Cross-Domain Deterrence: Strategy in an Era of Complexity
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Linkage Politics

Managing the End of the Cold War
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Abstract and Keywords
Most discussions of cross-domain deterrence focus on variation in the means of coercion, but variation in political ends can be just as consequential. Cross-domain deterrence in the context of linkage politics, in which disparate political interests are tied together to create incentives for favorable outcomes, gives potential adversaries the opportunity to avoid confrontational meeting engagements by playing for time to clarify interests and choosing the means most suited to achieving new goals. A broader diplomatic conception of cross-domain deterrence can also highlight the potential of using financial, institutional, or other nonmilitary actions that render the threat or use of force less attractive. This chapter draws on newly available archival evidence to examine issue linkage politics in the context of changing strategic interests in the case of U.S. efforts to deter Soviet repression in Poland and East Germany at the end of the Cold War. In both cases, U.S. policymakers used diplomatic reassurance and threats of isolation to shape Soviet policy as the United States pressed its new-found political interests in Eastern Europe rather than its traditional preoccupation with military affairs.

Keywords: end of Cold War, U.S. foreign policy, Poland, East Germany, issue linkage, cross-domain deterrence, nonmilitary influence

Cross-domain deterrence (CDD) relies on a basic relationship. Seeking to achieve specified coercive ends against a target, CDD combines the various military means at a state’s disposal to achieve these objectives. In this, it
represents a subset of a larger phenomenon that analysts often refer to as linkage, that is, the notion that pooling together different capabilities across interest areas can help offset weakness in any particular arena in pursuit of one’s objectives. Linkage has long been important to statecraft and grand strategy. Diplomatic envoys, for instance, routinely threaten aggressors with economic sanctions if opponents engage in aggressive behavior. Similarly, the threat of force routinely makes diplomacy more credible and a more palatable alternative than fighting. This situation is analogous to what CDD seeks to achieve in military affairs.

Existing research on CDD has largely ignored its relationship to linkage politics writ large. At the same time, existing studies (including other chapters here) have also tended to focus on the dynamics of linkage/CDD in scenarios where states are acquiring new tools of military power—largely as a result of rapid technological innovation—to affect deterrent relationships. This is problematic since, although deterrent relationships can be affected whenever states acquire new means to attain their political objectives, other deterrent relationships emerge when states seek new objectives (presumably reflecting new interests) in and of themselves. Indeed, recent years have seen the United States pursuing unexpected objectives in limiting Russian action in Ukraine, forestalling chemical weapons use in the Syrian Civil War, and hindering unilateral Chinese maritime gains in the western Pacific; in each, the United States sought to deploy existing tools of statecraft to deter challenges to these evolving objectives. Current studies thus miss the possibility that linkage politics might be as (or more) relevant to coercive and deterrent relationships not when new means are coming online but when old means are repackaged for new ends.

Accordingly, this chapter serves two purposes. First, I situate CDD in broader research on linkage politics, highlighting the similarity between underlying concepts in each discussion, as well as the connection between military operations and the broader portfolio of national capabilities. Second, I develop and illustrate the logic and dynamics of linkage politics and CDD when a state’s interests change while the tools to pursue those objectives remain fixed. In doing so, I focus on two interrelated questions. First, can existing tools used in a linkage relationship be repurposed to achieve new policy objectives, or do states need to acquire new tools to attain new ends? Equally important, how can policymakers best navigate periods when the ends and/or means in CDD change—what are the risks involved, and what options exist for strategists to address these problems? Addressing these questions while drawing out the connection between CDD and linkage politics constitutes a necessary step in developing a theory to account for when and why CDD—and any form of linkage—yields its desired effect, alongside the problems policymakers might encounter along the way.
The remainder of this chapter proceeds in several sections. First, it further relates CDD to diplomatic efforts linking the different means at a state’s disposal to achieve foreign policy outcomes. Second, I hypothesize how shifts in either a state’s desired ends or available means carry different strategic risks. This effort is particularly valuable given that analysts generally lack theories to explain the course of linkage politics and, since no plan survives first contact with an enemy, analysts can expect the means and/or ends of policy to change during a standoff; understanding the potential dynamics of such changes can help policymakers cope with the inevitable.

Third, I offer an initial test of these arguments by focusing on a notable case where the ends of policy changed while the means available to pursue policy remained constant, namely, U.S. efforts to deter a Soviet crackdown in Eastern Europe in the runup to the Revolutions of 1989. This case study is useful on both theoretical and empirical grounds. Theoretically, insofar as U.S. means remained broadly fixed, and given the narrow time frames involved, the case is intrinsically useful for theorizing and elaborating on linkage dynamics. Empirically, much of the evidence needed to reconstruct U.S. deterrent efforts during the case has been disclosed only recently, allowing us to shed new light on one of the most important diplomatic dialogues to occur in the shadow of a superpower nuclear confrontation. Finally, I conclude with lessons from the case for CDD, highlight avenues for future research, and briefly discuss applicability to current policy debates.

(p.292) Security, Competition, and Resources: The Logic of Linkage

As analysts have long known, states looking to survive in an anarchic international system seek to create security for themselves. To do so, they develop the military, economic, and political tools at their disposal in order to defend their vital interests and to promote a range of nonvital interests that nevertheless make the international system more conducive to their well-being. This process introduces a baseline level of competitiveness into international politics: because each state faces similar incentives to secure and promote its interests, states cannot rest on their laurels without losing out relative to other actors.

This dynamic also highlights one of the core problems inherent in strategy. Although competition is constant and threats numerous, resources are finite: resources are limited in an absolute sense compared to the nearly infinite array of possible challenges, while the need to allocate some share of a state’s wealth to domestic consumption limits the capabilities states can realistically develop for the pursuit of foreign objectives. States are therefore forced to make choices among both the interests they seek to protect or promote and the means developed to do so. These issues go hand in hand, as states generally seek a
wider range of means to protect their vital interests than they do with nonvital interests.

Linkage—of which cross-domain relations are one type focused specifically on the military realm—enters this picture when the means a state develops to protect its interests are designed to offset the means another state acquires to promote its own, by threatening to move a diplomatic or military conflict into arenas where the former has an advantage over the latter. Seeking, for instance, to deter a Soviet conventional attack in Central Europe, the Truman and Eisenhower administrations were prepared to launch a nuclear attack against the Soviet homeland and made this threat clear. Similarly, analysts today discuss deterring (p.293) possible cyberattacks against the United States with conventional retaliation, economic sanctions, and so on.

Linkage politics in general, and cross-domain politics in particular, are strategically attractive for two reasons. First, moving a conflict into an area where one’s state has an advantage over another allows one’s state to play to its strengths. Rather than devoting scarce resources to competing where an opponent is strong, states attempt to generate political influence by focusing on things they already do well. Thus, in lieu of competing with numerically superior Soviet conventional forces, the United States under Eisenhower looked to exploit its nuclear monopoly; similarly, rather than developing a mass army for deployment to Europe, pre-1914 Great Britain planned on using its economic advantages to bring the German capacity for war to collapse if conflict erupted. In theory, these approaches minimize a state’s expenditures by reinforcing existing strengths and avoiding the costs of developing any new tool of statecraft. Accordingly, this approach can leave a state holding developed and tested tools with which to defend its interests rather than having to acquire a full spectrum of capabilities—some of which might not be effective or cost-efficient.

Second, and owing to the efficiency gains in moving a conflict into areas where a state has an advantage, a state has additional marginal resources with which to advance other interests. The Eisenhower administration, for example, was able to take the savings incurred from concentrating on the nuclear mission (avoiding matching the Soviets quantitatively) and use them to promote U.S. economic growth; similarly, Israel’s ability to deter existential threats to its security by being the Middle East’s only nuclear-armed power likely allows it to devote proportionally greater resources to counter-terrorism and similar operations than would otherwise be possible. These freed-up resources form a kind of subsidy that helps a state protect a broader set of interests than would otherwise be the case.

Change in Linkage Politics and Cross-Domain Relationships
Treat ing CDD as part of state efforts to use strengths in one arena to offset weaknesses in another refocuses the analysis in several ways. First, it grounds the (p.294) idea of CDD in long-standing interactions at the heart of international relations. In fact, given this approach, war itself is related to dynamics highlighted by CDD: if, as Geoffrey Blainey argues, wars occur when states disagree over their relative power, then the decision to use force reflects a failure of military power to yield payoffs in the diplomatic realm.11 Seen in this light, CDD is less a new and novel feature of world politics and more a particular manifestation of the process through which states use the tools at their disposal to prevent harm or to further specific interests in world politics. Simply put, CDD is part of a broader effort in which states combine multiple means for particular coercive effects. Cross-domain deterrence might focus on the military piece of this puzzle, but the distinction is one of form rather than substance.

Second, treating CDD as part of a larger process by which states relate available means to specified ends helps identify processes by which change in linkage and cross-domain relationships can occur. Two pathways are readily apparent: changes in the means states can employ in pursuit of their interests and change in the interests pursued per se (see table 13.1).

**Table 13.1 Change in linkage/cross-domain relationships**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Mechanism</th>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Potential risks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Means-based change</td>
<td>State acquires or loses tools it relied on to attain strategic goals</td>
<td>Arms races</td>
<td>Spirals of insecurity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Windows of opportunity/ vulnerability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest-based change</td>
<td>State develops new interests it seeks to pursue or protect</td>
<td>Uncertain prioritization of interests</td>
<td>Miscalculation over interests and power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Means poorly suited to ends sought</td>
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</table>

**Means-Based Change**

As technology diffuses, economic patterns shift, and states compete, the capabilities at states’ disposal change as well. States can gain or lose means to seek particular ends as changes in technology, economics, and context give one actor new deterrent or coercive options. As a result, the advantages that enable State A to engage in cross-domain actions at Time 1 against State B might not exist at Time 2 as State B comes to match State A's capabilities.12 This type of means-based change is discussed (p.295) in several chapters here. It also has a
long historical pedigree. After all, the growth of the Soviet nuclear arsenal by
the mid- to late 1960s eliminated the United States’ prior cross-domain nuclear
advantage, just as the first cavemen to discover how to control fire, once the
secret was out, could probably no longer credibly threaten neighboring tribes on
the basis of that discovery. More directly, means-based change is prominent in
contemporary policy discussions as analysts debate whether, for example,
China’s acquisition of antiship ballistic missiles and economic inroads in
traditional U.S. markets will deter U.S. adventurism in East Asia, or whether Iran
might retaliate against Persian Gulf oil exports if the United States were to
strike the Iranian nuclear program.

In theory, means-based change can both exacerbate international competition
and generate dangerous conflict spirals. On the one hand, as states lose a prior
strategic advantage, they might cast about for new tools to gain a cross-domain
advantage. Other states might then respond in kind, priming the international
system for arms races as states gain and lose advantages over one another.
Conversely, states with a waning cross-domain advantage might worry that they
will be unable to succeed in a competition for new tools. Thus, rather than trying
to deter conflict, they might opt to use their advantages while they can in a
preventive action. It is not impossible, for instance, that a state that feels it is
on the verge of permanently losing an offensive cyber capability as another state
develops the ability to attack in kind will use its waning advantages to try to set
back an opponent’s cyber systems.

Interest-Based Change

As noted, analysts have long been interested in means-based change in linkage
relationships. Less studied, however, is the second pathway to change, or what I
term interest-based change. As the name implies, interest-based change occurs
when a state (p.296) identifies new or newly salient interests it wishes to
advance and uses preexisting means not necessarily tailored to these interests to
pursue them. Although subject to less attention, interest-based change is no less
important than means-based change is to linkage and, by extension, cross-
domain relationships. In fact, states often seek to utilize the capabilities
developed in one arena to influence actions in another. For example, the
conventional military developed by the United States to deter the Soviet Union
was repurposed in the 1990s to deter smaller, regional actors from local
aggression. Similarly, some analysts today fear that China is attempting to use
the capabilities developed to deter action around the Chinese mainland to
secure a broader Chinese perimeter in Asia.

Interest-based change suggests different pitfalls from those of means-based
change. First, interest-based change increases the risk of conflict from
miscalculation and deterrence failures. As scholars such as Thomas Schelling
suggest, deterrence requires a state to threaten retaliation if another state acts
in ways that contravene its interests. To make this threat credible, a state must
convince a target that the interest is so important that it is willing to risk diplomatic or military conflict. For this reason, analysts and policymakers have often looked to make a state’s focus on particular issues clear and explicit, partly by lavishing them with attention and partly by developing retaliatory tools tightly coupled to the interests in question and presumably less likely to be questioned by an opponent. Combined, these approaches allow a state to focus on maintaining a known status quo—retaliation is less subject to ambiguity.

Interest-based change upsets these calculations. As states fix on new interests, their ability to signal their focus on these interests may diminish as they lose prior investments of time and energy, and a gap opens up between the means at their disposal and their interests at hand. Put differently, interest-based change alters the status quo in terms of a state’s hierarchy of priorities. It might thus raise questions in an opponent’s mind over whether one’s efforts are credible. Uncertainty can increase as targets are unsure whether and how far a state is willing to go in defense of a certain issue. Moreover, because a state is using mismatched means to gain new ends, the target might question whether the costs the state threatens to impose outweigh the benefits it hopes to gain. In such situations, blunders and missteps can accrue, and a breakdown in deterrent relationships can emerge.

This relationship is not one-sided, with a target simply questioning another’s credibility. For states trying to advance their interests, interest-based change can present difficult questions of prioritization. Policymakers used to thinking of certain issues as those worth fighting over, for instance, might be uncertain how new interests compare to old ones when debating whether to tilt with an opponent. They might likewise face difficulties in identifying appropriate tools to attain these new interests, a task that could be compounded if they are uncertain how these interests compare in value to old ones and they recognize that any target is likely to ask itself the same question. This situation introduces conflicting incentives into one’s decisionmaking calculus: uncertainty over the value of the interest might lead policymakers to exercise caution, while the incentive to address any ambiguities in the eyes of a target might lead to steps that antagonize it.

Ultimately, if means-based change risks insecurity spirals and preventive conflict, then interest-based change risks a meeting engagement as states interact—attempting to deter and compete—on unfamiliar political ground with poorly understood tools and interests. States seeking to defend or advance new interests might be uncertain as to how far they are willing to go for these issues and might question whether they have the right tools to do so. States on the receiving end of this effort might ask themselves the same set of questions. Unlike means-based change, this process therefore appears paradoxically prone to both miscalculation and caution as states both feel their ways forward and uncertainty increases along the way. Deterrence might appear stable
as policymakers proceed cautiously, but be fraught with risks of sudden missteps and crises.

Interest-Based Change at the End of the Cold War

Though both sources of change are difficult to study, it is especially difficult to examine whether changing interests affect linkage and cross-domain relationships. State interests generally do not change significantly or rapidly, meaning states often have time to develop means, plans, and concepts to secure these objectives. This does not vitiate the importance of examining interest-based change, however: under certain circumstances, state interests do change dramatically, and it might be those moments that are most prone to conflict. After all, the onset of World War I followed the emergence of an Anglo-German rivalry for global influence as Germany decided it had new overseas interests; today, the search for cross-domain options is driven in part by concerns that states such as China will expand the range of issues over which they seek influence in world affairs at a faster clip than others can develop deterrent options.

Accordingly, one way to address the dynamics of interest-based change is to examine critical moments in the past when state interests changed unexpectedly and rapidly. By focusing on such moments, one can better establish the link between changing interests; at the same time, one can analyze the ways states look to bring preexisting capabilities to bear in a cross-domain relationship—given the short time frames involved, states are pushed into cross-domain action as there is no time to acquire new means. These moments are therefore as “pure” a test of interest-based change as one is likely to find in the empirical record.

United States efforts to deter a Soviet crackdown in Eastern Europe in 1989–1990 represent a fruitful case. As elaborated below, the United States’ decision to become overtly and directly involved in Eastern Europe represented a departure from prior U.S. policy and reflected new-found U.S. interests in Eastern Europe. Equally important, the rapidity of the case—covering roughly twelve months in 1989–1990—left U.S. policymakers reliant on linkage to influence Soviet action; although the United States retained both an extensive conventional presence in Western Europe and a range of nuclear options, strategic considerations meant that policymakers were not going to use military force to deter Soviet action within the Warsaw Pact. Instead, members of the George H. W. Bush administration turned to economic and diplomatic levers to shape Soviet behavior. Given that most deterrence theories assume that the threat of force is needed to deter or compel change in the use of force—such that economic or diplomatic tools are suboptimal (p.299) solutions—the Bush administration’s effort to link U.S. economic and diplomatic levers to Soviet policy both illustrates cross-domain efforts in action, and highlights the relationship between deterrence and foreign policy writ large. To demonstrate
the debates, difficulties, and opportunities involved in establishing CDD as interests change, the case of the end of the Cold War provides a valuable area of study.

Diplomatic Drama and Deterrence: Setting the Strategic Context for the Case

Through the end of the 1980s, the United States focused heavily on competing for power and influence with the Soviet Union while developing the means to deter a Soviet attack on vital regions in Eurasia. This effort represented a traditional deterrence relationship, as the United States emphasized acquiring the conventional and nuclear means to deter or defeat Soviet and Warsaw Pact military assets. As Brendan Green and Austin Long demonstrate (chapter 10 here), the United States’ efforts increasingly turned toward shifting the military balance in its favor, moving away from mutually assured destruction as the locus of strategic planning and toward pursuing counterforce options against Soviet nuclear assets. Arms control negotiations that began to bear fruit after the 1985 arrival of Mikhail Gorbachev as new general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union also contributed to this effort by lowering the nuclear ceiling and helping bring a stability to the U.S.-Soviet arms race within which U.S. counterforce options could develop. United States policy, in short, was oriented toward gradually moving the military balance in its favor, with the underlying goal of affording U.S. policymakers military options to deter or coerce a change in Soviet behavior in a crisis.

(p.300) In this environment, the United States paid only limited attention to political developments in Eastern Europe. To be clear, change in the region was accorded attention early in the Reagan years as the Solidarity movement gained traction in Poland. Similarly, the Reagan administration—working through nongovernment and quasi-nongovernment organizations—encouraged select groups in the region to challenge the authority of ruling Communist regimes while seeking long-term liberalization in the region. Relative to the attention paid to the U.S.-Soviet military balance, however, these issues were of decidedly lower priority. By the mid-1980s, Eastern Europe was rarely discussed by the National Security Council or the National Security Planning Group. Through the end of President Reagan’s tenure in office, he, Secretary of State George Shultz, and other senior advisors focused on improving the U.S.-Soviet relationship, leaving Eastern Europe to the purview of sub-Cabinet officials such as Deputy Secretary of State John C. Whitehead.

George H. W. Bush’s victory in the 1988 presidential election, coupled with developments in Eastern Europe, precipitated a change in U.S. priorities. Bush came to office having served as Reagan’s vice president for eight years and appreciated that the warming of U.S.-Soviet relations opened a broader range of possible bilateral outcomes. Nevertheless, Bush and his advisors, such as Secretary of State James Baker and National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft, took office convinced that Reagan had focused too heavily on the arms race and
spent too little time addressing the underlying “causes” of the Cold War. Particularly important in their estimate was the Soviet military presence in Eastern Europe and the dominance of Communist regimes in the area. By enabling the Soviet Union to attack Western Europe on short notice, these features of Europe’s political geography gave the U.S.-Soviet competition and the nuclear arms race momentum by presenting the Soviet Union with compellence options vis-à-vis Western Europe while requiring intensive efforts to deter Soviet aggression.

The net effect of this rethink was to solidify the importance of Eastern Europe in U.S. calculations and generate a search for short-term options that would allow the United States to pursue its new-found interests in the area. Of course, the Bush administration was not the first to seek a reduction of Soviet influence in Eastern Europe; both presidents Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman, for example, had worried what Soviet dominance in Eastern Europe would mean for European security, while the Eisenhower administration had made the “rollback” of Soviet influence a component of its foreign policy. That said, the George H. W. Bush administration was the first since the early Cold War to make limiting or undoing Soviet influence a cornerstone of the United States’ efforts. If, as the administration’s logic went, one removed or limited the Soviet and Communist presence in the area, then the U.S.-Soviet competition would abate as the need to deter the Soviet Union and its allies waned. Change in this direction, however, required U.S. action to simultaneously pressure the Soviet Union to allow change in Eastern Europe and deter a Soviet crackdown that could unwind such changes. Put differently, the United States’ new focus on interests in Eastern Europe required the United States to coerce and deter Soviet actions that could harm those interests and to creatively package existing capabilities so as to shape Soviet policy within the narrow time frame at hand.

The Bush administration’s gambit was possible because of shifts in the U.S.-Soviet distribution of power and the Soviet response to these changes. Starting in 1987, the Soviet Union had enacted a series of liberalizing political and economic reforms, while Gorbachev encouraged had leaders in Eastern Europe to follow suit. The underlying Soviet goal—as U.S. analysts at the time suggested—was to help sustain Soviet influence in the region by heading off popular discontent while improving economic conditions in Eastern Europe. Gorbachev coupled this pressure with a subtle threat that if Soviet client states refused to reform, then the Soviet Union might not intervene to shore up Communist regimes if their domestic conditions unraveled. Still, Gorbachev’s calls for reform led to mixed results. With economic problems and political discontent mounting, Polish and Hungarian leaders responded to Gorbachev’s calls and began reforming; by February 1989, Hungary had moved to relax the Communist Party’s hold on power, while Polish leaders launched roundtable discussions with non-Communist opposition groups. Other Soviet clients, such as East Germany and Romania, however, were less forthcoming.
Opposing Gorbachev’s message, these more conservative regimes sought to induce the Soviet Union to shift course by supporting internal crackdowns to arrest popular calls for reform that might threaten Communist control. Increasingly, the question became whether the Soviet leadership would resist calls to use force in Eastern Europe if events accelerated and Soviet influence in the area was directly challenged.\textsuperscript{38}

Combined, the U.S. and Soviet interests and plans began to intersect at the start of 1989 in such a way that deterrence and coercion failures were a growing possibility. Just as it seemed that U.S. military power could deter Soviet aggrandizement in Western Europe, changing U.S. priorities in Eastern Europe raised a new set of interests in the U.S.-Soviet relationship. Successfully pursuing these interests through some means promised to yield large payoffs for the United States, but doing so also held significant peril. After all, while Soviet leaders sought to spur change in the Eastern bloc, not even Gorbachev and his advisors wanted to create conditions that would risk the wholesale loss of the region or to appear to allow change in the area in response to U.S.-led pressure. Despite the Soviet desire to see the region reform, it was distinctly possible that U.S. activism could trigger a hostile Soviet response, roil U.S.-Soviet relations, and perhaps risk war itself.\textsuperscript{39}

The Deterrence Dance of 1989

Within this context, the United States moved to deter a crackdown in Eastern Europe at two main points in 1989. The first came during the spring and early summer as the Polish Socialist Workers Party, Poland’s Communist party, was evicted from office due to popular unrest and elections held as part of the April 1989 Roundtable Agreement with Polish opposition groups. The second episode came in the fall and early winter of 1989, as citizens in East Germany (the German Democratic Republic; GDR) demanded reforms while the GDR leadership, unwilling to concede, sought Soviet backing for a crackdown. Watching the situations unfold, U.S. policymakers were forced to improvise, seeking ways to pressure the Soviet Union to allow change to unfold and to deter a crackdown yet to avoid so \textit{(p.303)} direct an investment that a crackdown would irrevocably harm U.S.-Soviet relations and risk a direct U.S.-Soviet confrontation.

Ironically, the U.S. deterrent effort was likely one-sided. In retrospect, evidence from Soviet and East European sources indicates that the Soviet leadership was disinclined to allow a crackdown to occur; even as U.S. interests were expanding to include Eastern Europe, Soviet interests were contracting to the detriment of Soviet clients in Eastern Europe.\textsuperscript{40} Still, and as elaborated below, the Soviet leadership was less than transparent on this central point at the time. Moreover, the large number of Soviet forces and the history of Soviet interventionism gave U.S. policymakers ground to question Soviet intentions. Though retrospectively it looks like the United States prepared to deter a crackdown that was unlikely
to occur, U.S. policymakers could not have been confident in Soviet forbearance at the time. Given the shift in both U.S. and Soviet interests, the decisionmaking process of 1989 is all the more important for understanding cross-domain relationships.

Deterring Action in Poland: January–July 1989

Poland led all the Warsaw Pact states in pursuing political and military reforms. By February 1989, Poland’s Communist government had agreed to talks with Polish opposition groups—the labor union Solidarity being the most prominent among them—as part of a plan to head off mounting political unrest and strengthen the Polish economy. These talks culminated in the April 1989 Roundtable Agreement, committing Poland to hold free elections in June. Undergirding the Roundtable accords was a calculation, as the U.S. ambassador to Poland explained, by Poland’s Communist leaders that Poland was moving toward a “democratic neo-socialism” that “seems to have more in common with modern Sweden than with Stalinist Russia.” The Polish government also expected that Polish Communist leader Wojciech Jaruzelski would be selected as president regardless of the results of the June election, reinforcing the government’s willingness to accept the Roundtable Agreement by suggesting that the Polish Socialist Workers Party would maintain significant political influence even if it shared power with non-Communist groups.

(p.304) The Bush administration was pushed into a corner by Polish developments. Events in Poland suggested to policymakers that they faced a “historic opportunity” to expedite change in the Soviet bloc. United States policy in Poland would therefore “be taken as a signal throughout Eastern Europe . . . of a new U.S. approach to the region.” However, Polish developments also raised the prospect of hardliner pushback, precipitating debate over whether change in Poland (and the rest of Eastern Europe) “would lead to catastrophe or liberation.” As the National Security Council concluded in April, “instability and repression in Eastern Europe would have dire consequences for East-West relations and, arguably, for the course of reform in the Soviet Union itself.”

Still, the United States had limited interest and few means of responding militarily if a crackdown occurred. United States strategists thus needed to find a way, as secretary of state Baker later recalled, of “maneuvering so that we supported reform without triggering a backlash.”

Quid Pro Quo Deterrence: January–March 1989

To deter a crackdown and ensure Soviet quiescence, U.S. policymakers gradually escalated the diplomatic and economic tools the United States deployed as Polish conditions edged closer to assumed Communist redlines. The first move to deter a crackdown began in January 1989, as the United States played to Gorbachev’s desire for political and diplomatic support from the United States as the Soviet Union reformed. Even before the Roundtable Agreement was signed, former secretary of state Henry Kissinger was dispatched to Moscow to
explore Soviet interest in a quid pro quo. In exchange for U.S. pledges not to exploit unrest in Eastern Europe and to continue backing Gorbachev’s reforms, the Soviet Union would promise to exercise “restraint” as change occurred in the area. In effect, Soviet forbearance would be met by the U.S. in kind; given the absence of U.S. tools with which to deter a Soviet crackdown, the United States attempted to substitute political understandings and diplomatic engagement for material capabilities.

(p.305) Both the Soviet Union and the United States were interested in the Kissinger plan as a seeming way for each side to deter the other while pursuing their broader objectives. However, as the Roundtable looked more and more likely to yield a power-sharing arrangement, opposition to the Kissinger approach mounted within the U.S. government. In the changing East European environment, concern grew that Kissinger’s plan would tie the United States’ hands prematurely: as the National Security Council concluded in early April, “events in Poland and Hungary are moving so fast that Moscow cannot control them anyway, and we should not be seen as the ones imposing limits on Eastern Europe’s evolution.” Instead, the United States sought ways to “buy in” to Eastern European events so as to ensure that the U.S. interest in the “political and economic structural reform” continued. More important, the use of political agreements to keep military action in check was not credible in U.S. eyes. United States and Soviet understandings were well and good, but in the final analysis, “no Soviet commitment not to intervene in Eastern Europe would mean anything in the event of a real crisis.” If Soviet interests so dictated, the tanks would roll, and prior understandings would fall by the wayside. Deterrence and coercion via quid pro quo understandings would not suffice in the face of a pressing strategic need.

Deterrence as Reassurance and Engagement: Spring–Summer 1989

United States officials perceived a growing risk of a crackdown or Soviet intervention in the spring and summer of 1989 as Polish Communist authority was challenged after the Roundtable Agreement was formalized. This issue reached a head in June and July, as Polish elections went forward and delivered the Communist Party a significant political defeat. As U.S. ambassador John Davis cabled Washington shortly before the election itself, a Communist political defeat might upend the heretofore peaceful pace of change—“military responses could not be ruled out.” Soviet statements after the first round of Polish voting reinforced this potential, with Gorbachev himself suggesting that challenges to Soviet authority by seeking the overthrow of Communist regimes would be “a course toward confrontation, if not worse.” Past Soviet tolerance aside, U.S. officials worried—as National Security Council counselor Peter Rodman described—“that, somewhere out there, there is still a limit to that tolerance.” After all, there remained “room for speculation about how the Soviet leadership would react to a new challenge . . . say, a bloc country’s attempt to go neutral, or to vote the Communist Party out of office.” When Solidarity won
ninety-nine out of one hundred seats in the Polish Senate after the June elections and thereafter prepared to form a non-Communist government, this potential challenge became a reality. Still, as the prospect of a major Soviet ally moving away from Soviet influence increased, the United States’ interest in seeing liberalization continue expanded as well: paradoxically, U.S. interest in Poland grew parallel with concerns of a backlash.

To deter Soviet action and facilitate continued liberalization, the United States proceeded along two parallel tracks. The first track consisted of diplomatic efforts to deter Soviet action by lowering Soviet threat perceptions and claiming that the Soviet Union had nothing to fear from change in Poland. This approach had two components. First, the United States tried to reassure the Soviet Union that neither events in Poland nor U.S. policy should necessarily be taken as indicative of Eastern Europe’s future. For instance, the administration resisted pressure to use the signing of the Roundtable Agreement to call for change in Eastern Europe’s status quo, instead releasing a simpler announcement welcoming the “historic step towards pluralism and freedom” in Poland. Similarly, when explaining U.S. policy following the Roundtable Agreement, Bush narrowly argued that “if Poland’s experiment succeeds, other countries may follow [emphasis added].” Second, officials tried to convince Communist leaders that the United States did not intend to manipulate events in Poland for U.S. gain—in effect, signaling that the United States (p.307) prioritized stable change over rapid gains against the Soviet Union. In April, for instance, Bush emphasized that the U.S. approach was intended to “have no anti-Soviet cast,” while deputy assistant secretary of state Thomas Simons told North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) leaders that “we recognize the risks of instability and have no interest in encouraging it.” And, as East European reforms proceeded, the United States tried to ensure that its rhetoric “didn’t threaten the Soviet Union, . . . didn’t say that it’s them or us.” To lend credence to these claims, meanwhile, the United States capped the economic and political support it afforded Solidarity following Poland’s elections. In short, and as Bush told Jaruzelski in July, the United States sought to avoid sticking “a finger in Gorbachev’s eye.”

The second track to deter Soviet action and facilitate continued liberalization saw the United States reinforce deterrence by coercively linking the U.S.-Soviet relationship to developments in Poland. Meeting with Soviet foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze that summer, Secretary of State Baker highlighted the importance of ensuring “that movement toward greater openness will continue in both the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.” Accordingly, “avoiding the use of force would be important . . . to avoid an emotional outburst in the U.S. that might well be triggered by those who do not want to see [Soviet reforms] succeed.” Insofar as the Soviet Union sought cooperation “from the United States, Europe, and Asia,” the tacit threat was clear: a crackdown in Poland would threaten the broader U.S.-Soviet relationship. A subsequent meeting with
Shevardnadze in September returned to these themes, as Baker acknowledged that the United States “did not desire to stir things up or foment unrest, but that we were going to help the Eastern Europeans.” Encapsulating the deterrent effort, the National Security Council pushed Bush to note that changes in Eastern Europe marked “a turning point in East-West relations. Poland and Hungary are leading the way in a process of democratic change that could transform and overcome the postwar division of Europe.”

Prima facie, the U.S. effort to reassure and engage the Soviet Union does not look like deterrence. By addressing Soviet concerns in Poland and circumscribing U.S. policy, one might argue that the United States was itself deterred by fear of Soviet blowback. To be sure, there are elements of such calculations in the case. That said, U.S. policymakers intended reassurance and engagement to deter reciprocal Soviet action. They also hoped that soft-peddling Poland would create incentives for continued Soviet cooperation and help Poland liberalize. Giving the Soviet Union space allowed the United States to use Gorbachev’s desire to create a cooperative East-West relationship to box in the Soviet Union: by linking change in Poland to U.S.-Soviet relations, the United States held a core tenet of Soviet strategy at risk, forcing the Soviet Union to anticipate a problematic U.S. response if the Soviet Union acted in Poland. In short, a web of Soviet-U.S. interactions outside the military realm would help keep Soviet military action in check.

The Polish Puzzle

By the fall of 1989, Poland was led by a non-Communist prime minister, was moving the system away from a command economy, and had not seen any outbreaks of violence sponsored or encouraged by the Soviet Union. Equally important, events in Eastern Europe were leaving Poland behind; by October, unrest had spread to other Soviet client states, including—significantly—East Germany. This diverted Soviet attention elsewhere and drew the United States into new deterrent relationships.

Deterring Action in the German Democratic Republic: October 1989–January 1990

Like Poland, events in the GDR escalated rapidly and, owing to Soviet interests and means for intervention, represented a difficult arena in which to deter Soviet action. After all, East Germany was what the State Department termed the “jewel in the [Soviet] imperial crown” and the cornerstone of the Soviet Union’s alliance system; the Soviet Union would likely be hypersensitive to any indications that the GDR might be lost as an ally. The stakes were simply too high for the Soviet Union to be complacent. Coupled with an expansive Soviet military presence in East Germany that could implement a crackdown, the Soviet Union had both motive and opportunity to prevent East German unrest from getting out of control. If the United States wanted to
ensure Soviet inaction in Eastern Europe and deter a crackdown in the Warsaw Pact’s keystone member, it needed to be creative in finding the means to do so.

As protests grew in the GDR and West Germany (the Federal Republic of Germany; FRG) began exploring options for German reunification, risks to U.S.-Soviet relations mounted. It was not implausible that popular protests would threaten the GDR’s ability to maintain domestic control and/or entice the West Germans to encourage their fellow German nationals in order to expedite reunification. The Soviet Union would then face the unpalatable choice of either accepting the loss of the GDR or risking a direct confrontation with a member of NATO. The potential dangers were manifest. As an interagency study completed in early November argued: “in the event of severe internal unrest in the GDR, our overriding objective should be to prevent a Soviet military intervention, which could and probably would reverse the positive course of East-West relations for many years to come. More than that, it would raise the risk of direct U.S.-Soviet military confrontation [as Soviet intervention in the GDR was] among the World War III scenarios for which U.S. and NATO planners have been preparing for decades.”

Deterrence as Engagement: November–December 1989
The fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989 brought these issues to a head, raising the question of how the United States could deter intervention and address the return of the German Problem. As in Poland, U.S. strategists were forced to walk a fine line that signaled interest in seeing GDR reforms proceed yet deterred a Soviet reaction that could threaten U.S. security.

To this end, the United States initially followed the Polish model, seeking to prevent Soviet action through reassurance and engagement. More assertive means were unpalatable and infeasible—declaring reunification a vital U.S. interest, for example, would invite Soviet retaliation that the United States, with limited ability to project military power into Eastern Europe, would find difficult to address. Instead, a quieter approach that soft-pedaled GDR developments and limited overt challenges to Soviet interests was preferable. United States strategists therefore emphasized the need for stability, caution, and prudence. For instance, as the United States debated how to react to GDR developments in mid-November, Bush’s advisors presented him with three options. First, the United States could support a Four Power initiative by the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, and France to control the situation. Second, the United States could defer to events on the ground and let the FRG set the pace. Finally, it could simply advocate German self-determination. Of the three approaches, the first approach would be most conducive to Soviet security but would “legitimize a Soviet role and veto” when trends were moving in the United States’ favor. Conversely, the second approach would be most problematic for the Soviets by excluding them from the decisionmaking process.
Instead, Bush selected the third approach, deemed acceptable because it neither accelerated nor slowed the course of events.  

This approach reinforced U.S. deterrent efforts in the GDR by holding the U.S.-Soviet relationship hostage to Soviet quiescence. The policy came to the fore as Soviet and U.S. leaders prepared to meet at the December 1989 Malta Summit. As Bush told the National Security Council before departing: “I will explain that we are not trying to take unilateral advantage of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe but that the peoples of the region must be allowed to determine their own political and economic futures.” The counterfactual was stark: if the Soviet Union tried to hinder East German self-determination, the United States would retaliate. This effort elaborated on plans, first floated in early November, that called for “warning [Moscow] against unilateral intervention” in the event of GDR unrest. Now, instead of basic diplomatic threats, the United States turned to the same policy that had developed in Poland and threatened to sanction the entirety of U.S.-Soviet relations if the Soviets crossed the U.S. redline.

The United States communicated these latent deterrent efforts directly to the Soviet Union. At Malta, for example, Bush underscored both U.S. circumspection and the threat to respond if the Soviet Union changed directions, telling Gorbachev: “I hope you have noticed that as dynamic change has accelerated in recent months, we have not responded with flamboyance or arrogance that would complicate USSR relations [sic]. . . . I have been called cautious and timid. I am cautious but not timid. But I have conducted myself in ways not to complicate your life. That’s why I have not jumped up and down on the Berlin Wall.” Subsequently, Bush, Baker, and other members of the U.S. delegation clarified the U.S. position on European developments, calling on the Soviet Union to embrace self-determination for Eastern Europe. As Bush put it, “self-determination is a value. We endorse it and it is openness that permits self-determination. [It] does not mean the imposition of our system on Czechoslovakia, the GDR, or Romania.” Coming after Bush also warned the Soviet Union that “if we can stick with the notion of peaceful change, better relations will occur between the Soviet Union and the United States.” The message was clear: allow events to unfold in Eastern Europe, or the United States might penalize U.S.-Soviet relations. Conversely, and as Bush elaborated at a NATO meeting immediately after the Malta discussions, peaceful change would facilitate the construction of a new, increasingly integrated, and cooperative Europe; if the Soviet Union did not intervene, then the United States would continue cooperating with Soviet initiatives.

**Deterrence as Exit: December 1989–February 1990**

Ongoing events in the GDR and FRG, however, threatened to overtake U.S. linkage. Even before Malta, FRG chancellor Helmut Kohl began floating plans to reunify the two German states, making the Soviet nightmare—a united
Germany in the heart of Europe—a realistic concern. United States officials again feared that Soviet redlines were about to be crossed. Paradoxically, the FRG's efforts also led to American worries that the Soviet Union might reverse course and, instead of opposing change in the GDR, agree to cooperate with the FRG on reunification in exchange for German concessions—especially a West German exit from NATO—that would aid the Soviet Union and harm the United States.

Facing these pressures, U.S. policymakers struggled to prevent Soviet intervention while maintaining incentives for the Soviet Union to allow East German liberalization. Deterring the Soviet Union seemed to require that the United States play for time and ignore the demands of a major U.S. ally. On the other hand this policy could fall victim to its own success and push the Soviet Union and the FRG into alignment, in which case deterrence would have succeeded for no clear strategic benefit. A solution only emerged in January 1990. With pressure to expedite reunification increasing, U.S. strategists decided to use the FRG's interest in reunification and the GDR's ongoing difficulties as leverage. Now, rather than simply calling for German self-determination, the United States upped its desired end-state and backed the FRG's efforts to reunify Germany. However, the United States would also use the prospect of letting the Germans (meaning, in practice, the West Germans) decide the pace and form of reunification alone—a process that promised to sidestep Soviet concerns altogether—as a threat to keep Soviet pressure at bay. In other words, U.S. policymakers hit upon the idea of using the pressure for German reunification and the Soviet fear of the result as a way of constraining Soviet behavior.

To this end, the United States positioned itself as the honest broker in the reunification process and the best conduit for the Soviet Union to influence decisions surrounding reunification. This compelled the Soviet Union to confront a different counterfactual: if the Soviet Union responded with force, then the United States could abandon the Soviet Union and force it to address a German situation that it had already proven unable to control; needless to say, such a Soviet move would also squander Soviet hopes for a broader East-West rapprochement. This strategy was not necessarily credible—as noted, the United States itself feared a German-led reunification process—but it was still embraced. As Robert Hutchings and Robert Blackwill of the National Security Council concluded on 26 January, built into this strategy was a stark U.S. reminder that even if Gorbachev opposed the turn toward reunification, “we could remind Gorbachev that his troops are fast being pushed out of the region anyway and offer to work with him to create [a] new European security structure that actually addresses Soviet security concerns.” Soviet power was waning; in the interim, the United States would use the threat of an isolated Soviet Union
to block a last-chance Soviet grasp at imposing a solution in Germany. Diplomatic enmeshment would deter the Soviet use of force.

**Conclusion: Grinding Away on Germany**

By February 1990, the United States no longer needed to deter a Soviet crackdown. With Soviet forces being evicted from Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union could not reliably maintain a security presence in the GDR that could impose a military solution. As in Poland, U.S. strategy nominally yielded payoffs as diplomatic maneuvering seemed to deter military action. From February onward, therefore, the United States turned its attention to reunifying Germany within NATO without fear of Soviet blowback.99

**Summary and Implications**

This chapter argued that U.S. strategy looked to deter a Soviet crackdown during the Eastern European Revolutions of 1989 at two major points: as events developed first in Poland, and then in East Germany. In both episodes, the United States utilized nonmilitary means in a cross-domain fashion to deter Soviet military action while helping the U.S. pursue new-found interests in Eastern Europe (see table 13.2). The United States gradually escalated the means employed in these efforts as it became more engaged in Eastern Europe, yet never committed to using force to advance its objectives. Instead, and as one expects when deterrence relationships change because underlying interests shift, U.S. policymakers repackaged preexisting means—many of which were not ideal for the interests at hand—to compel the Soviet Union to accede to U.S. demands. United States policymakers used linkage politics and cross-domain options at the strategic level to obtain the desired operational effects.

United States policy in 1989 and early 1990 illustrates three lessons about what to do when grappling with interest-based change and linkage/cross-domain relationships. First is the importance of proceeding with caution. As U.S. policymakers realized in 1989-1990, uncertainty over where Soviet redlines fell compounded U.S. deterrence problems and made linkage politics attractive—cross-domain action allowed the United States to test the waters with the Soviet Union while interests clarified. This suggests an underappreciated feature of CDD: cross-domain actions, applied in circumstances where interests are ambiguous, can let actors probe intentions, assess sensitivities, and adjudicate the risk of further escalation. As interests change, proceeding judiciously helps policymakers ensure that the effort to extend deterrence to new interests is actually a game worth playing. Equally important, playing for time enables policymakers to more carefully define the objective they are trying to secure and to more carefully link means—which might be poorly structured to secure this interest—to the interest at hand. Linkage and cross-domain options do not eliminate uncertainty and possible escalation; given fluid interests, they also run the risk of injecting additional complexity into an already fraught environment. Compared to a headlong rush with poorly scoped means into an
uncertain arena, however, proceeding cautiously in complex environments limits the risks and prospective costs. This suggests the need for additional research on the strategic utility of time in linkage and cross-domain operations—counterintuitively, speed might not always be of the essence.

**Table 13.2 Linkage politics in 1989–1990: Deterring Soviet intervention in Eastern Europe**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>U.S. means</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poland I, early 1989</td>
<td>Political promises of mutual restraint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland II, spring-summer 1989</td>
<td>Reassurance and engagement to create economic and diplomatic costs to Soviet intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Germany I, fall 1989</td>
<td>Reassurance and engagement to raise broader economic and diplomatic stakes for the Soviet Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Germany II, winter 1990</td>
<td>Tacit threat to isolate the Soviet Union if it contravened U.S. interests</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Second, the U.S. policy during this period reveals how changing interests can make different means relevant to cross-domain relationships. Throughout the 1980s, the United States sought to deter Soviet aggrandizement through the military means at its disposal. Eastern European events, however, saw the United States newly invested in political rather than military developments inside the Soviet empire. This led to a search for new concepts and means (especially nonmilitary means) that could influence events. For policymakers today seeking to understand cross-domain dynamics as new powers emerge on the international scene, the implication is that military means might not always be the most efficacious or viable when it comes to engaging in CDD. Political, strategic, financial, or other considerations might simply take military options off the table and render them unattractive.

Despite the contemporary focus on cross-domain military options, therefore, strategists would do well to cast a broad net when considering options that might be useful in future operational scenarios. And here, particular consideration should be given to diplomatic and economic options. Thus, when seeking to deter Russian aggrandizement in Ukraine or Chinese action in the Western Pacific, attention could be paid to developing sufficient nonmilitary links with those states so that broader political and economic relationships can be held at risk should the situation require. To be sure, the United States has engaged in elements of this strategy in the past, for example by embedding China in global financial institutions and hinting at broader engagement with Russia in European security affairs after the Cold War. Still, these relationships were never fully developed and have largely waned in recent years. Instead, it might be necessary to find ways of *deepening* economic and political
relationships with potential trouble states and to sustain core elements of these relationships even amid tensions so as to retain flexible and graduated nonmilitary deterrent options. In sum, cross-domain operations should be broadly defined to encompass political, economic, and other nonmilitary statecraft tools.

Finally, policymakers must recognize that cross-domain activities amid changing interests might be prone to failure owing to a mismatch between ends and means. Deterrence is challenging enough when states try to link different-but-known issue areas together for deterrent effect. Change what the opponent knows of one’s interests, however, and the problem is magnified. United States strategists in 1989–1990 were aware of this problem and struggled to overcome it; thankfully, the Soviet Union never forced a test of the United States’ solution. Future work, however, needs to examine what happens when cross-domain efforts amid changing objectives are called into question—we need to know more about the risk of failure and the trade-offs that result. These cases would nominally represent instances of (p.316) deterrence failure but, through examination of the decisionmaking involved, should provide insight into why such failures occurred and whether a different ends-means chain would have resolved the problem. Ultimately, because cross-domain relationships are influenced both by the ends sought and the means employed, we need to better understand whether and how deterrence, defense, diplomacy, and strategy are influenced as each factor changes across time and space.

Notes:


(6) The trade-off between current military consumption and domestic growth is unclear, but the need to choose between “guns versus butter” is well understood in strategic discussions; on these dynamics, see: Paul Kennedy, The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers (New York: Random House, 1987); Robert Powell, “Guns, Butter, and Anarchy,” American Political Science Review 87, no. 1 (March 1993):


(10) Israeli analysts hint at this issue, with Israel’s former deputy national security advisor writing that a nuclear deal with Iran—which would leave Israel the only nuclear power in the Middle East—“will enable Israel to divert precious resources to more immediate threats, like Hezbollah’s more than 130,000 rockets, Hamas and the Islamic State.” Chuck Freilich, “A Good Deal for Israel,” New York Times, 19 July 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/20/opinion/a-good-deal-for-israel.html.


(12) This could also work in the opposite direction as states gain new capabilities.


(15) The canonical example is the Anglo-German naval race before 1914, but arms races were also central to the deterrence and coercion strategies of states such as Japan and the U.S.; see: Paul Kennedy, The Rise of the Anglo-German


(18) Thomas C. Schelling, Arms and Influence (New Haven, CT: Yale, 2008).


(20) Thus Schelling’s discussion of “throwing the steering wheel out the window” when trying to convince an opponent that one is willing to act in a seemingly irrational way. On sinking costs and lavishing attention on an issue, see: James Fearon, “Signaling Foreign Policy Interests: Tying Hands versus Sinking Costs,” Journal of Conflict Resolution 41, no. 1 (1997): 68–90, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002797041001004. My thinking on lavishing attention has benefited from conversations with Barry Posen and Daryl Press on postwar U.S. strategy in Europe.

(21) Analysts often consider military means when thinking of automatic retaliation, in part due to the emergence of deterrence theory in Cold War nuclear strategy debates. In the U.S. context, however, policymakers have also looked for automatic nonmilitary tools with which to influence an opponent. In trying to deter Iranian aggrandizement, for instance, Congress has repeatedly passed laws posing automatic economic penalties on any state or business engaged in trade with Iran. This is partly designed to make ongoing U.S. sanctions on Iran credible.

(22) As Press points out, credibility relies on an opponent’s perception that the stakes are worth fighting over. Thus, anything that changes the perception of one’s interests and the means one has to fight over them risks upsetting this relationship.

(23) This is analogous to Walt’s discussion of the difficulties that states encounter in identifying the interests of other states undergoing fundamental domestic

(24) For example, U.S. policymakers in the emerging Cold War felt that U.S. efforts to deter Soviet aggression in Europe were undermined by the limited tools the United States had both to fight in Europe and to threaten attacks on the Soviet Union directly. These problems are detailed in Steven T. Ross, American War Plans: 1945–1950 (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1996).


(30) Gregory F. Domber, Empowering Revolution: America, Poland, and the End of the Cold War (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 11–133. I have also benefited from conversations with Katherine Geohegan on U.S. efforts to challenge the status quo in Eastern Europe in the 1980s. For
illustration of U.S. plans, see: George Shultz to President, “Poland: Next Steps,” 28 March 1983, box 8, Clark Files; William P. Clark to President, “Poland: Next Steps,” c. 28 March 1983, box 8, Clark Files; William P. Clark to President, “NSPG Meeting on Poland in the Situation Room (Friday, April 8, 1983—11:00-11:30 a.m.),” and enclosed options paper and talking points, box 91306, Executive Secretariat: National Security Planning Group Records, all in Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, Simi Valley, CA.


(32) Author’s interview with John C. Whitehead, August 2011.


(38) The preceding is drawn from the collection of primary documents in Svetlana Savranskaya, Thomas S. Blanton, and V. M. Zubok, eds., Masterpieces

(39) Shifrinson, Rising Titans, ch. 5.


(43) Brent Scowcroft, “Meeting with the National Security Council,” 4 April 1989, NSC Meeting Files, George Bush Presidential Library (hereafter GBPL), College Station TX.

(44) Hutchings, American Diplomacy, 8; Robert Hutchings, “National Security Council Meeting on Western Europe and Eastern Europe,” 3 April 1989, NSC Meeting Files, GBPL.


(49) Condoleezza Rice, “DC Meeting on U.S. Policy Options If the Polish Roundtable Succeeds,” 29 March 1989, document provided by GBPL.


(53) American Embassy Warsaw to Secretary of State, “Election ‘89: Solidarity’s Coming Victory: Big or Too Big?,” 2 June 1989, box 34, NSA.


(55) Brent Scowcroft, “Repudiating the Brezhnev Doctrine,” 20 June 1989, box 91117, Rodman Files, GBPL. Bush’s notes on the document indicate agreement with the analysis.


(57) US Mission NATO, “Presentation by DAS Simons at April 13 NAC on Poland,” 14 April 1989, box 35, NSA.


(60) Bush and Scowcroft, A World Transformed, 52.


(63) Author’s interview with National Security Council official, 12 July 2012.

Memcon, “Bilateral Meeting with Wojciech Jaruzelski, Chairman of Poland,” 10 July 1989. See also the conversation between Bush and Gorbachev’s military adviser Sergei Akhromeyev, “Akhromeyev Memcon” (c. August 1989), box CF00721, Rice Files, GBPL.


“Draft Presidential Statement on Poland,” 22 September 1989, CF01410, Hutchings Files, GBPL.


Bush himself suggested the logic of the approach during a July press conference, telling reporters before a trip to Poland and Hungary that the visit “is not to try to—through this statement or anything else—drive wedges between the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. . . . [Gorbachev is] talking about a European home [i.e., a Europe no longer divided between East and West and increasingly interconnected]. And I’m saying that’s a good concept, but let’s be sure a guy can move from room to room. Let’s be sure it’s open. Let’s be sure people can move around in this home;” George H. W. Bush, “The President’s New Conference with Journalists from the Economic Summit Countries,” 6 July 1989, in Peters and Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed 20 March 2018, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=17246. In a preview of Bush’s logic, Rodman had similarly emphasized the need to “keep the heat on the Soviets” with regard to Poland in a June memo; see: Scowcroft, “Repudiating the Brezhnev Doctrine.”


Ibid.


Robert Blackwill, “GDR Contingency Planning,” 7 November 1989, and enclosure, “GDR Crisis Contingencies,” 6 November 1989, CF00182, Blackwill Files, GBPL. This perspective was reinforced in conversations between the author and former policymakers.


See, for instance, Brent Scowcroft, “The Soviets and the German Question,” 29 November 1989, 91116 Scowcroft Files, GBPL.

This approach was outlined in Bush’s initial letter to Gorbachev following the opening of the Berlin Wall. See: George H. W. Bush, “To Mr. General Secretary,” 15 November 1989, box 91127, Scowcroft Files, GBPL.

Bush and Scowcroft, A World Transformed, 148–150; Blackwill, “GDR Contingency Planning,” and “GDR Crisis Contingencies.”

This echoed a State Department recommendation that the United States should avoid “Four Power intervention . . . [to] avoid a Soviet veto”; Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice, Germany Unified and Europe Transformed: A Study in Statecraft (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 405 n. 32.

Robert Hutchings, “The German Question,” 20 November 1989, and enclosure, “Handling the German Question at Malta and Beyond,” CF00717, Rice Files, GBPL.

“Points to Be Made in NSC on Your Discussions with Gorbachev” (c. 30 November 1989), CF00718, Rice Files, GBPL.

James A. Baker III, “Your December Meeting with Gorbachev,” 29 November 1989, document provided by GBPL.

Blackwill, “GDR Contingency Planning” and “GDR Crisis Contingencies.”

Memcon, “First Expanded Bilateral with Chairman Gorbachev of the Soviet Union,” 2 December 1989, CF00718, Rice Files, GBPL.

Memcon, “Second Expanded Bilateral with Chairman Gorbachev of the Soviet Union,” 3 December 1989, Rice Files, GBPL, CF00718; Memcon, “First Restricted Bilateral with Chairman Gorbachev of the Soviet Union,” 2 December 1989, CF00769, Kanter Files, GBPL.


(91) Robert Hutchings, “Responding to Soviet Calls for a Peace Conference” (c. 15 January 1990), and enclosure to the President, “Responding to a Soviet Call for a German Peace Conference,” CF01414, Hutchings Files, GBPL.

(92) Brent Scowcroft, “U.S. Diplomacy for the New Europe,” 22 December 1989, box 91115, Scowcroft Files, GBPL.


(96) For elaboration on this perspective, see Condoleezza Rice, “Preparing for the German Peace Conference,” 14 February 1990, and enclosure to the President, “Preparing for the Six Power German Peace Conference,” CF00716, Rice Files, GBPL; no author [likely Robert Zoellick], “Two Plus Four: Advantages, Possible Concerns, and Rebuttal Points,” 21 February 1990, box 35, NSA.

(97) In addition to the documents in note 96, see also Scowcroft, “Objectives for U.S.-Soviet Relations in 1990.”


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