

North Koreans and Hezbollah alert mankind to the very real prospect that even more frightening payloads will exist in the next-generation missiles. The apprehension of missile warfare has not receded in the twenty years since Soviet-American negotiators met to discuss nuclear disarmament and missile defense in Reykjavik.

The Defense of Missile Defense

Nuclear-tipped missiles—and a possible defensive shield—were uppermost in the minds of the Soviet-American delegations at Reykjavik. Even before taking office, President Ronald Reagan wanted to defend against incoming nuclear missiles. In his 1983 speech that publicly announced the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), Reagan committed the United States to the search for a strategic missile defense system. This novel American approach soon encountered stiff Soviet opposition to what Moscow termed “space-strike weapons.”

Two salient facts about America’s commitment to an antimissile system stand out from the pivotal 1986 summit.¹ First and foremost, Reagan did not regard the SDI as a bargaining chip in the crucial negotiations with the Soviet Union’s Mikhail Gorbachev.² President Reagan pressed hard to convince the Soviet general secretary about the necessity of a defense against nuclear-armed ballistic missiles for both the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The Kremlin chief was wedded to the status quo in the strategic construct as set forth in the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile

Treaty, which enshrined the notion of mutual assured destruction (MAD) for both signatories if nuclear war were to break out. In the arms control calculus, MAD represented the ultimate stable deterrent against a Soviet nuclear attack, for Moscow risked joint destruction with the United States. President Reagan argued that in the event of a Soviet inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM) attack, the MAD strategy left the United States with the unpalatable decision of either doing nothing against a barrage of long-range nuclear missiles or retaliating in kind against Moscow. He hated the choices.

At the historic Soviet-American meeting in Iceland, Ronald Reagan argued for the elimination of all ballistic missiles, for he had long held an especial distaste for the thought of a thermonuclear war. Capitalizing on this apprehension, the Soviet leader offered his U.S. counterpart what seemed the deal of the twentieth century—the reduction of both sides’ strategic offensive arms over a ten-year period to achieve total elimination. But Gorbachev’s proposal contained a catch that remained a deal breaker. The Kremlin chief wanted Reagan to halt all testing in space of new SDI technologies, confirm research and testing on SDI technologies to the laboratory. The Soviet leader never defined what he meant by a laboratory, but his intent was to keep the SDI from going into operation.

In response to this sweeping proposal, Ronald Reagan asked: “If we both eliminate nuclear weapons, why would there be a concern if one side wants to build defensive system just in case?”³ Trying to forge an agreement, America’s fortet commander-in-chief even offered to share SDI technology with the Soviet Union. But he and his secretary of state, George Shultz, would not renounce SDI, believing that without it the had “no leverage to propel the Soviets to continue moving ov

1. For a vivid and authoritative account of the Reykjavik summit, see George P. Shultz, *Turnout and Triumph: My Years As Secretary of State* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1993), pages 751–80.

2. A description of the evolution of the Strategic Defense Initiative up to Ronald Reagan’s announcement speech to the nation on March 23, 1983, can be found in Anderson, *Revolution*, pages 80–99.

3. Shultz, *Turnout and Triumph*, page 771.

way."⁴ The Reagan foreign policy team held firm on sustaining research and development on an antimissile system for strategic long-range ballistic missiles at Reykjavik, despite the immediate perception by the media and pundits of a monumental diplomatic failure on the subarctic island. These first impressions judged that the United States had walked away from an array of Soviet concessions because of a dubious Star Wars fantasy.

Without "SDI as an ongoing propellant," in the words of George Shultz, Moscow's arms control "concessions could wither away over the next ten years."⁵ As the secretary of state and others realized, without the SDI impetus there was no reason for their opposite numbers to come to the negotiating table. As it turned out, during the subsequent George H. W. Bush administration, Gorbachev did, in fact, enter into sweeping nuclear arms reductions in the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks with the United States that had been furthered by the Reagan administration's stance. Had Reagan bargained away the prospects and promise of some type of defense-based deterrence system, it would have been the greatest one-sided bad bargain since Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for bread and pottage. Killing the concept of a defensive option to the MAD strategy would have increased the vulnerability that confronts the United States in the post-Cold War era.

The second and other significant Reykjavik factor that looms large today is that Reagan saw beyond focusing on just the Soviet Union as the only target for his proposed missile defense. It is true that President Reagan strove to eliminate nuclear weapons. But his passion for a protective defense system against strategic ballistic missiles encompassed a much

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wider scope than just the Soviet Union. In a March 1991 speech, nearly two years after Reykjavik, he asserted: "People who put their trust in MAD must trust it to work 100 percent forever—no slip-ups, no madmen, no unmanageable crises, 1 mistakes—forever."⁶

Madman and SDI

Before exploring the vindication of President Reagan's post-Soviet view, it is important to note his thinking on the uses of a missile defense system. Even before Reykjavik, he envisioned the SDI as protection against not only the Soviet Union but also other threats. After his 1985 speech inaugurating the SDI, Reagan faced accusations that he simply employed a strategy, or bargaining chip, to compel the Soviets to reduce the nuclear armory. He argued otherwise to American and Soviet listeners. Later, Reagan wrote with unusual prescience: "Orday a madman could come along and make the missiles an blackmail all of us—but not if we have a defense against him."⁷ President Reagan saw the SDI, not as an "impenetrable shield—no defense could ever be expected to be 100 percent effective," but, as he later wrote, as "a safety valve against cheating—or attacks by lunatics who managed to get their hands on a nuclear missile."⁸

Reagan desperately wanted to reach a verifiable agreement with the Soviets before, after, and during Reykjavik to eliminate nuclear weapons by year 2000, as Gorbachev proposed in early 1986, ten months before the Icelandic summit. What gave the U.S. chief executive officer serious pause were worrie

6. Quoted from Paul Lettow, *Ronald Reagan and His Quest to Abolish Nuclear Weapons* (New York: Random House, 2005), page 240.

7. Ronald Reagan, *An American Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990) page 548.

8. *Ibid.*, page 608.

4. *Ibid.*, page 775.

5. *Ibid.*, page 775.

about an SDI-less America. Such a defenseless scenario left the United States vulnerable, even naked, to long-range strategic missile threats. The ABM treaty did permit tactical and air defense-type missiles.

In his autobiography, the former president wrote a rhetorical question to his readers about the passing of nuclear-tipped missiles into the wrong grasp: "What about the Qaddafis of the world or a lunatic who got his hands on an A-bomb?"⁹

In mentioning by name Muammar al-Qaddafi, the Libyan strongman and terrorist mastermind of a rash of bombings and murders from the 1970s through the downing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, in December 1988, Reagan far-sightedly identified the type of threat America would face in the post-Soviet period. By resorting to terrorism and defying the international community, Qaddafi was the quintessential rogue dictator of the past era. Later, even more wicked and violent men displaced him as terrorist chieftains or took the reins of government in Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, and North Korea.

Just as Reagan wanted to trust but verify arms agreements, he wanted insurance in a dangerous world, even if Gorbachev did scale back on land-based ballistic missiles. In President Reagan's view, if practical, the SDI provided that insurance policy.

The "Qaddafis" of the Post-Soviet Period

Rogue states and substate actors, like terrorist networks, were not envisioned during the Reykjavik proceedings. And these entities now pose special dangers to the United States. Rogue nations burst on the international scene following the breakdown of the Soviet Union to preoccupy U.S. attention. The or-

9. *Ibid.*, page 651.

igns of contemporary rogue states date from the Cold War divisions, however. Much is made, and rightly so, of the immense changes that the Soviet Union's implosion ushered into Central Europe and Central Asia. The legacy of this side of the story was freedom from Soviet rule and independent capitals stretching from Tallinn to Tashkent. Yet, another dimension of the dissolving of Moscow's imperial apparatus has been less explored. The imploded empire left behind pernicious endowments that, like the dragon teeth sowed by the mythical Cadmus, sprang up as outlaw states. Moscow had funded, trained, and armed client states as proxies to confound the United States; they became the rogue states of the post-Berlin Wall era. North Korea and Cuba boasted avowedly Marxist-Leninist governments that masked personal authoritarianism despite Communist trappings. Other proxy states, such as Iraq, Libya, and Syria, professed a bastardized socialism through which their strongmen weaved fascistic systems, replete with secret police, subservient-party structures, and leader-praising slogans. Whatever their internal variations, these Soviet clients shared an abiding antipathy toward the West in general and the United States in particular.

History is replete with examples of rogue polities on the international scene, from the ancient Gauls to Nazi Germany, which functioned outside the world community of their eras. In the contemporary scene, rogue states demonstrate contempt for international norms by repressing their own populations, promoting international terrorism, flouting traditional diplomatic intercourse, and, most of all, seeking weapons of mass destruction (WMD). With the ouster of the Saddam Hussein regime, North Korea and Iran meet these broad criteria in spades.¹⁰ Moreover, they cooperate with one another in developing weapons and missiles.

10. For more analysis of the rogue state phenomenon, see Thomas H. Henriksen,