

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF HISTORY

How Reagan's National Security Decision Directives Can be Applied Today

by

Audrey Sightler

10/2021

Contents

Introduction.....	1
How Reagan’s National Security Decision Directives Can be Applied Today.....	2
Conclusion.....	10
Primary Sources.....	11
Secondary Sources.....	14

Introduction

On May 20, 1982, President Ronald Reagan signed the National Security Decision Directive Number 32. NSDD-32 authorized “diplomatic propaganda, political and military measures to repress the expansion of Soviet control and military presence around the globe.” The National Security Strategy document also includes a covert action element that would sponsor “demonstrations, protests, press articles, television shows and more.” Then, on September 2, President Reagan signed the NSDD-54 into law; the document was titled “U.S. Policy Towards Eastern Europe,” which declared to remove the Soviet Union presence in Eastern Europe; thus, re-unifying it with Western Europe. However, the NSDD-75 would become the most strategic and unique document in U.S. history. The NSDD-75 had many ways in which it was carried out. Still, the most significant way the policy discouraged the Soviet Union was by rapid U.S. military build-up and the Strategic Defense Initiative.

The NSDD-75 also included ideological objectives, such as: “U.S. policy must have an ideological thrust which affirms the superiority of U.S. and Western values of individual dignity and freedom, a free press, free trade unions, free enterprise, and political democracy over the repressive features of Soviet Communism.” This paper breaks down these national security documents through unclassified sources and analysis from various scholars, which gives a clear and definite understanding of how these policies ended the Cold War. Moreover, to analyze these policies by today’s standards and how policymakers can use with rising global powers such as the Communist Chinese Party and Russian influence.

How Reagan's National Security Decision Directives Can be Applied Today

The Reagan administration directed an assertive campaign to proactively challenge the Soviet Union, including mitigating the Soviet influence over Eastern Europe. President Reagan's top advisor, Richard Pipes, joined Reagan's National Security Council in 1982. Pipes established the two fundamental National Security Decision Directives and formed an Active Measures Group, including orchestrating an extensive series of irregular operations and strategies worldwide. Reagan's National Security Council worked on a strategic level that outlined an assertive campaign to contend the Soviets. On May 20, 1982, Reagan signed into law the NSDD-32 that authorized "diplomatic, propaganda, military, and political action to contain and reserve the expansion of Soviet control and military presence through the world" (Going on the Offensive: A U.S. Strategy to Combat Russian Information Warfare, n.d.).

Reagan then signed the NSDD-54 on September 2, 1982, titled "U.S. Policies Towards Eastern Europe." The NSDD-54 stretched further past the NSDD-32; it would be the policy that would release Moscow's grip from Eastern Europe; thus, it included "encouraging more liberal trends in the region" (Going on the Offensive: A U.S. Strategy to Combat Russian Information Warfare, n.d.). Moreover, to "reinforce the pro-Western orientation of their peoples." Likewise, "undermining the military capabilities of the Warsaw Pact." In January of 1983, the Reagan administration released the NSDD-75, titled "U.S. Relations with the U.S.S.R." The policy declared that the U.S. and Soviet Union system would no longer coincide (Going on the Offensive: A U.S. Strategy to Combat Russian Information Warfare, n.d.). The NSDD-75 stated that three inter-related missions would be within the policy regarding the Soviet Union. Once, to

reserve the Soviet Union to expand by competing on a continuous basis and change the Soviet Union toward a pluralistic political and economic system; likewise, to undertake negotiations with the Soviet Union, which secured and magnified U.S. interest (Going on the Offensive: A U.S. Strategy to Combat Russian Information Warfare, n.d.).

Moreover, the NSDD-75 contended the U.S. had to utilize a comprehensive array of military, economic, political, and other various tools such as ideology. Hence, “U.S. policy must have an ideological thrust which affirms the superiority of U.S. and Western values of individual dignity and freedom, and political democracy over the repressive features of Soviet Communism” (Clark, 1983). The NSDD-75 emphasized that Eastern Europe was the focal point of the policy, stating, “The primary U.S. objective in Eastern Europe is to loosen Moscow hold on the region while promoting the cause of human rights in individual Eastern European countries” (Clark, 1983). Furthermore, Active Measures Working Group used the documents to search for propaganda that the Soviet Union was overtly using. The group “worked as an interrogative organization which would compile examples of Soviet disinformation” (Clark, 1983). The group would then use the C.I.A.’s forgeries database containing U.S. intelligence experts and K.G.B. defectors. In contrast, the group would publish the results to inform a cast audience of U.S. government officials, foreign officials, and journalists (Going on the Offensive: A U.S. Strategy to Combat Russian Information Warfare, n.d.).

Led by the U.S. State Department, the group would eventually publish many reports on Soviet disinformation and anti-American K.G.B. forgeries. The Reagan administration aggressively campaigned against the Soviet influence around the world. The U.S. and Soviet

military were at significant risk of a nuclear confrontation. Therefore, Reagan believed that using unconventional tactics would be the better route to take in order to counter Russia elaborating through local surrogates. Hence, the administration organized an enormous scope of unconventional programs around the globe, such as Europe, the Middle East, Latin America, and many other continents. Richard Pipes' National Security Decision Directives became a pivotal element to the Reagan Doctrine.

The multi-faceted foreign policy gave a vast increase in pro-freedom public diplomacy that essentially drove the Soviet's economy to its collapse by reducing the oil price, including increasing U.S. support of anti-communist forces within Afghanistan and Nicaragua. In 1976, Pipes also assisted in developing public policy when leading a coalition by the name of "Team B" in which analyzed Soviet military strategy and U.S. foreign policy, the team was made up of military and foreign policy professionals. "Team B" advocated for policy that heightened aggression towards the Soviet Union; likewise, leaving no accommodating policy towards Russia. The action was first recommended by the C.I.A.'s team, "Team A." The analysis by Team B facilitated the offensive strategy of the Reagan Doctrine and, in turn, drew the Cold War to a close (Going on the Offensive: A U.S. Strategy to Combat Russian Information Warfare, n.d.).

Today, Russia considers the United States as its greatest adversary. To cause discord within the U.S., Russian leaders often engage in aggressive onslaught disinformation campaigns. And, most importantly, Washington D.C. undermined the United States' influence on the world stage and increased their influence. On January 10, 2018, The Moscow Times released a survey

by the Levada Center, which suggested that 66% of Russians believed that their country had an enemy. Of those, two-thirds indicated that the U.S. was Russia's most prominent adversary. Moscow's efforts have responded to what they perceive as three decades of indignity due to the collapse of the Soviet Union, along with Russia's displeasure of the European Union and NATO expanding in proximity to their border, especially Ukraine. In past years since the Reagan administration, has at times been maladroit to Russia's information warfare; this was due to the United States' implications in being able and ill-prepared to combat a new Cold War. Once 9/11 occurred, the U.S. focused on lethal operations versus political and information. Hence, being able to target terrorists by using precision-strike capabilities. However, such resources and weaponry have a limited influence against adversaries that fight information and disinformation warfare.

The United States' single most important necessity is developing an information warfare campaign that properly competes against adversaries such as Communist China and Russia. As reviewed in the latter section of the essay, the United States effectively and proactively established an information campaign to counter the Soviet Union during the Cold War. The movement was accomplished by a combination of overt and covert programs. The Reagan administration becomes a successful playbook that is a crucial model of success in countering Communist China and Russia. The U.S. strategy and covert operations implemented during the Cold War provide a valuable outline for today's adversaries. Moscow often targets Facebook, Instagram, and various media applications of today's Information Age, far different from the Soviet Union's targets during the Cold War era. However, the importance and necessity for the U.S. countering Russian influence is still the same needed end goal as during the Cold War. The importance of defense, such as protecting allied cyber networks, disinformation, and exposing

the Russian online influence, can be significantly thwarted by the U.S. government implementing an offensive information campaign similar to the Reagan administration.

The U.S. should punish Russia as soon as these incidents are identified by pressuring Russia to inhibit its information warfare campaign; likewise, exploiting Russia's weaknesses. This could be managed by a series of steps similar to the National Security Decision Directives designed and used during the Reagan administration. These steps also can counter Communist China in information warfare. First, U.S. leaders have to be clear and straightforward in warning Russian leaders publicly and privately that any information warfare will be countered with equal importance and force. When the Soviet Union influenced the globe during the Cold War, President Reagan actively responded by vowing to put the communist ideology where it belonged, stating, "leave Marxism-Leninism on the ash-heap of history." The Soviets understood quite quickly that Reagan was resolute in his warnings on combating them on every front necessary. Secondly, the U.S. must continue developing state-of-the-art offensive cyber capabilities, which is greatly needed to counter Communist China and Russia as attacks from both nations have become increasingly more dangerous and frequent. And thirdly, the U.S. should take an active role in destabilizing both China and Russia economically, including their military capabilities, and diplomatically. If needed, the U.S. more than likely can provide overt and covert backing to nations such as Ukraine to combat and weaken Russia's influence and grip on that region (Going on the Offensive: A U.S. Strategy to Combat Russian Information Warfare, n.d.).

Communist China poses a similar threat as Russia does. Therefore, an action similar to the National Security Decision Directive 75 would provide a similar opposition counter. The

policy was meant to compete against the Soviet Union in all the international arenas. China has become a dominating force economically through its relationship with the U.S. and other various large markets. The nation has also put itself in a central position in global supply and is significantly financed by multinational corporations and financial institutions that have increasingly given China vast wealth. The U.S. enabling our corporations to expand and increase Communist China's wealth will inevitably lead to many implications throughout our economy and supply chain. To counter the C.C.P. and its preeminence, the U.S. should restrain investments to Chinese corporations and industries known to support the C.C.P. and their human rights violations.

Also, the U.S. should block all access to U.S. technology and any areas to give the C.C.P. access to possible military technology advancement. Further action such as constructing a new global trade to decrease dependency on China would also benefit U.S. National Security. To quote Congressman Mike Gallagher, "To wage a Reagan-style ideological offensive against China's communist government, the United States must first promote its track record and values as a direct contrast to the C.C.P. America's diplomatic and development achievements are an indispensable public diplomacy asset that China's Communist leaders cannot hope to match. Reagan was fond of arguing that even former adversaries, once incorporated into the American-led international community, have prospered economically and politically. America's historic magnanimity is especially potent in light of the C.C.P.'s growing reputation for debt traps, economic coercion, and regional bullying" (Gallagher, n.d.).

China's activities are retrospective to the Soviet Union attempting to expand influence and counteracting democracies throughout the developing world, such as Taiwan. Although, the Soviets, for the most part, fought proxy wars in opposition to the U.S., unlike China thus far. However, adopting a new form of the Reagan Doctrine to counter China's opportunities to expand and influence by economic and political power would be an exceptional route for Washington D.C. The dissimilarity between countering China versus the Soviet Union is that rather than providing weaponry to various countries, giving other forms of support such as offering an alternative to Chinese investment and financing would help vulnerable countries resist Chinese influence.

Moreover, "The most interesting conclusion concerning the end of the U.S.S.R. by the general secretary of China's Communist Party is that the Soviets were insufficiently dedicated to an ideology. According to Xi, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union became corrupted by wealth, leading to a loss of faith and political legitimacy. As Xi put it: 'The wavering of idealistic faith is the most dangerous form of wavering. A political party's decline often starts with the loss or lack of idealistic faith'" (Gallagher, n.d.). This being said, Xi already suggests that China is a considerably large superpower that cannot afford to waver the same as the Soviet Union under the pressure of the Reagan administration. Xi knows that once their political system was to be actively challenged to such a degree, it would waver.

In 2019, the United States was estimated to spend \$649 billion on military capabilities. At the same time, China ranked second to military spending, which was about \$261 billion. By monitoring China's defense budget, we can try to avoid the issue of being unaware of their military build-up as the U.S. was of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union absorbed ten countries

and did so on an average of one every six months. However, this was mainly due to the U.S. failing in Vietnam, which was bolstered by a significant military build-up. By around 1979, under President Jimmy Carter, the Soviet Union military spending was approximated at 12 to 14 percent of Russia's G.P.N.; likewise, it was up 70% more in the U.S. dollar than U.S. defense spending (Holzman, 1989). In November of 1979, during the Iran hostage crisis, public opinion questioned the U.S. military capabilities; Carter responded by furthering the defense budget. However, Reagan made it a point to add to Carter's defense spending proposal once he took office. U.S. defense spending had increased from \$134 billion in 1980 to \$253 billion in 1985, which increased by 42%, which was greatly needed to counter the Soviet Union to show the United States strength on the world stage (Wrabley, 1991).

To quote President Reagan's top advisor, Richard Pipes, "Because totalitarian rule strives for the impossible and wants to place at its disposal the personality of man and destiny, it can be realized only in a fragmentary manner. It lies in its being that its goal can never be attained and made total but must remain a tendency, a claim to rule. Totalitarian rule is not a thoroughly rationalized apparatus that works with equal effectiveness in all its parts. This is something it would well like to be, and in some places, it may perhaps approach this ideal, but seen as a whole, its claim to power is realizable only in a diffuse manner, with very different intensities at various times in various realms of life; at the same time, totalitarian and non-totalitarian features are always commingled. But this is precisely why the consequences of the totalitarian claim to power are so dangerous and oppressive because they are so hazy, so incalculable, and so difficult to demonstrate. This contortion follows from the unfulfillable aspiration to power: it

characterizes life under such a regime and makes it so exceedingly difficult for all outsiders to grasp” (Edwards, n.d.).

Conclusion

In conclusion, there is great importance for the U.S. to incorporate National Security Decision Directive 75 to today’s policies towards both China and Russia to contain and over time reverse expansionism while working towards, as the document stated, “a more pluralistic political system.” The document also included, “U.S. policy on economic relations with the U.S.S.R. must serve strategic and foreign policy goals as well as economic interests. In this context, U.S. objectives are above all to ensure that east West economic relations do not facilitate the Soviet military build-up. This requires preventing the transfer of technology and equipment that would substantially contribute directly or indirectly to Soviet military power. And to avoid subsidizing the soviet economy or unduly easing the burden of soviet resources allocate decisions so as not to dilute pressures for structural change in the Soviet system.” Such economic sanctions would benefit from containing China’s economic expansion and wealth, which minimizes their capabilities in defense spending and puts pressure on democracies such as Taiwan.

Primary Sources

Going on the Offensive: A U.S. Strategy to Combat Russian Information Warfare. (n.d.).

Www.csis.org. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/going-offensive-us-strategy-combat-russian-information-warfare>

Clark, W. (1983). *FOR THE PRESIDENT: SECRET-* of a-lcpies 03.

<https://irp.fas.org/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-75.pdf>

Edwards, L. (n.d.). *Remembering Richard Pipes, a Cold Warrior Extraordinaire.* The Heritage Foundation. Retrieved September 15, 2021, from

<https://www.heritage.org/conservatism/commentary/remembering-richard-pipes-cold-warrior-extraordinaire>

Esno, T. (2017). *Reagan's Economic War on the Soviet Union.* *Diplomatic History*, 42(2), 281–304.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/dh/dhx061>

F. of A. S. (1982, May 20). *National Security Decision Directive 32: U.S. National Security*

Strategy. Homeland Security Digital Library. <https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=462986>

DOBSON, A. P. (2005). *The Reagan Administration, Economic Warfare, and Starting to Close Down*

the Cold War. *Diplomatic History*, 29(3), 531–556. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24915133>

Gallagher, M. (n.d.). *The Lost Art of Ideological Warfare [Review of The Lost Art of Ideological Warfare]*. The Reagan Foundation.

https://www.reaganfoundation.org/media/354768/rep_gallagher_moscow_state_university.pdf

Fischer, B. A. (1997). *Toeing the Hardline? The Reagan Administration and the Ending of the Cold War*. *Political Science Quarterly*, 112(3), 477–496. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2657567>

Secondary Sources

- Holzman, F. D. (1982). Soviet Military Spending: Assessing the Numbers Game. *International Security*, 6(4), 78–101. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2538679>
- M.A.T.L.O.C.K., J. (2017). *Reagan and the World: Leadership and National Security, 1981--1989* (B. L. C.O.L.E.M.A.N. & K. L.O.N.G.L.E.Y., Eds.). University Press of Kentucky.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1p6jhqm>
- Strobe Talbott. (2004, August). *Reagan and Gorbachev: Shutting the Cold War Down*. Brookings; Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/reagan-and-gorbachev-shutting-the-cold-war-down/>
- Rowland, R. C., & Jones, J. M. (2016). *Reagan's Strategy for the Cold War and the Evil Empire Address*. *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, 19(3), 427–464.
<https://doi.org/10.14321/rhetpublaffa.19.3.0427>
- Glantz, D., & Reagan. (n.d.). *Reagan and the Soviet Union: Competing Military Strategies, 1980-1988*. Retrieved September 24, 2021, from https://www.vmi.edu/media/content-assets/documents/adams-center/4-Military-Strategies_Final.pdf
- <https://www.washingtontimes.com>, T. W. T. (n.d.). *When Pope John Paul II and Ronald Reagan engineered the collapse of communism*. The Washington Times. Retrieved September 24, 2021,

from <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2020/oct/8/pope-john-paul-ii-and-ronald-reagan-communism/>

Wrabley, R. B. (1991). AntiFederalism and the Presidency. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 21(3), 459–470. https://www.jstor.org/stable/27550766?read-now=1&refreqid=excelsior%3A7b94f6a6535079b201933ffacfc2de10&seq=2#page_scan_tab_contents