defence budgets and a militarist containment of the United States' enemy of that period: the Soviet Union. Basing on the two previous chapters, the chapter sheds light on the principal domestic actors who condemned Richard Nixon-Gerald Ford's and later Jimmy Carter's policy of appeasement with the Russians.

The chapter focuses on the two intertwined lines of arguments the neoconservatives put forward to justify their hard line stance. The first is the

¹See the article of George F. Kennan, "After the Cold War: American Foreign Policy in the 1970s," Foreign Affairs, October 1972.

refusal of Détente and arms limitation talks under the pretext that it would be considered as an erosion of the American power and the abandonment of its international mission. According to the neoconservatives and their allies, the result of a lack of confidence in American values and of any sign of retreat would lead to the expansion of the Communist ideology and its oppressive and dictatorial behaviours.

The second and most controversial argument of the neoconservatives is the “present danger” symbolized by the military capabilities of the Soviet Union as well as its supposed aggressive strategic objectives towards the United States. The neoconservative–cold-warriors coalition rested on the ideological principles of Leo Strauss symbolized in the Good-versus-Evil dichotomy. Emphasizing on the wicked nature of the Soviet ideology, they claimed that it constituted a direct threat to the Western values and especially the United States. To convey their case, they used Leo Strauss’s approach to the elite-public relationship. A relation based on the theory that the public is unable to discern political priorities. In addition, the neoconservative defence guidelines advocated systematic worst-case analyses of Soviet intentions and capabilities i.e. the worst-case improbability was given ascendancy over the realistic data-based probability.

3.2. The Neoconservative Actors

The 1970s witnessed the emergence of a myriad of intellectuals, politicians and experts who developed ideas and assertions about the fallibility of the United States foreign and security strategies of that period. All converged in views and attitudes to criticize the successive American decision

makers regarding Détente and SALTs I and II. All these personalities belonged to neoconservative–militarist spheres and clustered around emerging powerful pressure groups (see Chapter Four).

Ranging from the staunch anticommunist politician to the highly regarded academic, the neoconservatives began writing and publishing essays and articles about the inconsistency of Détente and arms limitation talks with the USSR. Among those unfaltering “cold warriors” we may notice intellectuals such as Norman Podhoretz of Commentary magazine or Irving Kristol of the Public Interest and the National Interest, and politicians such as Senator Henry Jackson and would-be President Ronald Reagan. Paul Nitze, William Van Cleave – of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency – and Eugene Rostow (former Undersecretary of State) also had influential ideas.

It is out of the scope of this dissertation to detail the arguments of all opponents to Détente. Few leading figures of this trend with significant and sharp views are presented here. We must however keep in mind that they had a common line of reasoning: the American military and psychological inferiority because of its inability to realize the “present danger” symbolized by an imminent Soviet threat.

3.3. Norman Podhoretz and the American Loss of Will

Commentary Editor Norman Podhoretz based his condemnation of the 1970s foreign policy on ideological and moral arguments. Podhoretz scornfully described Détente as “Nixon's doctrine of strategic defeat.”¹ But what is the

¹ Norman Podhoretz as quoted in Edward Tabor Linenthal, “War and Sacrifice in the Nuclear Age: The Committee on the Present Danger and the Renewal of Martial Enthusiasm,” op.cit., pp 25-26.

most noticeable is that Norman Podhoretz rallied the conception the philosopher Leo Strauss had of foreign relations. Indeed, Détente, Podhoretz argued, did not allow for clarity of purpose in a dangerous world. He also explained the effects of the United States disaster in Vietnam as the key reason for the Americans – leaders and citizens – to their lack of will. As if he was missing post war American national stoicism, Norman Podhoretz viewed that because of the trauma of Vietnam, the policy of Détente enchained the sacrificing heroism of the American nation. He claimed that the policy of Détente took from the Soviet-American conflict “the moral and political dimension for the sake of which sacrifices could be intelligently demanded by the government and willingly made by the people.”¹ Podhoretz thus diagnosed an inner confusion brought about by the war in Vietnam and a spiritual “Finlandization”² of the United States caused by the policy of Détente. This scared Podhoretz and his fellow neoconservatives.

According to William McGurn, of the Wall Street Journal, Norman Podhoretz warned of the fatal flaw of ignoring the importance of ideology. Indeed, Podhoretz emphasized that “in any negotiation between a party with limited aims [understand the United States] and a party with unlimited aims [understand the Soviet Union], the party with limited aims is bound to lose in the very nature of things.” Therefore, to Podhoretz, the Détente that was sold

¹ Ibid.

² Norman Podhoretz, “The Present Danger,” Commentary, Vol. 69, No. 3, March 1980, pp 27 and 33. By “Finlandization” of the United States, Norman Podhoretz made the parallel with the Finno-Soviet pact of friendship signed in 1948. That pact was badly interpreted by the United States and other Western countries. It cast a shadow of cold war suspicion over Finland for decades. “Finlandization” was thus a term of opprobrium in the eyes of the West. This idea of “Finlandization” of the United States was also warned by Paul Nitze, quoted in John Ehrman, The Rise of Neoconservatism, op. cit., p. 113.

to the American people on the basis of restraining Soviet expansionist ambitions ended up restraining only Washington instead of Moscow.¹

Norman Podhoretz also detailed his case against an American rapprochement with the Soviets in The Present Danger (1980). He asked for a revival of the American spirit that had built the anti-communist consensus of the pre-Vietnam era. He believed that the United States was losing the leadership of the free world to the Soviet Union mostly because America did not have the will to oppose with force the Soviet Union. Recapturing the ideas of Leo Strauss, Norman Podhoretz thought that this lack of will was mainly due to the fact that Americans considered themselves to have been morally wrong in Vietnam. As a result of their guilt feeling and their loss of confidence in their “moral and political leadership,”² and because of their loss of will, Norman Podhoretz viewed that the American people were not realizing the present danger and consequently were endangering their future. He dramatically concluded that a persistent refusal to contain and roll back the Soviet Union would leave the United States with only two fatal alternatives: surrender or war.³

By presenting two scary options before the United States, Norman Podhoretz implied that peaceful coexistence, a third less frightening alternative, was unthinkable since he could not make any kind of equivalence between the American values and the ones of its enemy at that time, the Soviet Union. In other words, Norman Podhoretz did not (and still does not) believe

¹ William McGurn. “Norman Podhoretz and the Nature of Things,” New Criterion, Vol. 22, No. 7, March 2004.

² Norman Podhoretz, “The Present Danger,” op.cit., p. 31.

³ Harry M. Cleaver, summary of The Present Danger, University of Texas, http://www.eco.utexas.edu/facstaff/Cleaver/357Lsum_s2_NPodhoretz.htm

in a world culturally, ideologically and politically diverse since, to him, there was no place for mutual appeasement. Backing the opinions of his fellow neoconservatives, Podhoretz's key argument was that the deterioration of American moral and military forces and the Soviet build-up was the "Present Danger."

3.4. Paul Nitze and the Strategic Nuclear Debate

Whereas Norman Podhoretz and other intellectuals were arguing in the politico-ideological realm, the field of defence and national security was the concern of other specialists. That is where the neoconservative approach was mainly echoed by the Team B report (see Chapter four) and its leading authors such as historian Richard Pipes, security analysts (and former top bureaucratic officials) Paul Nitze and William Van Cleve. These strategic thinkers chose to go deep in detailing the drawbacks of arms limitation talks and the menace the Soviet Union constituted.

According to Richard Crockatt, the American debate about nuclear strategy in the mid-1970s moved on to the extent where the theory of nuclear deterrence, as it had been developed in the United States during the 1960s (see Chapter One), came into question.¹ Authoritative voices such as Paul Nitze or Richard Pipes suggested that 'mutually assured destruction' was a no more adequate basis for deterrence. They urged the need to develop American military and strategic capabilities so as to be able to fight and win a nuclear war.

¹ Richard Crockatt, *The Fifty Years War*, op.cit, p. 260.

Indeed, Paul Nitze vigorously criticized SALTs I and II in a technically detailed and complex exposition of how he viewed the outcome of the arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union. Nitze's leading thesis was that SALT I did not bring strategic stability but the contrary. He affirmed that under the terms of SALT agreements, the Soviet Union would not stop seeking a nuclear superiority and it intended to achieve a "theoretical war-winning capability."¹ Making a complex counting and calculation of the American and Soviet arsenals provisioned by SALT, and scheming a virtual nuclear exchange between the two superpowers, Nitze concluded that the United States was confronting a window of vulnerability. He argued that in any foreseeable nuclear war, the Soviet Union would have an overall nuclear advantage of retaliation.² In short and as paradoxical as it could be, he implied that arms control negotiations as they were pursued by the United States were endangering international stability and jeopardizing American security.

Of course, Paul Nitze could not openly advocate the abandonment of SALT. But he argued that a precondition for the United States to achieve a substantial success in dealing with arms control was only by taking appropriate action to recover what he considered as a looming strategic inequality with the Soviet Union. To him, only a huge American nuclear strength would persuade the Russians to abandon their quest for military superiority.³

¹ Paul Nitze, "Assuring Strategic Stability in an Era of Détente," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 54 N° 2, January 1976, p. 207, Council of Foreign Relations.

² Ibid, pp 226-231.

³ Ibid, pp 207-208.

The problem with the argumentation of Paul Nitze was that he requested an increase in the strategic arms budget so as to persuade the Soviet Union to resume the course of significant arms limitations and reductions through negotiation. The argument that advocated negotiating with the Russians in a position of superiority was not new and does not seem rational. Indeed, if History is any guide, Paul Nitze made the same assumptions in 1950, when he authored NSC-68, and that fed the arms race and exacerbated the security dilemma that trapped the Americans for about three decades!

The one who powerfully challenged Paul Nitze's arguments was another security analyst, Jan Lodal of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency who had also belonged to National Security Council under the Nixon Administration. Lodal responded to Nitze and systematically contradicted his ideas.¹ Lodal argued that Nitze overestimated Soviets' capabilities and did not pay attention to the critical technological deficiencies of their arsenal. He also called attention to the fact that SALT provided the United States with benefits it did not allow to the Soviet Union. In addition, he stressed the point that the United States' air-based, sea-based nuclear weapons and American Forward Base Systems (US nuclear arsenal in Europe) were by far more efficient than the Russian forces. He sustained that SALT was creating a nuclear balance and therefore a strategic stability. To Jan Lodal, an abandonment of the SALT

¹ The 1976 Nitze's and Lodal's exchange on strategic issues in Foreign Affairs was known as the "Nitze-Lodal-Nitze Debate."

process would only “increase Soviet–American tension and ...decrease rather than improve [American] security.”¹

Strategic arms negotiations and political conciliation with the USSR were not only criticized by Paul Nitze. While this latter emphasized the inconsistency of the SALT process, other experts such as Richard Pipes focused on the Soviet strategic thinking and challenged the idea that the Soviet Union had no aggressive objectives towards the United States.

3.5. Richard Pipes and the Soviet Military Doctrine

Richard Pipes was a Harvard University historian. He was also the leader of a group of experts outside the Central Intelligence Agency labelled as “Team B” which was set by the Whitehouse in July 1976 to undertake an experiment in competitive analysis with the analysts of the Agency on the Soviet military capabilities and strategic objectives. The circumstances, details and political outcomes of the “Team B” report will later be developed in the present dissertation (see Chapter Four). Richard Pipes also served as a consultant to Senator Henry Jackson in the early 1970s, he later belonged to the Committee on the Present Danger (see Chapter Four) and became member of the National Security Council under the Ronald Reagan’s administration as well as the President’s Advisor for Soviet Affairs.²

The arguments developed by Richard Pipes against Détente and SALT were mainly the views of the Team B Report. According to Richard Pipes, the

¹ Jan Lodal as quoted in Richard Crockatt, *The Fifty Years War*, op.cit. pp 262-263. See Jan Lodal, “Assuring Strategic Stability: An Alternate View,” *Foreign Affairs*, April 1976, Council of Foreign Relations.

² Sourcewatch, article, “Richard Pipes,” Center for Media and Democracy, January 2005, <http://www.sourcewatch.org/>

major problem the United States fell in was that it did not accurately appreciate the nature of the Soviet threat. He based his arguments on the assertion that there was an apparent peril in the Soviet nuclear doctrine and that it was dangerous for the United States to unilaterally adhere to a strategy of mutual deterrence. Pipes asserted that American and Soviet nuclear doctrines were diametrically opposed and that “Soviet leaders are first and foremost offensively rather than defensively minded.”¹ He believed thus that the perception the USA had of deterrence and Détente was not the Soviets’ perception.

In an article written in 1977 and published in the very neoconservative Commentary magazine,² Richard Pipes developed a line of reasoning based on Russian history and Soviet ideology to interpret its military doctrine and strategic intentions. According to Pipes, the Soviet Union manifestly harboured malignant intentions, and did not believe in mutual deterrence. He argued, for example, that nuclear strategy was seen by the Western World as a means to preserve peace through mutual deterrence whereas the USSR considered it – like other conventional arms – as a means by which the Soviet leaders could guarantee internal control and pursue territorial expansion. He also claimed that American strategic theories were developed largely by civilian scientists who were considerably guided by fiscal imperatives. On the contrary, in the USSR, strategy was elaborated by the military with no fiscal constraints. All over his article, Richard Pipes also implied that the USSR was

¹ Richard Pipes as quoted in Paul Warnke, “review of Killing Détente: the Right Attacks the CIA, Bulletin of Atomic Scientists,” Vol. 55, N° 1, January/February 1999.

² Pipes’ article presented the arguments of the Team B report that was at that time a “top secret” classified document. The Team B report was declassified in 1992.

a nation that could not be trusted (as if trust was the principle ruling international or bilateral relations) and which could – if necessary – sacrifice millions of its citizens to achieve its world ambitions. Richard Pipes warned that “ignoring or not taking seriously Soviet military doctrine may have very detrimental effects on U.S. security.”¹

In 1980, he went even further to assert that the United States was dealing with an enemy

Who is driven not by fear but by aggressive impulses, who is generally more innovative in the field of political strategy than [the United States is], and who selects his victims carefully, with long-term objectives in mind.²

Richard Pipes argued that although the USSR was involved in the SALT process, its strategy operated on a “first-strike doctrine,” implying the likelihood for the Soviet policy makers to launch a pre-emptive nuclear strike on the United States. Believing that in the 1980s the United States would find its nuclear capabilities under growing menace, he thus claimed that the ratification of SALT II would not exert a significant effect on future Soviet military deployments but would inhibit and even exclude any U.S military response to a Soviet attack.³

Finally, Richard Pipes put a huge criticism on the United States policy makers of the period and the different agencies in charge of assessing Soviet intentions and capabilities. He for example qualified Kissinger’s approach

¹ Richard Pipes, “Why the Soviet Union Thinks it Could Fight and Win a Nuclear War,” Commentary, Vol. 64, N° 1, July 1977, pp 32-33.

² Richard Pipes, “Soviet Global Strategy,” Commentary, Vol. 69, N° 4, April 1980, p. 39.

³ *Ibid*, p. 36.

toward diplomacy as short-ranged and dangerous. He also declared that Kissinger was more concerned with his prestige and standing in the international scene than he was with the United States' interests.¹

3.6. Ronald Reagan and the Soviet Threat

Disengaged from the Democratic Party since the liberal split of the late 1960s, and deceived by the realistic faction of the Republican Party led by Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford and Henry Kissinger, the neoconservatives turned toward the right wing of the Grand Old Party embodied by former governor Ronald Reagan.

Ronald Reagan's aggressive rhetoric differed from the elaborate and highly structured analyses of Richard Pipes or Paul Nitze. It also lacked the sophistication of Podhoretz's argumentation. However, Reagan went straight to the point and his ideas were crystal clear to the rank-and-file American citizen.

In August 1975, while announcing his candidacy for the Republican presidential nomination, Ronald Reagan accused the Whitehouse of forcing Détente on the American people who could not truly understand that policy. He also said that Americans would not want Détente if they could have comprehended its meaning. He also, accused President Gerald Ford and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger of bargaining away American military power.²

¹ Robert D. Schulzinger, Henry Kissinger : Doctor of Diplomacy, New York: Columbia University Press, 1988, pp 220-221.

² Ibid, p. 215.

Again, in a speech given during the primaries of 1976, and later labelled as the “To Restore America” speech, Ronald Reagan – who was a man of convictions but who was neither a national security expert nor a specialist in foreign affairs – started to present an endless list of United States defence deficiencies in comparison with the Soviet forces. He declared for example that the Soviet armed forces “outnumbered” the American ones more than two-to-one and in reserves four-to-one. Ronald Reagan added that the Soviets “out-spended” the United States on weapons by 50 percent, that the Soviet Union outnumbered the United States in surface ships and submarines two-to-one. He also said that Americans were “outgunned” in conventional weaponry three-to-one and that Soviet tanks outnumbered American ones four-to-one. After having listed all these “outs,” Ronald Reagan finally declared that Russian strategic nuclear missiles were larger, more powerful and more numerous than American nuclear arsenal. He concluded alarmingly: “We are Number Two in a world where it's dangerous, if not fatal, to be second best.”¹

Although Ronald Reagan lost the 1976 primaries, he kept on challenging the United States’ policy of arms control. He viewed that Carter’s administration was cutting back on the United States’ military power, that the strategic forces were becoming obsolete and that the American decision takers did nothing to reduce the Soviet threat.² In 1978 for example, Ronald Reagan criticized Jimmy Carter’s foreign policy. He pointed out that the Soviet Union had no concern in maintaining the status quo and that it did not accept the

¹ Ronald Reagan, To Restore America, speech, March 31, 1976.

² Thomas H. Moorer, The 1970s: The Decade of Disarmament, the American Security Council Foundation, Washington, 2004, http://www.ascfusa.org/publications/american_century

American concept of Détente (an argument already advocated by Nitze, Pipes, Rostow and other neoconservatives). He stressed the point that the USSR continued to build up its military capabilities for the sake of world domination. Reagan went even further in fuelling a climate of suspicion over American capabilities. Once again, he belittled American military forces and claimed that United States' strategic missiles would inflict only "minimal damage" on the Soviet Union. At the same time, he went against the National Intelligence Estimates mainstream concerning Russian capabilities. Ronald Reagan asserted that Soviet strategic missiles would cause "chaos and destruction" on the American mainland.¹ We can note here the striking influence views of the neoconservatives had on Ronald Reagan's thinking.

Ronald Reagan was member of the Committee on the Present Danger and of the American Security Council (see Chapter Four). Thirty-two members of the Committee on the Present Danger – all neoconservatives – were appointed in key posts during his first term of office (1981-1984).²

3.7. Other Neoconservatives

The personalities mentioned previously were not alone in criticizing the policy of appeasement with the Soviet Union. The neoconservative-militarist case was also heard via the voices of Senator Henry Jackson, his aide Richard Perle, and other figures such as Jeane Kirkpatrick, Eugene Rostow or William Van Cleave.

¹ Ronald Reagan, America's Purpose in the World, speech, 5th Annual CPAC Conference, March 17, 1978.

² International Relations Center, "Group Watch: Committee on the Present Danger," Group Watch: Profiles of U.S. Private Organizations and Churches, July 1989, in <http://www.irc-online.org/>

According to Richard Perle and Senator Henry Jackson, the USSR was “a menace, a threat to the physical survival and well-being of the United States.”¹ In 1981, Richard Perle, then Assistant Secretary of Defence in the Reagan administration claimed that the SALT II agreement in process during the 1970s, entailed constraints that would have permitted the Soviet Union to continue expanding and improving its offensive forces so that sometime during the life of the treaty it would have had the capacity to strike the United States. He also asserted that the American missile force would have been unable to threaten the Soviet one.²

Jeane Kirkpatrick, in her turn, argued that the United States was becoming progressively weaker and the Soviet Union not only increasingly stronger in relationship to the United States and the West, but also more hostile. She asserted that there was a national peril emerging out of the neglect of American strength. To her, the United States needed a change of policy since Détente could not work.³

Eugene Rostow (former under-Secretary of State and co-founder of the Committee on the Present Danger) came with the recurrent and habitual neoconservative–militarist language that the Soviets were in no case interested in mutual deterrence and that they viewed “clear nuclear superiority” as “the ultimate weapon of coercive diplomacy.”⁴ As Norman Podhoretz and owing to Leo Strauss, Eugene Rostow compared the years of

¹ Richard Perle, interview by CNN, March, 3, 1997, George Washington University Website, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/coldwar/interviews>

² David Hafemeister, “Reflections on the GAO Triad Report on the Nuclear Triad,” *Science and Global Security*, N° 6, 1997, pp 383-393.

³ Jeane Kirkpatrick, interview by CNN, George Washington University website, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/coldwar/interviews/episode-19/>

⁴ Eugene Rostow as quoted in John Ehrman, *The Rise of Neoconservatism*, op.cit., p. 113

Détente to the European passive situation before both World Wars. He claimed that

Since the final bitter phases of the Vietnam War, our governments have been preaching with the fear, passivity, and inadequacy which characterized the British and American policy so fatally in the Thirties, and British policy before 1914.¹

3.8. Conclusion

By the late 1970s, the foreign policy and strategic arms issues of the United States were a matter of great concern for American decision makers. The arms control consensus and Détente optimism of the early 1970s started to vacillate. The convergence of opinions hostile to these strategies took large proportions.

Neoconservative figures developed detailed and authoritative theories related to the United States' situation, the irrelevance of the SALT process, the nature of the Soviet military doctrine and capabilities. All complementary and put together, these views constituted the key thesis of the neoconservatives and their allies. It was their chief purpose to depict a Soviet Union that was neither concerned with a rapprochement with the United States nor willing to limit its military capabilities. Relying on the Straussian political teachings, and through continuous and incessant presentation of recurrent arguments, they warned the American people of an imminent present danger. This idea of

¹ Eugene Rostow as quoted in Edward Tabor Linenthal, "War and Sacrifice in the Nuclear Age: The Committee on the Present Danger and the Renewal of Martial Enthusiasm," *op.cit.*, p. 25. The same analogy was made by neoconservatives such as Richard Perle and William Kristol (son of Irving Kristol) on the brink of the War on Irak in 2003.

a “present danger” threatening the USA implied, of course, no alternative but a national mobilization to rally behind the request for huge military expenditures, a nuclear build up, a tough foreign policy and therefore the renunciation of the policy of Détente, the collapse of SALT and the resurgence of the Cold War orthodoxy.

These were the opinions of the detractors of the policy of Détente and strategic arms limitation talks. Moreover, they did not confine their critique to mere argumentations. The neoconservative–militarist coalition employed different methods to make their views heard and convincing. The political malaise that shook up the American public scene in mid-1970s, together with a network of influential pressure groups helped them to achieve that task. The following chapter will show how this was realized.

Chapter Four

The 1970s Neoconservatives' Agenda:

Undermining Détente

4.1. Introduction

The right wing militarist–neoconservative coalition condemned Détente and Strategic Arms Limitation Talks. The problem was that their view had little impact on the Nixon administration of the early 1970s. Indeed, the public opinion was largely approving the United States foreign and defence policies of the moment. However, neoconservatives took the opportunity of the malaise that started shaking the American political scene in the mid-1970s to systematically and shrewdly assail the policy of rapprochement between the United States of America and the Soviet Union.

The opponents of Détente and SALT negotiations worked at many different levels. First, they undertook to weave a web of pressure groups and alliances at the political levels. These lobby groups put huge pressure on both the Executive and the Legislative to make their opinion heard and put into practice. They also carried out campaigns in the academic spheres regarding the validity of Détente and arms control. The neoconservatives – militarists' coalition also exploited the media to reshape the attitude of the public opinion towards the Ford and Carter foreign policies. It would be hard to give an exhaustive analysis of the different and countless attacks on Détente and SALT in the present paper. I have therefore chosen to focus on the most

significant factors that undermined the 1970s foreign and defence policies of the USA.

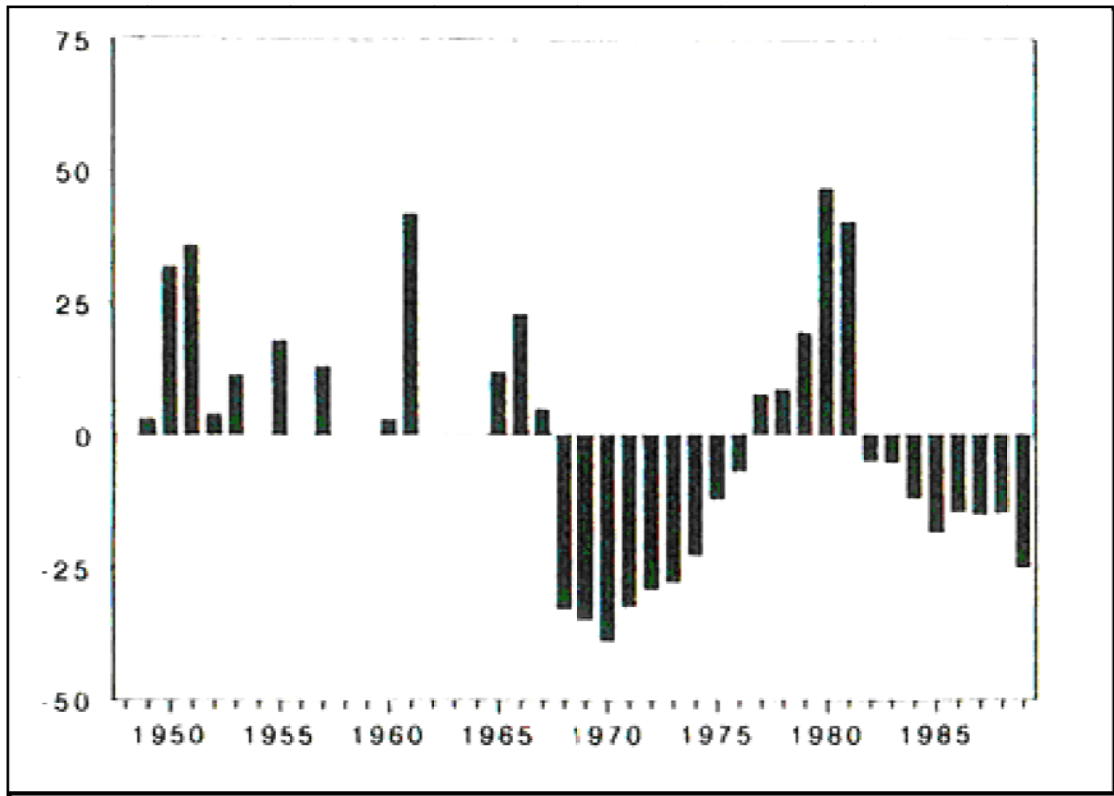
The aim of this chapter is to shed light on how the neoconservatives attacked the United States official policy of Détente and Strategic Arms Limitation Talks with the USSR. This chapter points out how the requesters of a strong military build up reversed the perception of the American society in order to confront what they believed as an imminent Soviet threat. This part of the dissertation also shows how the neoconservatives were able, from a marginal, uncharacterized movement in the early 1970s, to become a strong-minded and influential current on the eve of Ronald Reagan Presidency in 1981.

4.2. Targeting Public Opinion

We should mention here that the neoconservatives' claim – valid or not – that the United States' power and global influence were declining, had no impact on the top American policy makers who were resolute to pursue the realistic and subtle policy of Détente and arms limitation negotiations. Even the American public opinion was from 1970 to the 1976 presidential election, broadly in favour of that new approach in foreign and defence policies (see Figure 1, next page).

Figure 1 shows that the first round in Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (1969 – 1972) and its outcome, the SALT treaty of 1972 came at a time where the American public opinion was mainly opposing any increase in defence spending. It was therefore difficult in the heydays of Détente (1969-1974) for opponents of that policy to openly denounce or further attack it.

Figure 1: The American Public Opinion Balance on Defence Spending, 1949-1989¹



Certainly, by the beginning of the 1970s, due to economic problems in the United States, the strenuous Cold War mobilisation, the apprehension of a possible nuclear Armageddon attributable to the terrifying arsenals in possession of the two superpowers, and last but not least, the calamitous effects of the Vietnam War, the public opinion was neither favouring any rise

¹ Robert Higgs, "The Cold War Economy: Opportunity Costs, Ideology, and the Politics of Crisis," The Independent Institute, July 2001.

It is interesting to notice here that peaks expressing strongly favourable opinions on defence spending correspond to the beginning of the Korean War (1950-1951), the Cuban Missiles Crisis (1961), the beginning of the Vietnam War (1965-1967), and the arrival of Ronald Reagan to Presidency (1980-1981). Whereas the first three peaks are broadly explainable due to two shooting wars and a hot crisis, the last peak was mainly due to an atmosphere of fear and collective panic about the alleged Soviet strength.

of tensions with the USSR nor any American commitment abroad or increases in military outlays.

It was therefore hard for the foes of Détente to win the American rank-and-file citizen over to their opinions. For the American people, the fact that the Russian society was ruled by an oppressive and totalitarian regime did not justify an increase in military spending or more confrontation with the Soviet Union. In 1972 for example, an opinion poll ranked the threat of communism only twenty second among Americans' most concerns. The need to maintain strong military defences was in the twelfth place after domestic issues such as the cost of living (1st position), the amount of urban violence (2nd position) or the Vietnam War (5th position).¹

Another poll, conducted by the Roper Organization in 1971, showed that 61 percent of Americans disagreed with the idea that the United States' power was declining.²

Regarding relations with the Communist block, the number of Americans who took a favourable opinion of the Soviet Union rose from 5 percent in 1954 to 34 percent in 1973. Furthermore, that same year, 78 percent of the Americans responding to a Gallup poll believed the United States should go further in negotiating with the Soviet Union.³ In other words, the general mood of the American public opinion was optimistic regarding relations with the Soviet Union, Détente and arms limitation negotiations.

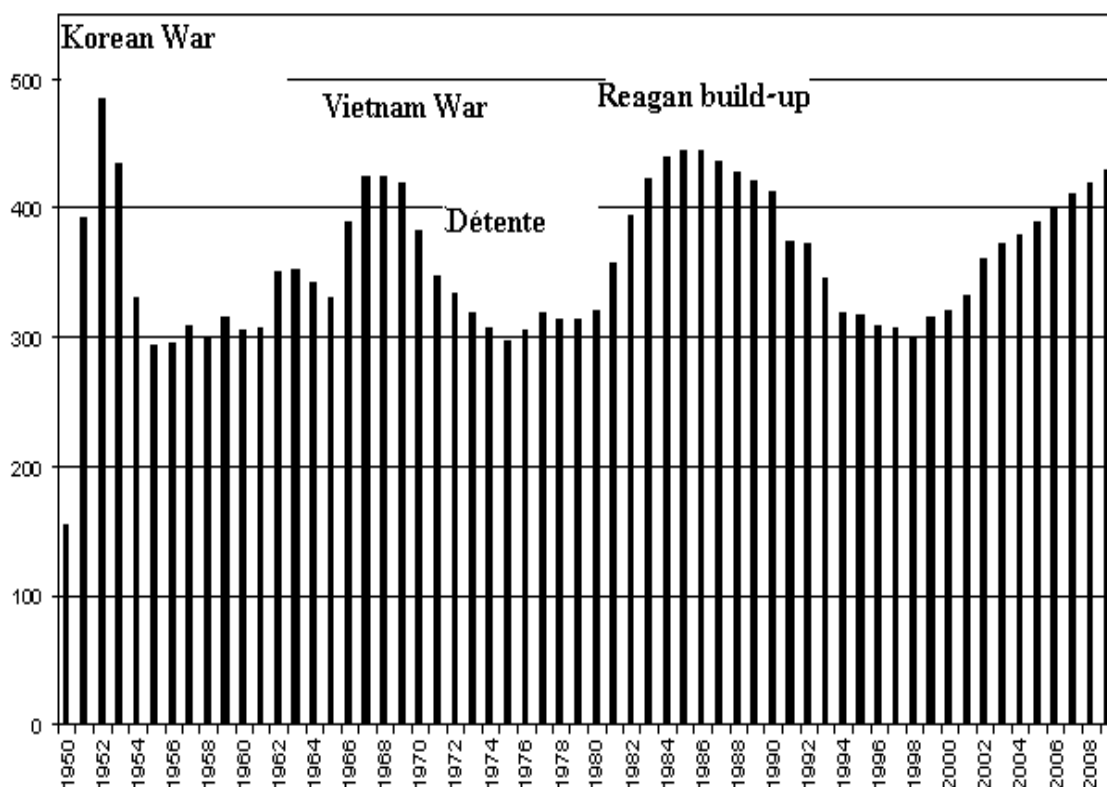
¹ Ben Wattenberg, *The Real America*, New York: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1974, p. 205.

² *Ibid.*, p. 209.

³ Anne Hessing Cahn, *Killing Détente: the Right Attacks the CIA*, op.cit. p. 7.

It should also be mentioned that the United States military outlays corresponded to the public opinion attitude of that time (see Figure 2, below).

Figure 2: US Military Spending (Billions of 2004 Dollars), 1950-2004¹



According to Robert Higgs, professor of political economy, the decline in military expenditures for the period of 1972-76, during the USA-USSR diplomatic rapprochement, was not due to the sole Vietnam War demobilization. To Robert Higgs, the size of the military cutback during the years 1972-1976 reflected more a public and congressional revulsion against

¹ Luc Mampaey, L'hystérie sécuritaire, moteur de la relance américaine : l'exemple du programme Manpads, Groupe de Recherche et d'Information sur la Paix et la sécurité (GRIP), Bruxelles, February, 10, 2004, <http://www.grip.org/>. We should mention that we have added to this figure the periods and events corresponding to the increases and decreases in military outlays (Korean War, Vietnam War, Détente and Reagan build-up).

militarism and the USA-USSR confrontation rather than savings associated with the decrease and eventual cessation of the United States involvement in the Vietnam War.¹ The intense debate inside the political and intellectual arena over the rightness of the policy of appeasement elaborated by the Nixon administration started during this period of reappraisal of the United States foreign and defence policy.

It was thus clear that the adversaries of any easing of tensions and development of arms control could not play the sole ideological antagonism card and the Straussian Good-versus-Evil dichotomy. Therefore they banked on another argument, perhaps much less well-founded but much more impressive: the “present danger” symbolized by the Soviet imminent threat, its huge military capabilities and its malignant intentions. The New Right and the neoconservative movement took the opportunity of the political unease of the mid-1970s to assault the administrations of Presidents Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter.

Starting from 1974, a sequence of domestic events came to reinforce the position of the opponents of Détente. These later were able to take advantage of a series of events and the public opinion started to shift towards the acceptance of more increase in military expenditures (see Figure 1, page 65). And in 1976, the debate over the policy of Détente reached its climax due to converging factors which weakened President Gerald Ford’s administration and strengthened the position of the American Right and especially the

¹ Robert Higgs, “U.S. Military Spending In The Cold War Era: Opportunity Costs, Foreign Crises, and Domestic Constraints,” *CATO Policy Analysis*, N° 114, the CATO Institute, November 30, 1988.

neoconservatives. Nevertheless, the actual launch of the neoconservative denunciation of Détente went back to 1974.

4.3. The Political Malaise of 1974 and First Launch on Détente

In 1974, America witnessed the start of an intense domestic debate over the validity of the United States foreign and defence policies of the moment. The policy of diplomatic and economic rapprochement with the Soviet Block, together with the pursuit of arms control negotiations irritated a great part of the American Right and in particular the neoconservatives.

Political leaders such as Senator Henry Jackson, intellectuals as Norman Podhoretz and Irving Kristol, and defence analysts as Richard Pipes, Paul Nitze, Albert Wohlstetter and William Van Cleave started to make themselves heard about the policy undertaken by the Nixon administration with regard to the Soviet Union. All were confirmed neoconservatives.

Summer 1974 was the time in which opponents of Détente and arms limitation negotiations started their political and media assaults. As a matter of fact, it should be noted that it was a propitious time for the neoconservatives to start publicly and methodically condemning the official policy of the United States. Indeed, 1974 was a year that witnessed a sharp disenchantment and a start of depreciation of the American public opinion towards politicians and political life in general. Even if Détente and SALT had nothing to do with the domestic scandal of the Watergate and the Vietnam debacle, the Whitehouse – President Richard Nixon, his heir Gerald Ford and Henry Kissinger – and the intelligence community came under fire.

The Watergate scandal that had been polluting the United States public life for months led to the resignation of President Richard Nixon in August 1974. Besides, investigations made by the New York Times revealed that for several years the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had, in violation of its charter and of federal law, spied on American citizens. “Plainly unlawful” actions such as break-ins, wiretapping, and bugging were perpetrated by the Agency.¹ Adding to that, the wicked and incompetent role attributed to the CIA during the Vietnam War, all made that these two bodies were particularly vulnerable.

During that politically confused summer, Albert Wohlstetter chose to criticize the Defence Department and the Central Intelligence Agency on the subject of their estimations of the Soviet nuclear arsenal. He asserted that for a decade, the Pentagon and the intelligence analyses underestimated the real nature of the Soviet strength and threat. He detailed his arguments in a series of highly regarded journals as Foreign Policy, Strategic Review and the Walt Street Journal.² His arguments were in accord with the views of Richard Pipes (see Chapter Three) and the would-be Team B report. In addition, Paul Nitze who was member of the SALT negotiating team resigned and publicly backed the views of his friend Wohlstetter (views he had been holding in private for years). Despite responses from William Colby, the Director of the CIA at that time, that Wohlstetter oversimplified the complex record of intelligence

¹ Milton C. Cummings and David Wise, Democracy Under Pressure, 3rd edition, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1977, pp 548. And also Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, “Central Intelligence Agency,” article, Encarta Encyclopaedia CD-ROM, 2002, Microsoft Corporation.

² Anne Hessing Cahn, Killing Détente: the Right Attacks the CIA, op. cit. pp 11-13. See Albert Wohlstetter, "Is There a Strategic Arms Race?" Foreign Policy n°15, summer 1974, and "Clocking the Strategic Arms Race," Wall Street Journal, September 24, 1974.

assessments,¹ the debate had been publicly and academically launched and the the messy situation the United States government was in, in the troubling late 1974 did not arrange things.

4.4. The Jackson-Vanick Trade Amendment

According to Anne Hessing Cahn, a key factor that worsened the relations between the USA and the USSR and therefore started to undermine the policy of Détente occurred at the level of the American political scene in 1974.² It took place in the corridors of Capitol Hill. The offensive came from Democratic Senator Henry Jackson of Washington State and his aide Richard Perle who would later be member of negotiation team for arms control under the Reagan Administration. Richard Perle who was considered as the true initiator of the Jackson-Vanick amendment,³ is also a famous neoconservative and an influential “hawk” in the present George W. Bush administration.

In the early 1970s, the primary goal of Soviet policy was to succeed in attracting substantial United States capital investments and to import sophisticated American technology with the aim of stimulating the fading Soviet economy.⁴ The 1972 package agreements linked to arms limitation negotiations initiated by the American administration included some substantial trade agreements between the United States and the Soviet Union.

¹ Ibid, p. 15.

² Ibid, p. 5.

³ Raymond L. Garthoff, The Great Transition: American-Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War, Washington, D.C. Brookings Institution Press, 1994, p. 34.

⁴ Encarta Encyclopaedia, “1975: USSR,” archive article, Microsoft Encarta Encyclopaedia, 2002, Microsoft Corporation.

However, that same year, the Soviet Union imposed a kind of educational tax on would-be emigrants who received higher education in the USSR but wanted to leave the country. This measure was actually designed to combat the brain drain caused by growing emigration of the Soviet Jews and other members of the Russian intelligentsia to the West and Israel.¹

Condemning this Soviet domestic policy, Senator Henry Jackson found it necessary to add an amendment to the trade bill of 1974 then being discussed in Congress, under which “most-favoured-nation status”² would be denied to any country that restricted its citizens' emigration (understand here the Soviet Union).³ The Jackson-Vanick Amendment to the trade bill of 1974 met fierce opposition and denunciation from the USSR which saw in the amendment an interference in its domestic affairs. The United States' officials and especially Henry Kissinger – who criticized Jackson's attempts to sabotage Détente – found themselves in a delicate position regarding their commitments vis-à-vis their Soviet counterparts.

The Jackson-Vanick amendment was one of the first hitches which damaged the strategy of rapprochement with the Soviet Union.

4.5. 1976: Strains on Détente and Arms Control

1976 could be considered as the year in which the United States political and media scene witnessed the most contentious debate over foreign and defence policies. 1976 was an electoral year, and a convergence and

¹ Wikipedia Encyclopaedia, “Jackson-Vanick Amendment,” article, <http://www.wikipedia.org/>

² Most-favoured-nation status gives specific privileges to a country in its commercial relations with the United States.

³ Encarta Encyclopaedia, “1975: USSR,” archive article, op.cit.

accumulation of factors put President Gerald Ford and his State Secretary Henry Kissinger (and later the Carter administration) in a delicate position vis-à-vis their detractors over the policy of *Détente* and SALT.¹

The first notable element was the disillusionment of the majority of Americans over politics and politicians in general, and on the Nixon administration in particular, after the Watergate scandal and the pardon of President Gerald Ford (1974). The second element was the adverse opinion of the American society towards the scandals regarding unconstitutional activities of the Central Intelligence Agency. Then, there was the strong opposition within the Republican Party led by presidential candidate and staunch anti-*Détente* figure Ronald Reagan. An example of the huge political pressures exerted on President Ford was that by 1976, he decided that the word *Détente* itself should not be spoken publicly and he instructed his staff not to use the word.² Finally, the coup de grâce was a controversial classified competitive intelligence assessment of the Soviet military capabilities and strategic intentions: the “Team B report.” Its authors leaked it to the press a few weeks before the elections.

4.6. The Team B Episode

The controversial Team B report on the Soviet strategic objectives was the pinnacle of the rightists attack on the policy of *Détente*. The report of Team B was the fruit of an unprecedented intelligence community experiment in competitive analysis of the Soviet Union, its military capabilities as well as

¹ Encarta Encyclopedia, “1976: United States, Defense and the Campaign,” archive article, op. cit.

² Anne Hessing Cahn, “Team B: The Trillion Dollar Experiment, Part One,” the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, April 1993, p. 25.

its strategic intentions. Most hullabaloo came about the panel which constituted Team B, how it came to constitution, and what its findings were.

4.6.1. Constitution of the Team B Panel: Background and Members

Team B refers to a panel of outsiders – specialists who did not belong to the intelligence community – who were not satisfied with the successive National Intelligence Estimates¹ of the late 1960s to the early 1970s. All Team B members were committed neoconservatives or military men converging in views, and all would belong to the reactivated Committee on the Present Danger.

In 1975, foes of Détente and Arms Control inside and outside the administration pressed President Gerald Ford to order his director of the Central Intelligence Agency, William Colby, to allow external experts in the field of armament, defence and Soviet affairs to study the classified intelligence data on the USSR. They gave the pretext that such experiment would result in a more comprehensive assessment of the Soviet Union's strategic objectives. William Colby rejected it and claimed that it was not reasonable to believe that a panel of experts not used to handle classified information and inexperienced in the field of intelligence to make a “more thorough, comprehensive assessment of Soviet strategic capabilities...than the intelligence community can prepare.”² Enduring hard pressures from the right wing of the Republican party and the neoconservative web, President Ford

¹ National Intelligence Estimates or NIEs represent the collective judgment of the entire intelligence community (CIA, NSA, etc...). The United States decision makers base their national security policy and defence budgets on the general conclusions of the authoritative NIEs.

² Anne Hessing Cahn, “Team B: The Trillion Dollar Experiment, Part One,” op.cit., p. 24.

fired on November, 1, 1975 William Colby but also Defence Secretary James Schlesinger. The views of this latter on Détente were incompatible with that of the administration and Schlesinger's relations with State Secretary Henry Kissinger were exacerbating.¹ These two officials were replaced respectively by George H. Bush (who would later become Ronald Reagan's Vice-President) and Donald Rumsfeld.

Then, in 1976, a special body inside the Executive was to play a major role in the setting of Team B. Indeed, the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (PFIAB) was mainly constituted of hard-line neoconservative cold warriors² that all would also belong to the Committee on the Present Danger a few months later (see page 80). This body pressed George H. Bush to set up an "Intelligence Community Experiment in Competitive Analysis."³ This was an opportunity for the neoconservatives to refute the precedent assessments on the Soviet Union undertaken by the intelligence community. The analyses would be undertaken by two groups: a team 'A', belonging to the intelligence community, and Team B, constituted of external experts.⁴

The problem raised by experts in arms control Anne Hessing Cahn and Raymond Garthoff, and historian John Prados, and even mentioned in the introductory remarks of the Team B report, was that

¹ Jason Vest, "Darth Rumsfeld," The American Prospect, volume 12, issue 4, Feb. 26, 2001.

² Members of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (PFIAB) advised the United States' President on issues related to Intelligence and National Security. Among the members were William Casey (who would be director of Ronald Reagan's presidential campaign and Director of the CIA under his presidency), John Connally, John Foster, Clare Booth Luce, and physician Edward Teller (father of the Hydrogen Bomb).

³ Raymond Garthoff, "Estimating Soviet Military Intentions and Capabilities," in Watching the Bear: Essays on CIA's Analysis of the Soviet Union, Center for the Study of Intelligence, 2001. <http://www.ocdi.gov/csi/books/article05>

⁴ Members of Team B were historian Richard Pipes, defence analysts Paul Nitze, Paul Wolfowitz, William Van Cleave, Lt. Gen. Daniel Graham (co-chair of the American Security Council Foundation).

Members of Team B were deliberately selected from among experienced political and military analysts of Soviet affairs known to take a more **somber view** of the Soviet strategic threat than that accepted as the intelligence community's consensus.¹ (Emphasis added)

As maintained by Paul Warnke, Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and chief SALT negotiator in the Carter administration, the way members of Team B were selected and the method in which it conducted its assessments virtually predetermined the conclusions of its report.² Indeed, rather than including a diversity of views that would perhaps lead to an impartial and dispassionate analysis of the Soviet threat, all of the Team B panel were unfaltering neoconservatives. The analysis of Team B was thus goaded more by ideological considerations and one-sided interests than by a desire to reach an unbiased and independent assessment of the Soviet Union's intentions and capabilities. As a matter of fact, Richard Perle played an active role in the selection of the panel and recommended Paul Wolfowitz to Richard Pipes, the team leader.³

The Team B panel was set in summer 1976, in the midst of the presidential campaign, and submitted their classified report in October 1976. Though a top secret classified document, its findings were leaked to the press

¹ Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), NIO M 76-021J, Intelligence Community Experiment in Competitive Analysis: Soviet Strategic Objectives, An Alternate View: Report of Team "B," December 1976 (declassified on September 16, 1992) p. iii.

² Paul Warnke, review of Killing Détente, the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, Volume 55, N° 1, January/February 1999.

³ Sourcewatch, article, "Richard Pipes," Center for Media and Democracy, 17 Jan. 2005, <http://www.prwatch.org/>.

a few weeks before the presidential elections.¹ Among the Team B panel were William Van Cleave and Paul Nitze.

4.6.2. Team B's Evaluation of Soviet Strength and Objectives

The report of Team B expressed the pre-conceived opinions of its authors towards the nature of the Soviet threat (see Paul Nitze and Richard Pipes, Chapter Three). In its atypical assessment of Soviet military capabilities and strategic objectives, the Team B panel strongly criticized the intelligence community consensus and asserted that the previous National Intelligence Estimates (NIE) had gravely and dangerously failed in evaluating Soviet Strategic objectives² (as mentioned previously, Albert Wohlstetter curiously made the same assertions two years earlier). The report argued that earlier NIEs had misperceived the motivations of the Soviet strategic programmes and “thereby tended consistently to underestimate their intensity, scope and implicit threat.”³

The report explained these deficiencies by stipulating that the CIA experts based on the conceptual flaw of “mirror-imaging” while analysing Soviet intentions. “Mirror-imaging” implied that Americans attributed to Russian policy makers such actions and behaviours as might be expected from their U.S. counterparts under similar circumstances.⁴ By raising such observation the Team B panel suggested an opposition between American and

¹ See article of David Binder, “New CIA Estimate Finds Soviets Seek Superiority in Arms,” New York Times, 26 Dec. 1976.

² Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Intelligence Community Experiment in Competitive Analysis: Soviet Strategic Objectives, An Alternate View: Report of Team "B," op.cit., p. 1.

³ Ibid, pp 1 - 2.

⁴ Ibid, pp 1, 9 and 10.

Soviet values and culture that were goading Soviet thinking to behave aggressively. The report thus argued that nuclear power was perceived by Soviet strategic thinking not simply in serving mutual deterrence but in “negating the enemy’s ability to survive.”¹ Furthermore, Team B contended that the USSR did its utmost for strategic superiority and that it “would be less deterred than [the United States] from initiating the use of nuclear weapons.”²

Regarding its military objectives the Team B panel concluded that

[T]he Soviets may well expect to achieve a degree of military superiority which would permit a dramatically more aggressive pursuit of their hegemonial objectives, including direct military challenges to Western vital interests...³

The Team B report laid the intellectual and academic foundations upon which a constellation of neoconservative and militarist pressure groups rested. It became the expertise used to question and to attack the policy of Détente and arms control.

4.7. The Neoconservative Web

To undermine the policy of Détente, SALT negotiations and to put huge pressure on the American policymakers, the neoconservatives allied with the American right and the military-industrial complex to build and assemble a network of intellectual and political pressure groups. Some of these major groups were the Coalition for a Democratic Majority (CDM), the Committee

¹ Ibid, p. 42.

² Ibid, p. 6.

³ Ibid, p. 47.

for a Free World, the Committee on the Present Danger (CPD) and the American Security Council (ASC).

4.7.1. The Coalition for a Democratic Majority

It is undeniable that the Coalition for a Democratic Majority has its roots in the neoconservative intellectual movement. Its members belonged to the newly emerged current. Indeed, Ben Wattenberg and Irving Kristol were selected to co-chair the coalition, Samuel Huntington, Richard Pipes, Nathan Glazer, James Woolsey, Seymour Lipset, Michael Novack, Jeane Kirkpatrick and many others belonged to that coalition.

The Coalition was formed in 1972 by Democratic Senator Henry Jackson who led the conservative wing of the Democratic Party. It emphasized the promotion of democracy, anticommunism, and a global interventionist foreign policy. The Coalition for a Democratic Majority therefore asked for a strong military and promoted the concept of ‘peace through strength.’¹ The CDM also helped to reactivate the Committee on the Present Danger (CPD), a lobby group for containment militarism. Together with the Committee on the Present Danger, the broader goal of the CDM was to undermine Détente and to restore containment militarism at the core of the United States’ foreign policy. The CDM argued that the United States had to develop a powerful national defence and a foreign policy of confrontation to what it called “totalitarianism and repression.” In addition, the neoconservatives belonging to the Coalition conveyed neoconservative principles at that time i.e. they

¹ The concept of “Peace Through Strength” is still advocated nowadays by neoconservative think tanks such as the “Project for a New American Century,” the “Center for Security Policy,” the “Hoover Institution,” or the “American Enterprise Institute.” See websites of these think tanks.

stressed that communism was a “great evil” and that the United States had a moral obligation to eradicate it and foster democracy throughout the world.¹ The coalition had seminal private and government connections. Its members were full participants in other pressure groups and held key positions in the American political and bureaucratic spheres.²

4.7.2. The Reactivation of the Committee on the Present Danger

The controversial report of Team B, together with the election of Democratic Jimmy Carter in November 1976 pushed the neoconservative – militarist coalition to reactivate the famous Committee on the Present Danger (CPD). This lobby group was perhaps the most ardent and the most efficient opponent of Détente and arms limitations talks.

The Committee on the Present Danger (or CPD II) which was set up in November 1976 was in fact a reincarnation of the first version of the Committee on the Present Danger, founded after the elaboration of the famous NSC-68 in 1950.³ At that time, Paul Nitze co-founded the Committee to alert the American people on the “year of maximum danger” for the USA: 1954.⁴

¹ This idea of an Evil to eradicate and to promote democracy is nowadays put forward by the neoconservatives to sell the War on Iraq, to wage war on “radical Islam” or “Islamofascism” and to build a “Great Middle East.” See quotes of prominent neoconservatives in the CPD III website, <http://www.fightingterror.org/>

² [International Relations Center](http://www.irc-online.org/), “Group Watch: Coalition for a Democratic Majority,” [Group Watch: Profiles of U.S. Private Organizations and Churches](http://www.irc-online.org/), <http://www.irc-online.org/>

³ In July 2004, the Committee on the Present Danger III (CPD III) was once again reactivated by neoconservative politicians, academics and intellectuals to fight and win what they see as World War IV against “militant” or “radical” Islam. Among the members of CPD III, we can notice Norman Podhoretz, Senator Joe Lieberman (2004 Vice-presidential candidate), Michael Novak, Jeane Kirkpatrick, James Woolsey, William Van Cleave, Daniel Pipes (son of Richard Pipes) and Ben Wattenberg, i.e. the same members of the 1970s CPD II plus a new generation of neoconservatives. See <http://www.fightingterror.org/>

⁴ Paul Nitze as quoted in Richard Crockatt, *The Fifty Years War*, op.cit. p. 262.

Many constituents of the Coalition for a Democratic Majority, of the American Security Council and the entire Team B panel were co-founders or full members of CPD II. Neoconservative figures such as William Bennet, Paul Nitze, Michael Novak, Max Kampelman, Jeane Kirkpatrick, Irving Kristol, William Casey (Ronald Reagan's Director of the 1980's presidential campaign and later Director of the CIA), William Van Cleave, Richard Pipes, Richard Perle and Norman Podhoretz belonged to the Committee. Both Team B and the Committee on the Present Danger housed in the offices of the Coalition for a Democratic Majority.¹

The Committee on the Present Danger included in its ideology a strong anti-Soviet policy and a strategy which promoted growth and expansion. During Jimmy Carter's term of office (1977-1980), the CPD presented an alternative to the project of cooperative imperialism put forth by the Trilateral Commission.² Echoing the views of the neoconservatives, the CPD rather promoted an imperial, unilateralist philosophy of global hegemony through military strength. Other proponents of the CPD's vision are the American Security Council (ASC) and its affiliated congressional lobby group, the Coalition for Peace Through Strength (CPTS).

Advocate of a global nuclear superiority, the CPD also contributed to the highest degree to create the myth of U.S. nuclear inferiority and the concept of "windows of vulnerability" in the late 1970s. In its first policy

¹ Raymond L. Garthoff, *A Journey Through the Cold War: a Memoir of Containment and Coexistence*, Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 2001, p. 328. And International Relations Center, "Group Watch: Committee on the Present Danger," Group Watch: Profiles of U.S. Private Organizations and Churches, <http://www.irc-online.org/>

² Trilateralists or the Trilateral Commission was a private group that sought to promote American, European and Japanese political and economic cooperation in order to weaken the Communist block. One of the major advocates of the trilateral thinking was Zbigniew Brzezinski, Jimmy Carter's National Security Adviser.

statement, a few days after the 1976 presidential election (and the victory of Jimmy Carter), the Committee stated that

The principal threat to our nation, to world peace, and to the cause of human freedom is the Soviet drive for dominance based upon an unparalleled military build-up.¹

The Committee also asserted that the United States was “in a period of a danger”² and that danger was increasing. Still According to the CPD, the Soviet Union designed its nuclear forces to “fight, survive and win an all-out nuclear war should it occur.”³ This is why the CPD expressed longstanding opposition to all types of arms control. Indeed, founding member William Van Cleave criticized arms control arguing that it had dreadful effects on the United States military programs and on its ability to deal with the Soviet Union.⁴

According to philosopher Edward Tabor Linenthal, the Committee functioned as a “prophetic minority” who wanted to alert and warn Americans of the “present danger” personified by the Soviet Union. It contributed mightily to the creation and persistence of Cold War orthodoxy.⁵ Indeed, meeting Leo Strauss’ theories on politics, the Committee on the Present Danger affirmed that the nation was plagued by a “crisis of conviction” (views expressed by Norman Podhoretz) and called for a revival of “certain national virtues.” The raison d’être of the Committee was thus, still according Edward

¹ The Committee on the Present Danger as quoted in Paul Warnke, review of Killing Détente, op.cit.

² Committee on the Present Danger as quoted in Edward Tabor Linenthal, “War and Sacrifice in the Nuclear Age: the Committee on the Present Danger and the Renewal of Martial Enthusiasm,” op. cit., p. 25.

³ Committee on the Present Danger, quoted in Anne Hessing Cahn, Killing Détente, op.cit, p. 29.

⁴ International Relations Center, “Group Watch: Committee on the Present Danger,” op.cit.

⁵ Edward Tabor Linenthal, “War and Sacrifice in the Nuclear Age: the Committee on the Present Danger and the Renewal of Martial Enthusiasm,” op.cit., p. 21.

Tabor Linenthal, to create a milieu of national crisis that would spur Americans' nationalism and mobilize them against a foreign "present danger."¹

4.7.3. The Role of the American Security Council

According to the American Security Council (ASC) website, the role of this lobby group which had been founded in 1955 was considerable in the anti-Détente and anti-SALT campaigns of the 1970s.² Like the Coalition for a Democratic Majority and the Committee on the Present Danger, the fundamental principle of the American Security Council was that communism and the Soviet Union were "the greatest evils in the world,"³ and that the Russians were making an all out effort for military superiority aiming at world domination. The ASC promoted then a policy intended to achieve an overall American military superiority and a strong opposition to defence budget reductions and to all arms control agreements.⁴ Another objective of the American Security Council was "public education to change the majority opinion when it was in contrast to our national security interests."⁵

The ASC comprises leaders from the military-industrial complex and high-ranking retired military people. In order to influence the United States' policy, the ASC initiated the "Coalition for Peace Through Strength" (CPTS) in 1978. This sub-coalition was mainly composed of private organizations,

¹ Ibid.

² Thomas H. Moorer, The 1970s: The Decade of Disarmament, op.cit.

³ American Security Council as quoted in International Relations Center, "Group Watch: American Security Council," Group Watch: Profiles of U.S. Private Organizations and Churches, <http://www.irc-online.org/>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Thomas Moorer, The 1970s: the Decade of Disarmament, op.cit.

members of Congress, and private individuals actively working to accomplish the agenda of the ASC. The ASC allied with the very neoconservative Committee on the Present Danger to work in the realm of national security. Their main assertions were that the United States' defence capabilities were far behind the Soviet ones.

The ASC contended that defence policies under Presidents Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter were ones of “disarmament” in front of a Soviet gigantic military build-up. It hence undertook massive lobbying and media campaigns such as broadcasting films in American networks like The Price of Peace & Freedom (1976) and The SALT Syndrome, to demonstrate

[H]ow severely the United States had disarmed itself over the past seventeen years, at the same time the Soviet Union was engaged in a massive armaments program.¹

Anne Hessing Cahn notes that The Price of Peace & Freedom was aired 180 times on television stations around the United States.² And according to the ASC, The SALT Syndrome was broadcast 2,300 times, reaching an estimated total audience of 100 million persons. The American Security Council also published countless reports and assessments on the Soviet military strength in comparison with the United States alleged inferiority. A single but significant example was a report titled An Analysis of SALT II, authored by the Coalition for Peace Through Strength. According to that report, SALT would “lock the United States into strategic inferiority” and would make the American people

¹ Ibid.

² Anne Hessing Cahn, Killing Détente, op.cit. p. 29.

hostages under the doctrine of Mutual Assured Destruction as it was unverifiable and was the “symbol of phased surrender by the United States.”¹

Like the Committee on the Present Danger, the American Security Council and its spearhead the Coalition for Peace Through Strength, saw in Ronald Reagan the man who could take “decisive initiative to reverse [Détente and SALT] fatal trends.”²

4.8. Conclusion

From the fall of pragmatic President Richard Nixon in August 1974 to the arrival of dogmatic President Ronald Reagan in 1981, the neoconservative – militarist coalition undertook a significant and successful strategy to undermine Détente and arms limitation talks between the United States and the USSR.

Creating influential pressure groups, manoeuvring in the different circles such as political lobbying (the Jackson-Vanick Amendment and the role of the President’s Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board in the setting of Team B as an intelligence experiment in competitive analysis were significant), academic debates and media campaigns, the advocates of high defence spending and a policy of confrontation with the Soviet Union were successful in putting huge pressure on the United States’ officials of the period. They did this by reversing the initial attitude of the public opinion toward foreign and defence policy (see Figure 1, page 65).

¹ Thomas H. Moorer, The 1970s: the Decade of Disarmament, op.cit.

² Ibid.

The stratagem used and the arguments put forwards were striking. The neoconservatives were able to choose the right time to make their voice heard and the right targets to attack or to reshape. They were also able to make use of the domestic malaise of the mid-1970s, the Americans' dissatisfaction with the policy makers of that time. Even if the discontent concerned the politicians' misconducts regarding Vietnam and the Watergate Scandal and in no way the policy of Détente and SALT, the neoconservative – militarist alliance were able to confuse the 1970s political environment, to create a national perception of imminent threat and to nurture an atmosphere of suspicion regarding the United States officials and their different policies.

However, these neoconservatives gave arguments against Détente and arms control that were somehow groundless or proved to be exaggerated. This is going to be the concern of the following chapter of this dissertation.

Chapter Five:

Evaluation of the Neoconservatives Case

5.1. Introduction

After having examined the political ideology of the neoconservative movement, and the reason for which they opposed and attacked the official foreign policy of the United States of America in the 1970s, this chapter is intended to demonstrate that the allegations put forwards by the neoconservative-militarist coalition against Détente and SALT were exaggerated views.

This part of the dissertation presents the analyses of the United States officials and the views of some American scholars on the nature of the Soviet threat. These views contradict the assertions of the Committee on the Present Danger, the views of the American Security Council and the attitude of the hawks of the 1970s American political scene. Finally, this chapter also formulates some criticism regarding the neoconservative case against the policy of Détente.

5.2. The Nature of the Soviet Military Capabilities

As mentioned in Chapter One, one of the American objectives of strategic arms limitation talks was to confer the USSR a kind of “perceived” nuclear parity. This was mainly due to the evident Soviet deficiencies in military technology. Indeed, by SALT II, in 1979, the Soviet nuclear arsenal was broadly inferior to the American one and less technologically developed.

A secret CIA analysis reported in 1973 that the USSR principal military objectives were far from being hostile. Actually, Soviet leaders' main concern was to protect the security of the homeland, deter nuclear war and "project an image of military strength." In fact, the report recognized that there was good evidence that the Soviets did not consider a sudden first strike to be a "workable strategy." Of course, Russians showed unwillingness to remain in a position of marked strategic inferiority relative to the United States.¹ But this did not prevent them from acknowledging that they desired to limit competition in "an area where the United States had significant advantages and stood to lengthen its lead."² They therefore privileged a doctrine based on retaliation rather than the doctrine of pre-emption³ suggested by the neoconservatives. Even as regards the Soviet perception of a possible United States threat, the analyses stated that the USSR did not anticipate any sudden first strike by the United States.⁴

Furthermore, at the time where neoconservatives and militarists were criticizing Détente and SALT, National Intelligence Estimates (NIE) in 1975 asserted that the USSR did not have the capability to avoid an American devastating retaliation should a nuclear conflict occur.⁵ The NIE also affirmed that despite the Soviets' increasing military capabilities, their efforts to improve the quality of their arsenals and their efforts in research and

¹ Central Intelligence Agency, SR RP73-1, June 1973, Soviet Nuclear Doctrine: Concepts of Intercontinental and Theater War, p. 3, Center for Studies in Intelligence, <http://www.cia.gov/csi/books/princeton/>

² Ibid, p. 4.

³ Ibid, p. 7.

⁴ Ibid, p. 6.

⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, NIE 11-3/8-75, Soviet Forces for Intercontinental Conflict Through the mid-1980s, Nov. 17, 1975, pp 2-3, <http://www.foia.cia.gov/>

development, “it was possible but unlikely” for the USSR to acquire more strategic power than the one available in American hands.¹

Moreover, and despite the acknowledgement of the huge nuclear potential of the Soviet Union, this latter, as Jerome B. Wiesner – a former Science Adviser to President Kennedy and former President of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology – pointed out, would not have been able to threaten the United States’ strategic force.

Taking Paul Nitze at his word, and referring to a 1978 study prepared for the Congressional Budget Office, Jerome B. Wiesner gave detailed statistics on American and Russian capabilities in the early 1980s. Taking into consideration all parameters such as the number of warheads in possession of each side, their mega tonnage, the number of land-based, sea-based missiles, the ones carried by bombers, the reliability of these arsenals, the reliability of the command-and-control systems (command and coordination within the American and Soviet command structures), and scheming first-strike and second-strike scenarios, he categorically rejected the possibility for the USSR to embark on a nuclear confrontation with the United States. According to him, deterrence actually worked since “under present technology, either side could devastate the other after enduring any conceivable attack.” Jerome Wiesner also asserted that even if the Soviet Union could carry out the worst attack that the alarmist have been able to imagine, the USA would not only

¹ Ibid.

retain its relatively strong position, but “would have enough nuclear weapons to destroy several Soviet Unions.”¹

Furthermore, David Hafemeister of the California Polytechnic State University examined the General Accounting Office report of 1993² and noted that the 1980s American decision takers (mainly neoconservatives under the Reagan administration) systematically over-estimated Soviet strategic forces and underestimated the performance of the American defence systems and especially the nuclear triad, the capstone of American nuclear deterrence. Hafemeister believes that this exaggeration was mainly due to systematic exaggerated worst-case assessments. David Hafemeister accurately criticizes this method of analysis in the sense that it raises a number of questions, among them how the Congress would know what to believe (when policy makers do exaggerate, and when they do objectively and reasonably assess the enemy’s intentions or capabilities) when appropriating hundreds of billions of dollars. Undeniably, to Hafemeister, the necessity to restrain the psychological and economic drive for exaggeration is vital since it is not economically viable for a country to always use worst-case analyses.³

David Hafemeister thus viewed that worst-case assessments of Soviet military capabilities as stipulated by the neoconservatives – Wohlstetter, Nitze and Pipes – endangered the international situation of the late 1970s and early

¹ Jerome B. Wiesner, “Russian and American Capabilities,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 250, N°1, July 1982, pp 50-53.

²The General Accounting Office (GAO) is an independent agency of the U.S. government. Its function is to audit federal expenditures, to advise and assist the United States Congress in the legislative administration of public funds. The Office provides independent examination and expertise of spending operations and programs. It generally improves efficiency and economy in the government. Its responsibilities extend beyond the national level whenever federal funds are involved. See Encarta Encyclopaedia, “General Accounting Office,” article, *Encarta CD-ROM*, 2001, Microsoft Corporation.

³ David Hafemeister, “Reflections on the GAO Triad Report on the Nuclear Triad,” op.cit.

1980s. He noted that this exaggeration exacerbated the psychological aspect of the Cold War and undermined rational logical behaviours.¹

5.3. The Team B Report: a Criticism

In retrospect, the reality was that the CIA's estimates of the 1960s and 1970s, which were described as too low by the neoconservatives–militarist circles and Team B, were gross exaggerations. The claims of the neoconservatives, the report of the Team B panel and the warnings of Norman Podhoretz or Ronald Reagan were perhaps overstatements of the actual capabilities and intentions of the decaying Soviet Union.

Raymond Garthoff – an authority in arms control – for example, argued that Richard Pipes, Paul Nitze, William Van Cleave and Paul Wolfowitz had imposed via Team B an “unjustified” and “ominous picture” of Soviet capabilities and intentions. To Garthoff, the authors of the report were more concerned with pushing their hard-line views than with improving the estimating process. He affirmed that Team B's assessments were gratuitous and without foundation. According to Garthoff, Soviet strategic capabilities were unable to surpass the United States' strategic forces, and the Soviet Union was incapable of exceeding any requirement for mutual deterrence.²

In its report, Team B undertook assessments of the Soviet military capabilities which proved to be almost wrong and overstated. From the number of bombers the USSR would acquire by the mid 1980s, the quantity of

¹ Ibid.

² Raymond Garthoff, “Estimating Soviet Military Intentions and Capabilities,” in Watching the Bear: Essays on CIA's Analysis of the Soviet Union, Center for the Study of Intelligence, 2001, www.odci.gov/csi/books/watchingthebear/article05

ICBMs (Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles) and their efficiency, to the Soviet antiballistic missile systems and the possibility of developing antisubmarine warfare capabilities, all the predictions of Team B proved to be unfounded and exaggerated.¹ In their collective report, Pipes, Nitze, Wolfowitz and their fellows raised concerns over looming threats that actually did not occur.

Another scholar who criticized the findings of Team B was Richard Lehman – Director of the Office of Strategic Research from 1975 to 1976, Deputy to the Director of Central Intelligence for National Intelligence from 1976 to 1977, and Chairman of the National Intelligence Council from 1979 to 1981. As a privileged witness of the Team B exercise, he noted that the experiment in competitive analysis was a “disaster.” He also stated that the report of Team B was an “inflammatory document ...full of things that were nonsense but which sounded good” voluntarily leaked to the press during the 1976 presidential campaign.²

Not only did scholars such as Anne Hessing Cahn, Paul Warnke, Richard Lehman or Raymond Garthoff criticize the form and the content of the Team B experiment, but governmental committees as well unveiled the drawbacks of its analyses.

In 1978, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence of the United States Congress also noted that the Team B reflected the views of only one fragment of the spectrum of opinion. The findings of the Select Committee also remarked that the Team B report wrongly attributed to the intelligence agencies the role of “doves,” when they in fact represented a broad range of

¹ Ibid.

² Richard Lehman, “Mr. Current Intelligence: an Interview with Richard Lehman,” interview by Richard Kovar, *Studies in Intelligence*, N° 9, summer 2000, pp 51-63.

views. Another criticism made by that same committee was the fact that inexperienced analysts of Team A – the intelligence community panel – could evidently not confront the views of “prestigious and articulate B Team authorities” such as Paul Nitze, William Van Cleave or Richard Pipes.¹

The Senate Select Committee concluded that the Team B exercise did not meet the requirements it had been set for. It declared that Team B did not perform a precise and objective assessment of the Soviet capabilities and intentions. The committee also remarked that the Team B report did not express the best and most broadly representative expert knowledge possible.²

Ten years later, in 1989, the Central Intelligence Agency published an internal review of the threat assessments on the Soviet Union from 1974 to 1986. The review concluded that the Soviet threat had been “substantially overestimated” every year.³

5.4. The Soviet Military Doctrine versus Soviet Political Behaviour

Regarding the Soviet military doctrine, some arguments exposed by Jonathan R. Adelman – Professor at the University of Denver – contradicted the conclusions of Richard Pipes (see pages 54-56). In an analysis of the evolution of the Soviet military doctrine during the Cold War era, Adelman pointed out that with the prospect of an eventual war, military men would be by far overshadowed by civilian party leaders with their own political agenda.

¹ United States Congress, Senate, Report of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Subcommittee on Collection, Production, and Quality, The National Intelligence Estimates A-B Team Episode Concerning Soviet Strategic Capability and Objectives, February 16, 1978, Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1978.

² Ibid.

³ Lawrence Korb, “The Real Problem with Intelligence,” the Defense Monitor, Volume XXXIII, N° 4, July/August 2004, Center for Defense Information, Washington D.C, pp 1 and 7. And Fareed Zakaria, “Exaggerating the Threats,” Newsweek, U.S edition, June, 16, 2003.

Although the Soviet military had significant contribution on the technical ground, the ultimate decisions were taken by the political leadership.¹

Despite occasional preoccupying declarations of Russian officials, Jonathan Adelman asserted that the record of Soviet behaviour had shown that political leaders had been very cautious and conservative when dealing with crises involving a possible American response. Since the end of World War II, Soviet leaders had shown a clear aversion to the high degree of risk-taking presupposed in the Soviet military doctrine. Jonathan Adelman supported his view with some significant cases where the Soviet Union intervened and others where it did not. He stated for example that Soviet leaders privileged the maintenance of their spheres of influence, intervening in Hungary (in 1956) and in Czechoslovakia (in 1968). Adelman noted that these actions represented minimal risk of confrontation with the United States since, as said above, they were crises within the Soviet sphere of influence. Only once did the Soviet Union use force outside the Warsaw Pact², in Afghanistan in 1979, where and when there was no chance of American military response.

On the other hand, as Adelman noted, in crises such as the extremely unstable Cuban crisis of 1962, the Soviet Union backed away from confrontation; and the Arab-Israeli War in 1973, the Soviet Union passively envisaged military intervention but did not proceed to carry it out. Thus, the overall record of the Soviet behaviour when confronted to an international

¹ Jonathan R. Adelman, "The Evolution of Soviet Military Doctrine, 1945-84," [Air University Review](#), March-April 1985.

² The Warsaw Pact was a military alliance of European Communist nations, dominated by the former Soviet Union. It was signed on May 14, 1955. It enacted to counter the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

crisis was far more unadventurous and cautious than the tone of its doctrinal pronouncements.¹

Other historians did not share Richard Pipes thesis about the Soviet military doctrine. When Pipes considered that the Soviets had manifest hostile intentions (see Richard Pipes, Chapter Three), historians such as Raymond Garthoff, David Holloway and Benjamin Lambeth concurred in having an opposite view. They differed greatly from Pipes' thesis that the Soviet Union harboured malignant intent. They gave other explanations and affirmed that the reference in Soviet writings to victory of communism over capitalism and 'war as an instrument of policy' did not reflect the actual Soviet military doctrine and intentions. These scholars maintained that Soviet ideology was mainly based on propaganda. The statements referring to 'victory' or 'war as the continuation of politics' were therefore basically intended for indoctrination and boosting the morale of the armed forces and the Soviet society.²

Furthermore, Garthoff and Holloway argued that the main purpose of the Soviet leaders was to seek to prevent any nuclear confrontation with the Americans. According to Garthoff and Holloway, Soviet leaders viewed that their ideology and objectives of the victory of Communism over Capitalism could not be achieved should a nuclear conflict occur between the two superpowers. This explained the Soviets' wish to deploy forces so as to deter the United States. As explained by international relations expert Alan Collins, the Soviet Union regarded the preparation for waging war as a means of

¹ Jonathan R. Adelman, "The Evolution of Soviet Military Doctrine, 1945-84," op.cit.

² Alan Collins, The Security Dilemma and the End of the Cold War, op.cit, pp 116-119.

preventing, or deterring, an enemy from initiating hostilities. The need to provide and/or project a force of enough magnitude so as to appear overwhelming was therefore the foundation of the Soviet concept of deterrence.¹

5.5. Soviet Bellicose Intentions Versus Soviet Economic Problems

Economic evidence also contradicted the idea that the Soviet Union was capable or had the intention to come into armed conflict with the United States. Indeed, it was not rational that a country getting dramatic and aggravating oil troubles, and suffering from impeding and intensifying energy crises² to reasonably believe in waging a war that would exacerbate its situation. A significant example is an economic report authored by the CIA in 1977. It described the Soviet Union's dramatic economic problems that would intensify in the 1980s.³ Even though the report suggested that these heavy economic constraints would not affect military programmes,⁴ the prospect of a Soviet Union having hostile behaviours and proceeding with a first-strike doctrine toward the United States, and at the same time seeking grains, equipment, technology and long-term credit from the West and especially the United States – as the report indicated – was visibly inconsistent.

¹ Op.cit.

² Central Intelligence Agency, Economic Report, ER 77-10147, Intelligence Memorandum, The Impending Soviet Oil Crisis, March 1977, Center for the Study of Intelligence, 2001.
<http://www.cia.gov/csi/books/princeton/>

³ Central Intelligence Agency, Economic Report, ER 77-10436U. Soviet Economic Problems and Prospects, July 1977, Center for the Study of Intelligence, 2001.
<http://www.cia.gov/csi/books/princeton/>

⁴ Ibid.

5.6. The Neoconservative Case Against Détente: a Criticism

To my opinion, the neoconservative arguments and attitude towards the Soviet Union meet some inconsistencies. The first questions the substance of their view and the second challenges their method.

The neoconservative claim that the Soviet Union constituted the “present danger;” that it had no interest in Détente and it was in fact arming, together with the neoconservative urge for a massive development of the United States military forces present some inconsistency. One of the questions that were posed was whether the neoconservatives really believed in a Soviet military superiority and imminent threat.

In the 1970s, logic held that the renouncement of Détente and SALT would have exacerbated American-Soviet relations. This would have encouraged the then USSR to pursue and increase the development of its military capabilities. If we rely on the neoconservative claim that the Soviets had an aggressive military doctrine, hostile objectives towards the United States coupled with an “unparalleled military build up,” it would have been foolish for American policy makers to leave the USSR free of any arms control agreement. In addition, the media campaigns and public academic debates on strategic issues in the United States domestic scene might have fuelled Russian distrust and suspicion. On the basis of the neoconservative analysis of the Soviet Union, neoconservatives’ demands and policy during the first Reagan Administration would have been more likely to end with a conflict (perhaps nuclear) between the two superpowers. History taught us that it was not the case. Not only was the USSR capable and willing to enter into conflict

with the USA, but it collapsed within a decade after the neoconservatives raised the sceptre of Soviet hegemonic expansion.

The main argument asserted by the neoconservatives afterwards i.e. in the 1990s, was that their hard line stance helped defeat the USSR. The problem is that at that time, they did not have the same discourse. In the 1970s, they argued that the Soviet Union was on the verge of World domination. How could they – after claiming that the Soviet Union was militarily superior and aggressively minded – ask for a confrontation that would have led to nuclear holocaust? The question seems amazing.

Basing on the principle that men such as Paul Nitze, Richard Pipes, William Van Cleave were experts and far from being novices, how could they actually think at that time that the Soviet Union was militarily superior, that it constituted a grave menace to the United States security and that it had inherently hostile objectives, and at the same time asked for measures that could have aggravated relations and endangered international stability? Since the renouncement of Détente and an increase of the US nuclear capabilities might have fed the perception of insecurity of the Soviets and amplified the security dilemma the two superpowers were in for more than three decades and therefore more risks of armed conflict. If the Soviet Union constituted an actual danger, its demonization by the Reagan administration and the 1980s military build up theorized and requested by the neoconservatives was an extremely dangerous game.

A plausible explanation was that these neoconservative strategic thinkers and intellectuals were probably aware of the true situation the Soviet Union was in. It was a country full of internal problems, impeded by social

and economic difficulties. Although the USSR had impressive military capabilities, it was unable to exceed the United States' force and thus to threaten the strategic balance. Furthermore, at that time, it was being defeated by its own economic contradictions and ideology, and incapable of sustaining its international ambitions. In the late 1970s, the USSR was a country on the verge of collapse.

That was therefore the opportunity for the anti-communist coalition to trap the Soviet Union into a renewed and economically unviable spiralling arms race. However, for the American public opinion a weak Soviet Union would have meant unacceptable and groundless increase in military expenditures.

This is why neoconservatives mainly relied on the Leo Strauss' principle that noble lies are sometimes necessary to obtain the consent of an ignorant public opinion and to sustain national mobilization behind the elites. They therefore introduced the notion of a "present danger." Furthermore, while in power in the 1980s, Ronald Reagan, and behind him the neoconservative machinery, made use of the different executive bodies to reactivate and intensify the American-Soviet antagonism. Even the prestigious Encarta Encyclopaedia states that, in the early 1980s, the CIA under William Casey (who naturally belonged to the Committee on the Present Danger) created reports that exaggerated the economic and military threat presented by the Soviet Union. These distorted estimates helped Ronald Reagan to undertake a massive military build up.¹

¹ Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, "Central Intelligence Agency," article, Encarta Encyclopaedia CD-ROM, op.cit.

5.7. Conclusion

By the end of the Cold War, it became clear that the gigantic military build up and the immense increases in military expenditures realized by the Reagan administration (see Figure 2, page 67) under the pretext of an imminent and growing Soviet danger was groundless. In the 1980s, that danger never materialized.

Post-Cold War analyses corroborated most National Intelligence Estimates of the late 1960s and 1970s which described the USSR as a country which was benefiting from Détente. In addition, despite the USSR's imposing nuclear arsenal and wishes to improve its military capabilities, the Soviet Union was a country having serious economic and social problems. They also revealed that the Soviets neither had the capability nor intended to pursue an aggressive policy toward the United States.

Therefore, the 1970s neoconservatives' campaign against Détente and arms control perhaps aimed more at creating an atmosphere of national fear that would allow the resurgence of the cold war confrontation, and not because of the potential threat the former Soviet Union constituted.

General Conclusion

“If you forget history you will believe anything”¹

In the 1970s, the succeeding American administrations followed the path of Détente and Strategic Arms Limitation Talks. To the American policy makers of that period, a changing world needed a change of policy. The keywords of that new policy were realism and pragmatism. Therefore, they implemented Containment through diplomatic and economic means. The result was a series of treaties and a growing economic and scientific cooperation between the two blocks. Political and ideological rivalry persisted but nuclear competition slowed down and the risk of confrontation moved away.

That was not the view of a new emerging political current, the neoconservatives. These latter wanted to maintain a strategy of confrontation, an interventionist tough foreign policy in order to promote an American global hegemony, based on a colossal military build up.

With a public opinion meticulously and methodically conditioned to back an increase in defence spending under the pretext of a growing Soviet danger, and enormous pressures on the decision takers, the neoconservatives were able, in half a decade, to reverse the course of the official foreign and defence policies of the United States.

¹ Howard Zinn, War and Terrorism, Seven Stories Press, 2002, p. 53.

Relying on the teachings of the philosopher Leo Strauss, the neoconservatives set in motion a strategy aiming at undermining the 1970s American foreign policy of Détente, at re-establishing the Cold War orthodoxy and the United States-Soviet confrontation of the late 1940s and 1950s. Splitting from the American traditional Left they once belonged to, and from a Democratic Party they viewed as being captured by the dovish liberals of the New Left, the neoconservatives moved rightward to ally with the traditional but isolated cold warriors of the Republican Party.

Emphasizing on the United States' inescapable mission to lead the world, they did not accept the realistic vision of an American restraint in foreign affairs after the Vietnam War. They further accepted neither the reduction of defence spending following the SALT Treaty of 1972, nor the SALT II negotiations that were underway.

As vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, the neoconservatives viewed it as the Evil the United States must put an end to. Considered as dictatorial, oppressive, immoral and far from being democratic, the USSR did not deserve any rapprochement with the United States since an easing of tensions would, according to the neoconservatives, only benefit the Communist block and encourage its expansionist policy. The neoconservatives also considered Détente as an obstacle to the imperial role of the United States; an imperial role that could be achieved only by means of an increase of the military spending.

In the 1970s, the policy of Détente and the SALT process were somehow creating an international stability and averted the danger of a nuclear war. Hence, the argument of a dictatorial and oppressive communist ideology,

although somehow valid, could not reverse a foreign policy based on Real Politick, and backed by a large portion of the American public opinion in the first half of the 1970s. Neoconservatives therefore decided to couple the idea of a totalitarian USSR with the vision of a looming growing danger. They put forward the vision of an enemy that was developing an unprecedented military build up, which was inherently wicked, and which was on the verge of world domination.

In the early 1980s, external factors such as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the American Embassy hostage taking in Teheran (Iran) weakened President Jimmy Carter and reinforced the advocates of a tougher foreign policy. The arrival of Ronald Reagan to presidency in 1981 epitomized the neoconservative-right wing victory over the architects and proponents of Détente and arms control. By the early 1980s, the resurgence and intensification of the Cold War threw Détente into the oubliettes of History.

Shall we affirm that Ronald Reagan based his election on the rhetoric of fear? What is apparent is that Reagan relied on the American strategic discourse that raised the sceptre of Soviet military superiority and Communist expansionism. The neoconservatives' emergence in the shaping of the United States' foreign policy under the Reagan administration symbolized the victory of what Paul S. Boyer – professor of History at the University of Wisconsin at Madison – called “the apocalyptic, absolute-good-versus-absolute-evil theme of Cold War ideology.”¹

¹ Paul S. Boyer, “Fear, Security and the Apocalyptic World View: The Cold War’s Cultural Impact and Legacy,” March, 2001, p. 11, in Columbia International Affairs Online, CIAO, Columbia University, <http://www.ciaonet.org/>

Afterwards, all the warnings and gloomy estimates of the neoconservatives proved to be groundless and false. Overwhelmed by its inherent social and economic inconsistencies, the Soviet Union collapsed from within at the end of the 1980s.

Unfortunately, lessons provided by History have not been learnt. Since 2001, the United States' policy makers have been adopting an approach towards international relations and defence analogue to the one advocated by the neoconservatives in the 1970s and implemented in the early 1980s. Post-9/11 America witnessed the comeback of the neoconservative view of world affairs at the highest spheres of American politics. Here too, neoconservative figures were able to choose the right time to put their globalist, interventionist ambitions forward.

Indeed, in 2001, the September 11 attacks left the American people scared stiff. Ever after, influent neoconservatives could point out a new Evil, a new foreign danger threatening the survival of America and its values. Outside the Bush administration, preminent figures such as Norman Podhoretz, Irving and William Kristol, Charles Krauthammer backed by strong-minded think tanks have provided the intellectual frame of a neoconservative-inspired foreign policy. And inside the Executive, officials such as Richard Perle, Paul Wolfowitz and Dick Cheney could use that opportunity to impose their views on world affairs.

As Historian Howard Zinn notes, nowadays terrorism has replaced communism as the justification for creating an atmosphere of hysteria in the

American society.¹ Recently, neoconservatives have made use of the terror card to justify war on Iraq and to try to reshape the Middle East. They have also reactivated the Committee on the Present Danger² in order to launch “World War Four” against Terrorism.³ However, they fail to give a precise definition of terrorism and are confusing it and Islam. Furthermore the neoconservatives’ claim has asked Americans to rally against a foreign danger which – according to them – is threatening no less than the American way of life and values and the survival of the United States.

Nowadays, the neoconservatives are waging what they consider as the “Long War of the 21st century.”⁴ Norman Podhoretz was worried, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, that the United States had no more major foreign enemy.⁵ Nowadays he argues alarmingly that the United States is facing “the greatest threat of its entire history” (he has perhaps forgotten the American Civil War which was to put an end to the United States as a unite nation, or racist Nazism which was to dominate the entire globe and exterminate a great part of the human race, or more recently the former Communist Soviet Union and its nuclear stockpile). William Van Cleave for his part asserts that Islamism is threatening Judeo-Christian values.⁶

¹ Howard Zinn, Terrorism and War, op.cit, p. 48.

² <http://www.fightingterror.org/>, the website of the third reincarnation of Committee on the Present danger, op. cit.

³ See Norman Podhoretz, “World War IV: How It Started, What It Means, and Why We Have to Win,” Commentary, September 2004, pp. 17-54. In this essay, Norman Podhoretz blames the entire Muslim World, confuses between different and completely distinct events that happened in the Near and Middle East in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. He also mixes up the different Arab or Islamic resistance movements and terrorism, as well as Islam and terrorism.

⁴ James Woolsey quoted in the Committee on the Present Danger website, <http://www.fightingterror.org/>, op. cit.

⁵ Grant Havers, Mark Wexler, “Is US Neo-Conservatism Dead?” the Quarterly Journal of Ideology, Vol. 24, N° 3 - 4, Louisiana State University, 2001.

⁶ Norman Podhoretz and William Van Cleave, quoted in the Committee on the Present Danger’s website, op.cit.

So, we can easily make a parallel between the process that led to a climate of fear and revulsion against Détente that grew up in the United States of America in the late 1970s and continued during the first term of Ronald Reagan presidency, and the atmosphere that is being created nowadays. In the 1970s, a subtle combination of information management, continuous intellectual and political lobbying stimulated by ideological and even religious spurs helped to derail a policy that was underway.

Nowadays too, we can witness a permanent mobilization of the public opinion with frightening assertions, and an apocalyptic vision of clashing civilizations. Additionally, a full-scale exploitation of the media, huge defence expenditures, an aggressive foreign policy, and wishes to reformat the World according to American values are being waged under the pretext of a war on terror.

Moreover, we may wonder if the Straussian philosophy of deception has not been provided to justify the war on Iraq, to nurture a feeling of suspicion toward the Muslim-Arab World, and to export “American democracy.” Indeed, neoconservative arguments such as weapons of mass destruction in Saddam Hussein’s hands, the vision of an Iraq as a threat to the United States and links between Iraq and terrorism, all proved to be unfounded.

In the final analysis, can any rational mind acknowledge that pointing out foreign enemies that are threatening no less than the survival of the United States and its values is sensible? Is the stratagem of creating a state-of-siege mentality, and being in a perpetual war the best strategy? Extremisms of all kinds and in all cultures existed in the past, and are still a problem

confronting human society. So, is extremism the remedy to extremism?
Hence, we may wonder if implementing wrong solutions to true problems is
the judicious policy.

Glossary

Below are the definitions and/or explanations of some terms used in the present dissertation.¹

Arms control: attempts through treaties, proclamations, convention, and tacit agreement to limit the destructiveness of war by controlling the production, acquisition and use of weapons and military technology.

Arms race: the arms race is intense competition between nations to accumulate technologically advanced and militarily strategic weapon systems.

Balance of power: A balance of power exists when there is parity or stability between competing forces. As a term in international law for a 'just equilibrium' between the members of the family of nations, it expresses the doctrine intended to prevent any one nation from becoming sufficiently strong so as to enable it to enforce its will upon the rest.

Bipolarity: in world politics, it describes a distribution of power in which two states taken together control 50 % or more of strategic resources, each of the two leading states both control at least 25 % of strategic resources, and no other state controls 25 % or more. Examples: Carthage and Rome during the Antiquity, Spain and England during the reign of Philip II and Elizabeth I,

¹Obtained from different sources such as Encarta Encyclopaedia, the Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado website, <http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/>, and Wikipedia Encyclopaedia, <http://www.wikipedia.org/>

or more recently, the United States of America and the former Soviet Union during the Cold War.

Deterrence: in international relations, deterrence is the policy of discouraging hostile action by a potential aggressor.

Foreign policy: a consistent course of actions followed by one nation to deal with another nation or region, or international issue. A country's foreign policy may reflect broad national objectives or be a very specific response to a particular situation.

Idealism: in international relations, it is the strong belief in the affective power of ideas, in that it is possible to base a political system primarily on morality. Idealists believe international law and morality are key influences on international events, rather than power alone.

Inflation: decline in the value of money, in relation to the goods and services it will buy. Inflation erodes the purchasing power of money creating serious economic distortions and uncertainty. Inflation was historically directly linked to wars, poor harvests, political upheavals, or other unique events.

Interventionism: the policy of intervening in the political affairs of other countries.

Liberalism (political liberalism): It is the belief that individuals are the basis of law and society, and that society and its institutions exist to further the ends of individuals, without showing favour to those of higher social rank. Political liberalism stresses the social contract, under which citizens make the laws and agree to abide by those laws. Liberalism is based on the belief that individuals know best what is best for them. liberalism seeks a society

characterized by freedom of thought for individuals, limitations on the power of government, wealth, and religion, the rule of law, the free exchange of ideas, a market economy that supports private enterprise, and a transparent system of government in which the rights of minorities are guaranteed.

Military doctrine: level of military planning between national strategy and unit-level tactics, techniques, and procedures. The military doctrine generally states a nation's national military objectives, the general mission of the armed service and the general concepts of how this service shall perform its mission. It also states the concerns and cautions in carrying out this mission ("how we should do it") and historical examples ("how we did it in the past")

Military-industrial establishment: mutually supportive relationship of the armed services and the industrial corporations that supply weapons and other goods to the military. Critics argue that the military-industrial complex inflates defence budgets and protects weapon programs that security needs alone do not justify.

Multipolarity: in international politics, it describes a distribution of power in which three or more states each control at least 5 % of the strategic resources, but no single state possesses as much as 50%, and no two states have as much as 25 % apiece. In theory, the powers involved in the system would be constantly playing off against each other and each would challenge the other two for global influence. However, the balance of power often changes during the period of multipolarity, as powers align against the others in order to check or contain their influence.

Political philosophy & Political theory: Political philosophy is taken to mean what philosophers said about politics. This is sometimes called ‘classical political theory.’ However, Political theory focuses on intellectual and cultural backgrounds and attaches importance to the history of concepts like the *State*. ‘Modern political theory’ has been more a theory of politics than a philosophy of politics.

Pragmatism: Pragmatism calls for ideas and theories to be tested in practice, by assessing whether acting upon the idea or theory produces desirable or undesirable results. According to pragmatists, all claims about truth, knowledge, morality, and politics must be tested in this way. Pragmatism has been critical of the notion that there are absolute truths and absolute values.

Pressure group: group of people that actively tries to influence public opinion and government action.

Realism: Realism in international relations is the belief that nations act only out of self-interest and that their major goal is to advance their own positions of power in the world. Realists argue that the leaders of nations must use their power to advance the interests of their own nations with little regard for morality or friendship.

Strategy: It is art of employing all elements of the power of a nation or nations to accomplish the objectives of a nation or an alliance in peace or war. Strategy involves the use and close integration of economic, political, cultural, social, moral, spiritual, and psychological power. National objectives and national power are the irreducible elements of national strategy.

Unilateralism: any doctrine or agenda followed by one nation that supports one-sided action. Such action may be in disregard for other nations' interests.

Worst-case scenario: Disputants often take the worst possible view of their opponents' intentions and strategies. Usually, such worst-case scenarios are inaccurate. Using them as a basis for making strategic decisions is usually unwise, as it is likely to antagonize moderate members of the opposing group and lead to unnecessary escalation.

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