

Bush's 'Beyond Containment' strategy toward the Eastern Bloc in 1989 within the US Foreign Policy context¹

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Politics in Central Europe (ISSN: 1801-3422)

Vol. 17, No. 2

DOI: 10.2478/pce-2021-0016

Abstract: *This paper explores the foreign policy of US President George H. W. Bush and his administration towards the Soviet Union and the other countries of the Warsaw Pact. The article also focuses on two historically significant American foreign policy strategies that were implemented during the earlier years of the Cold War: containment and détente. The rapidly changing international environment and Bush's Beyond Containment policy which, aimed to respond to these changes, became the basis for the following research questions: 1) How did American conception of foreign policy approach to Eastern Bloc countries such as Hungary or Poland change under the Bush administration in 1989 in comparison to the period of implementation of the containment or détente? 2) How did the American perception of the retreating Soviet power within the bipolar international structure affect American diplomatic relations with the Eastern European governments? The aim of the paper is to put Bush's foreign policy in his first year in office in the American 'Cold War' foreign policy context and to compare the classical American political strategies with Bush's foreign policy in 1989.*

Keywords: *George H. W. Bush, U. S: Foreign Policy, Eastern Bloc, Beyond Containment, Containment, Détente*

¹ This paper is the result of a project of specific research 'US diplomacy towards Hungary during the "Goulash Communism" and Détente (1973–1977)' supported by the Philosophical Faculty of the University of Hradec Králové in 2020.

Introduction

On December 31, 1989, George Bush wrote: *'It's been some year – a fascinating year of change. I end the year with more confidence'* (Bush 1999: 451). The role of US President George H. W. Bush and the foreign policy of his administration in the revolutionary events in Eastern and Central Europe in 1989 is often overlooked by both scholars and society at large. Far more attention is paid to his predecessor in the position of US President Ronald Reagan, or to the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, in the analysis of the fall of communist regimes. However, the Bush presidency (1989–1993) should not be neglected. It was Bush who led the United States at the time when the Eastern Bloc and the entire Soviet Union was disintegrating. Henry Kissinger even subsequently described Bush's presidency as *'the most tumultuous four years since Truman's reign'* (Meacham 2015: 354).

The geopolitical development during the Bush presidency was markedly different from the previous more than forty post-war years which were characterised by a clear bipolar structure of the world order of the two rival powers during the Cold War. Back in the second half of the 1970s, shortly after Henry Kissinger's resignation as Secretary of State and the gradual retardation of détente policy in US-Soviet relations, Corin Bell (1977: 27) described the West's hopes for the Cold War development as follows: *'An optimistic American vision of the Cold War would assume that the USSR could weaken as a political power, allowing Eastern Europe to regain its autonomy, and end the military threat and possibility of Soviet influence expansion overseas'*. She herself considered these hopes to be *'highly unrealistic'* (Bell 1977: 27).

However, during the Bush presidency, the original bipolar order completely disintegrated, optimistic visions of the West began to come true and the United States was heading for the dream of 'a unipolar moment in its history'. Bush became president in January 1989, at a time when the change in the Soviet perception of its foreign policy and Gorbachev's rejection of Brezhnev's doctrine significantly affected the countries of Eastern Europe. The gradual loosening of Soviet oversight of its 'satellite countries' led to the fall of the communist regimes in those countries and the eventual fall of the 'Iron Curtain' in 1989. The second superpower of the bipolar structure, the United States, sought to respond to these rapid changes overseas.

This paper focuses on the newly created American foreign policy, called 'Beyond Containment', as introduced by President Bush in the first half of 1989. The paper deals with the development of Bush policy towards the rapidly changing situation in the Warsaw Pact countries, especially in Hungary and Poland. The research goal of the paper is a comparative analysis of the ideological shift in American foreign policy in the form of the newly created foreign policy concept

of the Bush administration in comparison with previous important concepts of American foreign policy – the strategy of containment and détente.

Of course, it is not our intention here to shed light on all theories of American foreign policy approach to the Soviet Union, but to focus only on the fundamental points of those concepts that played a crucial role in creating the American position towards the Eastern Bloc. George F. Kennan's containment policy that provided the fundamentals of Bush's later strategy and the policy of détente, which was promoted by the United States, especially during Henry Kissinger's tenure as National Security Adviser and then Secretary of State, was chosen for comparison. On the contrary, the paper omits Cold War strategies that, despite their undeniable importance, did not settle into American foreign policy discourse to a significant extent.²

American post-war foreign policy concepts

The strategy of containment

'The question is whether to think of the world as a deadly struggle between those who call themselves communists and those who do not. This fight could eventually lead to the complete destruction of one or both' (Kennan 1964: 41).

The most successful American post-war foreign policy theory in terms of its later implementation in real politics has proven to be the policy of containment. This foreign policy strategy, based on the post-war views of George F. Kennan, then an employee of the US Embassy in Moscow, became a fundamental pillar of US foreign policy toward communist countries in the following decades and was also strongly embedded in the Truman Doctrine. However, Kennan's work, which was based on a historical approach together with an elaborate realistic perspective following the ideas of Hans J. Morgenthau, had to, as well as later strategies, react to current world events, and not only be fixed to its own ideological base (Blažek – Pšeja 2005: 36).

Given the danger represented by the Soviet Union at the time, the basic principle of this strategy was containment of Soviet foreign expansionism which would cause the structural problems of this empire to turn inwards into the Soviet system resulting in provoking possible changes within the Soviet Union itself (Guzzini 2004: 70). In his strategy, Kennan perceived the USSR foreign policy as a patient and pragmatic form of power policy that does not follow ethical norms and has no respect for international law (Guzzini 2004: 72). He further argued that the United States was seen as an imperialist power

2 For example, Johnson's 'Building Bridges' strategy.

from the Soviet perspective, and that seen from the inside of the Soviet Union, confrontation was inevitable. He said the United States had to prepare for this inevitability by putting its containment strategy into practice. Kennan (1951: 119): *'We must have a policy of resolute containment that is designed so that the Russians, wherever they tend to disrupt the interests of a peaceful and stable world, face steadfast counter-pressure'*.

As a self-proclaimed realist, Kennan obviously also focused on the question of balance of power. In the case of Soviet expansion into other countries, he recommended creating pressure that would elicit a change in the internal policy of the Soviet Union and, at the same time, help the United States to establish a stable balance of power. According to him, the Soviets were more willing to retreat on individual parts of the diplomatic front in this case, but only if they felt that the diplomatic pressure was too strong (Kennan 1951: 118–119). On the contrary, he recommended American restraint in areas that were already definitely a territory of Soviet security interests for him. The ultimate goal was to bring about changes in the Soviet perception of international relations that would be more beneficial to the United States (Guzzini 2004: 73). What was therefore a significant factor in foreign policy toward the USSR was a policy that is pragmatic and protects American inviolable spheres of influence.

Kennan's concept was introduced at a time of significant post-war changes in American politics and was linked to the beginning of the Cold War. Truman's fear that the Soviet Union might attempt an early attack on the United States led him to believe that Kennan's containment strategy needed to be put into practice through what later became known as the 'Truman Doctrine'. However, after the Eisenhower administration took office in 1953, many concepts of this doctrine were criticised. In particular, the then-Secretary of State John Foster Dulles considered the containment too moderate and generally proposed a more forceful approach to communist countries.

Although the focus of the containment strategy lay primarily on the relationship with the Soviet Union, Kennan also touched on the issue of Central and Eastern Europe in his deliberations. Here, too, he followed his realistic view, when, despite his opposition to the Stalinist system, he considered the actions of the Soviet Union in Central Europe to be logical, because according to him, the USSR only legitimately sought to secure its position and its own security in the international system (Hanuš 2015: 157–159). It was this premise that was unacceptable to Dulles. According to him, the United States should not automatically accept Eastern Europe as a territory of Soviet influence but seek a policy of 'liberation of captured countries'. Kennan, on the other hand, considered the most dangerous moment for world security to be the possible weakening influence of the Soviets on their satellites in Europe, which could lead Soviet leaders to a desperate reaction (Hanuš 2015: 157–159). In the following periods, containment retained its unquestionable influence, even though

Kennan himself saw the Soviet-Chinese rift, as evidence of the invalidation of his original concept.³

Efforts to replace the policy of containment and the search for new approaches in relation to the USSR

Although the bipolar post-war international system was rather rigid and essentially unchanged, especially the growth of Soviet military power and the associated greater geopolitical demands of the Soviets gradually forced Americans to seek new strategic approaches to their main challenger and overcome the policy of containment. This effort was most pronounced in the context of the détente policy. Nixon's presidency (1969–1974) marked a significant foreign policy milestone, which also significantly affected US-Soviet relations.

In addition to the already mentioned impact of the growth of the Soviet armed forces and the American economic difficulties, it is necessary to mention two other topics that contributed to the enforcement of the détente policy – American participation in the Vietnam War and the Sino-Soviet split. The military presence in Vietnam had decreased the number of usable US forces in order to carry out firm containment, and therefore has been one of the reasons for modifying this strategy. By contrast, China's disputes with the Soviet Union, especially in the border areas of those countries, forced both communist powers to turn to the long-hated United States and agree to a process of easing tensions with the West. It is therefore obvious that emergence of the containment strategy thus took place under completely different geopolitical conditions than détente. Now the Soviets claimed that *'the United States and the USSR have a common goal, to stop Chinese expansion'* (Ferguson 2015: 736).

In this constellation, and at a time when the Soviet Union had essentially managed to achieve a strategic balance with the West, the then-National Security Adviser and later Secretary of State Henry Kissinger became determined to pursue a policy of détente. As the name of this strategy suggests, the main feature was the effort to replace the current confrontational style in relation to the Soviets with mutual cooperation and greater involvement of the USSR in political and economic ties with the West. Efforts to improve US-Soviet relations could already be seen during Lyndon Johnson's previous government as part of his 'Building Bridges' strategy. However, it had never achieved the success of the détente policy. In essence, Kissinger suggested that the United States be willing to accept the USSR as an equal international player in exchange for some moderation of aggressive Soviet foreign policy and then use this balance to its advantage (Guzzini 2004: 113).

3 He considered this rift to be proof that the communist movement was no longer united and its strategy no longer needed to be applied (Suchý 2005: 59).

Given the fact that the forces of the two great powers were almost equal in terms of military readiness, in Kissinger's view it was no longer possible to continue to sharpen mutual US-Soviet relations. On the contrary, it was necessary to move towards reducing political tensions. So Kissinger, like Kennan before, relied heavily on the concept of power balance. He also connected with Kennan in that he, unlike the conservative wing of the Republican Party, refused to demonise the Soviet Union. He held on to the opinion that although there would be no reconciliation between the two great powers in the near future, the Soviet Union did not intend to attack the United States militarily, and it was therefore possible to make mutual concessions (Kissinger 1997: 795).

Although containment strategy and détente are considered to be realistic theories, several contradictions can be found. Above all, it is necessary to emphasise Kissinger's milder view of negotiations with the Soviet Union, as well as partial confidence that cooperation with the Soviets is possible and desirable in view of the then world order. However, it is not possible to separate the two strategies, because détente also has its ideological roots partially in Kennan's strategy. The common features of both theories were, in particular, the presence of de-ideologisation, the concept of containment of Soviet expansive tendencies, but also an attempt to partially pacify the Soviet Union, without using the concept of reconciliation (Guzzini 2004: 126).⁴

In real politics, for example, this policy has been reflected in negotiations on the Strategic Arms Limitation (SALT). According to many, the SALT agreement has become the most prominent point of the détente policy (Litera et al. 2000: 506). What no less marked the international scene during the Kissinger strategy was the so-called 'Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe', which subsequently acted in the following years as a means of pressure from the United States on the Soviet Union, especially in the field of human rights, and is considered to be an important element in reducing tensions during this phase of the Cold War. This act enabled the West to criticise the actions of the Soviet leadership in relation to Soviet and Eastern European citizens when the USSR in the following years often did not follow the resolutions of this act.

According to many experts, détente became the culmination of the policy of containment and took over as the new most important American foreign policy strategy (Guzzini 2004: 126). Although it later faced criticism for giving way back to Soviet demands, it happened to be the least hostile period between the two superpowers since the end of World War II during Nixon's tenure (Litera et al. 2000: 507). Détente, which developed during Nixon's reign under the leadership of Henry Kissinger, was not abandoned even after the

4 Kissinger (1982: 241–242) described the connection of his policy to the containment as follows: 'A détente policy is dangerous if it does not include a strategy of containment, but containment is unsustainable if it is not linked to a vision of peace'. Peace was, in his eyes, connected precisely with the effects of the détente.

resignation of the president in 1974. His successor Gerald Ford, although he despised the word *détente* itself, continued to support the most important features of the policy.⁵

The end of Reagan's term and the dawn of Bush's administration

At the time of his inauguration, George H. W. Bush was well informed of the Soviet political changes in the policy of *Perestroika* and *Glasnost*, as he had participated several times directly in previous negotiations between Reagan and Gorbachev as Vice President. The last summit of the two presidents on Governors Island in December 1988, shortly before Bush took office, was particularly important to him. Here, Bush, although still only in the position of 'President Elect', already played a dominant role and Reagan was rather a passive participant. The importance of the meeting was increased by the fact that Gorbachev delivered his famous speech at the UN before the summit. Gorbachev, for example, announced the change of Soviet doctrine which had become rather defensive (C-Span 1988).⁶

Gorbachev's statements before the summit were ground-breaking for the Cold War rhetoric and could be seen as a significant step towards the US-Soviet agreements that the Soviets wanted to finish with the new US administration. Bush believed that if Gorbachev did live up to his promise, he could begin political talks leading to a more stable international environment (Sununu 2015: 94). At the same time, Gorbachev's emphasis on announcing the threat of force no longer playing an important role in the international environment was understood in such a way that the Eastern Bloc countries could decide the direction of their 'reconstruction' themselves without any pressure from Moscow (Engel 2017: 65). This belief subsequently played an important role in shaping the American foreign policy towards Hungary and Poland.

Although Bush, as Vice President of the previous government, was expected to follow the foreign policy of the Reagan administration, his actions began to take a different path from Reagan's approach. From the beginning of his candidacy, Bush was disappointed that his policy was widely assumed to be a mere clone of Reagan's policy. He therefore set himself the goal of creating his own identity and defining himself against the previous policy while keeping in mind that Reagan and his policy should not be discarded in any way. Above all, the newly elected president believed that Reagan had become too trusting of Gor-

5 According to Kissinger himself, the *détente* was ended only by Reagan's rhetoric in his first term of office (Kissinger 1997: 802).

6 Gorbachev also opposed arms races or reported a reduction in the number of Soviet troops in other Warsaw Pact countries (Gorbachev 2014: 406–407). This reduction included the promise of the early withdrawal of fifty thousand soldiers and five thousand tanks from East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Hungary (Sebestyen 2011: 245).

bachev and had put all faith in change of the Soviet Union into him, which he considered to be wrong and dangerous (Engel 2017: 48). In the domestic policy, Bush's policies were greatly influenced by the country's economic situation, which he inherited from the Reagan administration. Low taxes coupled with Reagan's economic policy and enormous military spending had put significant pressure on the US budget deficit. Economic problems subsequently manifested themselves in policy towards the Eastern Bloc and in insufficient financial assistance to democratizing countries.⁷

When Bush took office, he was clear about the many challenges his administration would have to face in foreign policy. However, the turbulent times eventually somehow shifted priorities, and so the main problems of Bush's foreign policy were the events in China (especially the situation after the military intervention in Tiananmen Square), Latin America (especially in Central America-Panama and Nicaragua), the Soviet Union/ Eastern Europe and the Gulf War. But Bush was sure of what he wanted to do in office. In his inaugural speech, he stated that *'freedom works... we know how to ensure a prosperous life for man: through the free market, freedom of speech and a free choice'* (Engel 2017: 72). For him, a possible triumph in the Cold War meant the victory of democracy over all other systems and was thus the central goal of his foreign policy.

National Security Policy Review

In the first months of Bush's presidency, a typical question for the new president was when the administration would determine a major initiative to set the direction for US policy on the Eastern Bloc. Bush's response then mostly turned to the need to rethink foreign policy toward the Soviet Union, which he said needed more time and patience.

After several weeks of considering the situation and under the influence of his colleagues, the new president decided on the 15th of February to draw up a summary of foreign policy towards the USSR with a possible outlook for the future. Bush had his subordinates draft a National Security Review which was primarily intended to answer questions that would determine his policy toward the Soviets. Brent Scowcroft and his team were mainly responsible for the elaboration. The aim of the report was to seek answers to the question of the likelihood of success of Gorbachev's changes – should we continue to count on Gorbachev, or will he be overthrown by conservative circles in the leadership of the Soviet Union?

It was still a popular opinion in the administration that Gorbachev was acting in order to restore the strength of the Soviet economy and army and, consequently, to attempt to take global dominance. These fears led the admin-

7 In addition, Bush faced the most unanimous opposition of all 20th-century American presidents in Congress, which inevitably led him to replace Reagan's confrontational policy toward Democrats with a policy of bipartisanship.

istration to refuse to make cuts in military spending, which, according to the Americans, could be taken advantage of by the Soviet Union. Although the US president was criticised for his restraint during this period, which was sometimes presented to the media as a sign of weakness, Bush saw the more positive side of his policies. He defended his policy as a negotiation from a position of power while considering the USSR as a weakening power that can only wait for American initiatives (Greene 2000: 91).

The National Security Review (NSR), which was completed in mid-March, in a way confirmed with the final wording of the document the criticism that Bush received in the first months from the media or the opposition for his reactionary approach to events behind the 'Iron Curtain'.⁸ Secretary of State Baker, who wanted to see a more active role for the United States in the Eastern Bloc, criticised the report as weak, and US Ambassador to Moscow Jack Matlock described the main message of the report as '*do nothing, stand where you are*' (Engel 2017: 133, Green 2000: 90).

Due to his restraint, Bush subsequently came under pressure from his allies. For example, Canadian Prime Minister Mulroney told Bush personally that he was highly critical of the US position: '*The Russians have withdrawn from Afghanistan, making unilateral restrictions in Eastern Europe. The United States must take the initiative, or the Soviets will gain a strategic advantage*' (Engel 2017: 98). Bush eventually agreed with this view, but at the same time understood from the results of the NSR report that his colleagues, including National Security Council staff, are more sceptical of Gorbachev and his plans than himself, and claimed that a rapid response to his actions could jeopardise not only security of the US, but also their allies (Sununu 2015: 95).

It was clear, however, that the Bush administration was yet been interested in taking the initiative in talks with the Soviets and taking full advantage of the opportunities offered by the newly formed Soviet foreign policy. Henry Kissinger himself was a critical voice on cautious policy in the Bush advisory team. Given his political and academic background, it was no surprise that in those days he sought to emphasise the need for a 'big strategy' for US foreign policy (Bush – Scowcroft 1998: 26). At the time, however, members of the US administration continued to care essentially only about the status quo and its protection in relations with the Soviets and the Eastern bloc.

The main points of the NSR report were the recommendation that the administration should do everything to succeed on the domestic scene and thus strengthen the American image abroad. In the field of foreign policy, the report proposed further support of alliance ties within NATO and emphasise its de-

8 Garthoff (1994: 380) described the report as follows: '*The result that emerged from the NSR was, in fact, still embarrassingly narrowly profiled in terms of relations with the Soviet Union and possible American initiatives*'.

terrent nature, preparations for negotiations on the START agreement or improvement of the relations with the Eastern Bloc through economic agreements (Bush – Scowcroft 1999: 40). One of the reasons for choosing a more cautious approach was the fear that excessive changes and American support for such changes could result in Gorbachev's unseat by the conservatives in the USSR. The success of perestroika was evaluated by American experts at 50/50 and they differed greatly on what would happen next in the Soviet Union (Engel 2017: 133). Of course, these reports did not help Bush in any way to find the promised invention in bilateral relations, and only underscored the widespread criticism of the new administration's inaction at the time.

Although the Soviet Union's approach to its 'satellites' was undergoing unprecedented changes, US policy under Bush remained strategically cautious in the first months, building on earlier US Cold War concepts. The NSC still included American policy as part of its containment policy. This meant, above all, promoting American interests, not giving in to the Soviet Union and gaining clear support from Germany for the NATO policy (Ehler 2006: 16). The problem for Bush was that this cautious policy toward the Soviet Union also became criticised within the Republican Party, especially in the Conservative wing of the party which believed that Bush was not making sufficient use of the current Soviet weakness (Greene 2000: 92). It was the Conservatives and the far-right wing of the GOP that had previously criticised all concepts that sought to establish better diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, especially in the case of Kissinger's détente. A partial change in this approach took place during the second term of office of President Reagan, who was able to defend his open policy towards the USSR from the Conservatives. These Conservatives now expected the same from Bush.

Gorbachev was therefore rather sceptical about Bush's first months in office. He wanted to return to the previous US-Soviet détente policy, and at first Bush's cautious approach made him more nervous. He subsequently stated that he was surprised by a 'pause' (Greene 2000: 91). The fact that the new American political representation did not initially know how far it should go in the negotiations is evidenced by the fact that the administration also expressed the opinion that American policy should focus on changing the behaviour of Soviets not only abroad due to Soviet economic problems, but also within the Soviet system itself (Bush – Scowcroft 1998: 41). That was the opposite view from what the NSC originally had, and such an approach would then mean a significant shift away from classical American foreign policy concepts during the Cold War, especially the already-mentioned Kennan's containment policy. Although these proposals were not initially accepted by the administration, they soon became one of the foundations of American 'Beyond Containment' policy.

Bush, like many analysts, was deeply dissatisfied with the conclusions of the original NSR report and instructed Scowcroft to draw up further, more detailed

reports. From this initiative, a new report NIE 11-4-89⁹ emerged, which was already more detailed and was more optimistic about Soviet action (Sebestyen 2011: 260). Among other things, a National Security Directive 23 (NSD 23) report was issued in March, directly commenting on the approach to containment policy, which led to George Bush's May speech at the University of Texas (Bush 2009: 34). The report argued that the policy of containment had never really ended, and that perhaps only now was the time to move through containment to an active US policy that would help integrate the USSR into the international system (Beschloss 1993: 24-26, 33-34, 43-45). This report represented a significant shift in the US side's perception of Soviet political change, with the proposed strategy not only going beyond the policy of containment, but its message pushing the cooperation between the two powers even further than the *détente* policy.

Gorbachev still believed that his proposals would make Bush's actions clearer (Wilson Centre 1988).¹⁰ Thus, although it initially seemed that Gorbachev's concessions offered in his speech to the United Nations would not be enough to change Bush's vigilance on mutual relations, they ultimately helped American foreign policy toward the USSR take the direction of a greater willingness and confidence in the then Soviet leadership. The main lesson from the 'pause' was that the United States had to be more active in its own initiatives, in supporting reforms in Eastern Europe and in pushing the withdrawal of Soviet troops from other Warsaw Pact countries (Bush – Scowcroft, 1998: 43). At the same time, over time, it became clear that under the influence of these reports, in relation to the USSR, Bush's goal was the Soviet renunciation of Brezhnev's doctrine, the plurality of Eastern European communities and the liberalisation of the economies of the Eastern bloc countries (Ehler 2006: 19).

University speeches and change of style

After a long pause in the new US administration's activities toward the Eastern Bloc, when American politics began to appear to shift from Reagan's active foreign policy back to isolationism, a series of Bush's speeches at American universities set the course of new US foreign policy priorities. Each speech aimed at a different foreign policy theme. Bush gradually announced policies towards Eastern Europe, Western Europe, the Soviet Union and finally disarmament negotiations. Although these speeches were again somewhat cautious and measured in their content, they were able to name what the new administration had as its goals in the field of foreign policy.

9 Soviet Policy Toward the West: The Gorbachev Challenge. The National Security Archive [online]. USA, 1989 [2019-04-23]. Available from: <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB261/us11.pdf>.

10 Gorbachev's proposals included the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the Soviet-Chinese border, a 20 percent reduction in Soviet nuclear weapons in Europe and a 14 % reduction in the military budget.

Just before the speeches at universities, Bush revealed his new vision of foreign policy in mid-April 1989 in Hamtramck in a speech to local citizens. This speech was particularly important for the reform movement in Eastern Europe. Hamtramck was chosen because of its large Polish minority, and Bush's goal was to clarify the strategy for the Eastern Bloc countries, especially Poland, and to appreciate Jaruzelski's approach to reform. In this speech, Bush announced America's willingness to support Poland's efforts to liberalise politics and the economy.¹¹

Gorbachev also wanted to support the US government's more accommodating policy towards the Eastern Bloc when he offered to remove 500 tactical nuclear weapons from Eastern Europe during Baker's visit to Moscow, sparking controversy within the US administration (Garthoff 1994: 378). For the sceptical Scowcroft, it was a gesture aimed primarily at creating a division within NATO and strengthening those who wanted to declare the Cold War over. While for other members of the administration, it was just more proof that Gorbachev's proposals should be taken seriously and that the Americans should take serious action (Bush – Scowcroft 1998: 133).

Announcement of the Beyond Containment Policy

Following Gorbachev's actions, Bush subsequently decided to uncover the results of the promised NSR report in a speech at Texas A & M University in May 1989. The main vision of this speech was to move beyond containment towards a broader access to the USSR. According to Sununu, the main goal of this strategy was to show the Soviets that they had the full support of the United States to continue reforms (Sununu 2015: 108). Bush's speech showed a friendlier face in the newly formulated approach to the Soviet Union than many feared. One of the goals was to move from the old Cold War policy, represented mainly by arms control talks, to a broader concept of relations that would lead to peace between the two countries. The content of the newly formulated strategy was hence clearly revolutionary within the American Cold War approaches.

At the beginning of the speech, Bush spoke at length about the policy of containment itself, praising Kennan and President Truman, and addressing its impact on US-Soviet relations: *'Containment has worked and it worked because democratic principles, institutions and values are right and always have been. It worked because our alliances are and have been strong, and because the dominance of a free society and a free market is triumphing over stagnant socialism. This is undeniable'* (Bush 2009: 34). Subsequently, Bush also focused on the principles of how this policy should be transformed in the American way, in the situation of

11 For example, the then American administration planned to help liberalisation by proposing to the Allies that they reorganise Polish debts and support loans to Poland from international institutions (Bush – Scowcroft 1998: 51).

large-scale and accelerated changes in the world at the time. The positive views on Kennan's strategy prevailed across the Bush administration. Scowcroft, who helped create the new concept, considered Kennan's original containment tactics to be a strategy that had succeeded '*above all expectations*', but now needed to be moved further (Engel 2017: 134). Opinions on the permanence of the Kennan strategy, however, differed within the Bush administration. For example, the then-Secretary of Defense Cheney remained cautious. He argued that containment itself still made sense, and that the Soviets had not changed enough to guide its pleasing actions in US defence policy (Engel 2017: 137).

But Bush himself no longer shared Cheney's scepticism. In his speech, he announced that it was no longer the main goal of the US to curb communism, but instead, America intended to help accept the Soviet Union into the community of nations (Sununu 2015: 107, Bush 2009: 34–35). According to Bush, Moscow should have shown more sincerity in their actions and work together on regional conflicts in the world to be welcomed in a new world order (Bush – Scowcroft 1998: 53). As part of the 'beyond containment' policy, Bush also called on the USSR to take constructive steps, especially in the area of limiting conventional forces in Eastern Europe, which the United States might follow up with its concessions (Sununu 201: 108). Bush's speech also mentioned the call for the Soviets to be more open and accountable to the international community.

However, the basis remained to continue and, at best, to multiply the positive steps of recent months. The Americans were primarily concerned with the reduction of the number of Soviet troops in Eastern Europe and ceasing Soviet support for communist forces in Latin America. Subsequent speeches¹², although partially different, carried a similar basic message – Bush welcomed the changes taking place in the USSR and at the same time called for a reduction in the number of troops in Europe. He also addressed nuclear weapons, stressing that the United States wants to keep nuclear weapons just as a deterrent, but also mentioning that it will seek to reduce the number of nuclear weapons in order to help '*stable world peace*' (Sununu 2015: 108). In the field of nuclear weapons, Bush was a smooth follow-up to earlier American concepts, including détente policy, which considered nuclear weapons to be a means of deterrence rather than an offensive weapon.

In his speeches, the American president further focused on the fact that even though the reforms in the Soviet Union are significant, the change is far from complete and it is therefore necessary to continue working to reduce the militarisation of Europe. Therefore, in his closing talk on arms control and disarmament, Bush presented his goal of reducing the threat of war in Europe. According to him, this could be achieved if Gorbachev kept his promises to unilaterally reduce conventional forces and turned the Warsaw Pact strategy into

12 On 21st May at Boston University and on 24th May on Coast Guard Academy in Connecticut.

a defensive alliance (Bush – Scowcroft 1998: 55). At the same time, Bush called on him to do so.¹³ According to Scowcroft, the United States had thus moved from the old patterns of arms control to a dialogue that was to bring peace to the world (Bush – Scowcroft 1998: 56).

‘Beyond containment’ thus became the key to Bush’s policy, which no longer included only arms reduction negotiations with the Soviet Union, but also focused on supporting reform efforts in the Warsaw Pact countries. Bush had decided to approach these states individually, with the countries where the most rapid political or economic reforms deserved the most support (Sununu 2015: 101). However, according to Bush, it still had to be a proportionate and prudent support that would not provoke the possibility of violent clashes. Bush soon received a response from Gorbachev to his speeches when the Soviet leader accepted the vision of the Soviet Union as an integrated entity in the international community in his speech in Strasbourg and also came up with the idea of the Common European House and rejected the Cold War concepts that, according to him, had transformed Europe into an arena of confrontation (Sununu 2015: 108–109). Gorbachev’s conciliatory approach subsequently helped Bush to present his new policy to the Eastern Bloc in his speeches on visits to Poland and Hungary.

Bush’s plan in the first months of the presidency was certainly not to approach Reagan’s hard position in his early years in office, but at the same time to be far more cautious about Soviet action than Reagan was in his second term (Greene 2000: 90), especially when it came to the field of arms control. The above-described long-standing American distrust of Soviet action caused by forty years of Cold War and fears of the speed of change in Eastern Europe were subsequently expressed in a moderate version, even during Bush’s subsequent visits to the Eastern Bloc.

Official visit to Poland and Hungary

Throughout 1989, Moscow gave political freedom to the changes taking place in the Eastern Bloc, and this initiative was taken up mainly by Poland and Hungary. The shift in the perception of these countries by the American administration can be best illustrated precisely in the case of Bush’s visit to Warsaw and Budapest. What Kennan wrote in 1964 about socialist countries, namely that discipline and unity were of key importance to the development of Marxist socialism, and that it was necessary for Eastern European countries to blindly obey orders from Moscow, was now obsolete (Kennan 1964: 38). Throughout May and June 1989, the borders between Hungary and Austria gradually began to open, followed by partially free elections in Poland won by Solidarity.

¹³ The implementation of the new US government strategy can be considered, for example, the NATO Declaration of May 1990, which proclaimed the goal of easing economic restrictions on the USSR, offering financial assistance and allowing membership in international institutions (Ehler 2006: 88).

Hungary and Poland thus became the most prominent aspirants for George Bush's first official presidential visit in the Eastern Bloc countries¹⁴. A clear indication of how the US view of Soviet influence within the Warsaw Pact countries had shifted since the first months of Bush's presidency was that Bush began to believe that these changes would cause a reassessment of typical US Cold War policy priorities from arms control to new concepts focused primarily on promoting change in the Eastern Bloc countries (Bush – Scowcroft 1998: 38). At that time, the American president already believed that Poland could be at the forefront of these reform tendencies. Among the steps that the American president appreciated in the Polish communist leadership was, for example, Jaruzelski's decision, which led to the legalisation of Solidarity. Although Bush was enthusiastic about the changes taking place in Poland, he was also aware of the economic problems in the country and feared that a poorly structured and inefficient economy could collapse (Bush 1999: 432). Despite his internal doubts, however, when visiting the Eastern Bloc, he primarily wanted to show that the United States '*supports democracy, human rights, and a free economy*' (Bush – Scowcroft 1998: 63).

The aim of this visit was therefore primarily to support the reform efforts of these countries, both rhetorically and by promising financial assistance as an incentive for further change. At that time, significant changes were taking place in Poland associated with the so-called round table negotiations.¹⁵ In the case of Poland, the American president wanted to point out that progress cannot take place without significant political and economic liberalisation, and that aid from the West would come only if this liberalisation took place (Bush – Scowcroft 1998: 51). At the same time, he did not want to encourage the revolutionary mood too much in his speeches with his rhetoric, as he feared that this could cause a possible intervention by the Soviet army. These fears accompanied Bush, despite Gorbachev's announcement that he did not intend to take any action against the changes taking place in Poland and Hungary.

Bush's meeting with Jaruzelski in Warsaw was so impressive that the American President subsequently supported Jaruzelski in the fight for the presidency in order to maintain stability. Surprisingly, Jaruzelski became the person who connected Gorbachev with Bush. Both leaders expressed support for his reform efforts. Bush's support for Jaruzelski was very surprising, especially from the American perspective. '*There was an American president sitting here who supported the Communist in his struggle for the presidency*' (Sununu 2015: 123). However, Bush's support for Jaruzelski's reforms had already been evident since his

14 The visit itself took place as a part of Bush's trip to Paris for a meeting of G-7 leaders where changes in the Eastern Bloc were to play an important role in joint discussions.

15 The result of these negotiations was, among other things, the approval of elections, which subsequently brought Solidarity a clear victory, which led to the appointment of the first non-communist prime minister in the Eastern Bloc (Wegs – Ladrech 2002: 244).

speech in Hamtramck, where he conditioned his financial support for Poland on the continuation of these reforms (Greene 2000: 96). For Bush, Jaruzelski was a '*force for stability*' that could protect Eastern Europe from the outbreak of anarchy (Sebestyen 2011: 293).

After visiting Poland and supporting Jaruzelski's reforms, Bush moved to another country that was making significant progress towards reforms – Hungary. Although the Hungarian reforms were not yet as high as in Poland, the desire for change was also visible among the local communists. During his speech in Budapest, Bush once again praised the local communist leaders and the changes they were making in Hungary and then, during the internal meeting, Bush revealed a financial offer for Hungary if it pursued a reform policy. Although, according to both the American and Hungarian sides, this offer was not enough, Bush could not afford to offer better financial assistance due to American budget problems.

After visiting the two Eastern Bloc countries, Bush and Baker realised that the key to political and economic liberalisation for Eastern and Central European countries was to support the reform process, not to oppose it (Garthoff 1994: 381). Scowcroft, who had long been sceptical, was the one who wrote in his memoirs about this insight: '*I realized that something significant was happening, something that could not be denied. Reforms now seemed inevitable*' (Bush – Scowcroft 1998: 126). Bush subsequently pushed for economic aid to Poland and Hungary at the G-7 meeting in July 1989 with French support. However, there were still significant discrepancies within the US administration regarding the amount of financial support. For example, economic aid from the United States seemed insufficient to Scowcroft, and he considered the package to be politically weak.¹⁶ However, the US Secretary of the Treasury Nicholas F. Brady spoke clearly against the increase in financial aid, when he declared: '*We can no longer throw state money into that bottomless pit*' (Sebestyen 2011: 294). Bush eventually came up with his own option, where Poland was to be provided with \$ 1 billion, but where only \$ 200 million came from the US budget and the rest from other states and institutions (Bush – Scowcroft 1998: 140).

In his subsequent assessment of his stay in Poland and Hungary, Bush again focused on the need for caution: '*We entered Poland and Hungary cautiously, avoiding the anger of the Soviets, whose military presence is still present... I understand that the pressure on Gorbachev hardliners would otherwise rise again*' (Meacham 2015: 376). As for the most significant result of the visit, Bush considered it to be the decision that the United States had to start approaching the satellites more individually. In earlier years, the United States preferred those satellites

¹⁶ The US administration came up with a draft package that included postponing Poland's \$ 39 billion debt and requesting another \$ 325 million in new loans from the World Bank, while Poland requested \$ 10 billion (Bush – Scowcroft 1998: 114). Hungary received an even lower aid offer from the US – \$ 25 million to support private enterprises and \$ 5 million to support regions (Bush – Scowcroft 1998: 124).

that showed the most independence from the USSR, which, for example, led to support for the Romanian regime. Now the main criterion was the speed of the process of liberalisation of the system.

Containment and Beyond Containment

The view of Kennan's strategy and its use in US foreign policy over the past 40 years has been relatively clear within the Bush administration. Already during the first meeting of the President with the expert group on Eastern Europe, it was generally accepted that the policy of containment was a successful policy that resulted in the then revolutionary events in Eastern Europe. One of Bush's most important foreign policy makers, Brent Scowcroft, argued that America's post-war policy toward Europe and the USSR was successful because Western Europe prospered while the Soviet Union was held back (Bush – Scowcroft 1998: 42). But what the Bush administration said was further needed was to move beyond the containment policy and to expand relations with the Soviet Union. Secretary of State Baker agreed with Bush's view when, for example, he declared in 1989 that the United States now had a historic chance to move beyond the containment and find '*points of understanding*' while not succumbing to false optimism (Garthoff 1994: 187).

It was from this impulse that a policy called '*beyond containment*' arose. However, Baker's mention of not succumbing to false optimism remained ubiquitous in the administration. Scowcroft or Cheney, who perceived the Soviet Union as well as Kennan from Russia's historical perspective, from a realistic point of view and within Soviet expansionist tendencies, pressured the president to replace the optimism about the Soviets with caution. It was a pragmatic approach to the USSR that much of Bush's surroundings shared with Kennan.

Strategic approach to the countries of the Eastern Bloc

The changed international situation, created by the new approach of the Soviet leadership to its role on the international scene, was also reflected in the fact that under the Bush presidency, the United States began to take an active interest in countries that were the so-called Soviet satellites. This was in contrast to the actions of previous US administrations, which based their relationship with their main rival primarily on arms control issues, and their policy toward satellite countries remained rather marginal. It was unacceptable for Kennan himself for the United States to enter politically or militarily into the countries of the Eastern Bloc, which he had already attributed to the Soviet Union in his strategies (Gaddis 2012: 515). He called the situation in these countries as '*finality*' and recommended restraint to the American government in its approach to them (Hanuš 2015: 160).

Kennan went so far in his approach that even later, when martial law was declared in Poland in 1981, he advised the United States to fully respect this decision, as he considered it the right response by Moscow and Warsaw to its security concerns (Hanuš 2015: 161). According to him, it was absolutely unimaginable that US policy should be interested in the integral parts of the Soviet Union, which included the Baltic States. Nevertheless, during Bush's presidency, it was not just countries such as Hungary and Poland in 1989, but also Lithuania two years later that became the focus of American foreign policy.

It was Bush's trip to Poland and Hungary, including speeches to the locals, that was the most visible sign of a new relationship between the two great powers and the affirmation of a policy beyond containment. Bush no longer sought to prevent communist forces from moving further West, but instead encouraged liberal forces within the Warsaw Pact countries to take more progressive and liberal steps at the economic and political levels. However, he was also aware of the historical realities of the Cold War and the reality of earlier Soviet military interventions in Eastern Bloc countries that deviated from the course pursued by Moscow in their policies. For this reason, Bush's speeches and calls for Eastern European politicians were still rather cautious.

In relation to the liberalising countries of the Eastern Bloc, economic policy played an irreplaceable role in 1989. It was in the economic field that the governments of Hungary and Poland wished Bush to follow up on the results of Kennan's containment policy after World War II, which resulted in financial assistance under the so-called Marshall Plan. This policy, within the Truman Doctrine, based on Kennan's reasoning, aimed to provide strong economic support to help European countries rebuild their devastated national economies in the post-war period. Its primary strategic goal was to protect European countries from the communist takeover.

According to the representatives of Hungary and Poland, during the Bush era, similar financial assistance could avert the confusion after the transition of these countries from communist-led economies to a free-market economy and at the same time help liberal efforts to rebuild state institutions. However, Bush was in a situation where he was unable to meet such a commitment due to internal pressures from the US budget deficit and offered these countries significantly lower financial means than it was expected (Bush – Scowcroft 1998: 48).

At the same time, this financial support was not uniform for all Eastern Bloc countries. During his first year in office, Bush decided to apply different benchmarks to various Eastern Bloc countries. While he supported more liberal regimes, he did not offer help to rigid communist regimes. It was the different relations with various countries under Soviet influence and the support of these countries in opposition to the way in which Soviet Union behaved internally and externally that Kennan saw in his time as a problematic but realistic scenario

for the West (Kennan 1964: 50–51). Nevertheless, Kennan argued that for the independence of Eastern European countries, it was necessary for the United States to show due respect for Soviet security interests (Hanuš 2015: 162). Bush, although in a much more welcoming international situation, was aware of this fact and tried to be as careful as possible during his visit to Eastern Europe precisely so as not to endanger Soviet security interests.

In the framework of the mentioned speeches, the American president, for instance, did not yet touch on the possibility of changing the membership in the military alliances of these countries and the withdrawal of Hungary and Poland from the Warsaw Pact, which subsequently took place two years later. On the contrary, as for most of his presidency, he based his actions on a premise similar to Kennan, and believed that gradual and limited goals towards the Soviets were more advantageous than hasty or revolutionary steps. This manifested itself not only in the visits to the Eastern Bloc, but also, for example, in urging Kohl's patience in German unification, in support of Gorbachev and his reforms, instead of Yeltsin's more radical approach, and subsequently in a cautious response to Soviet armed action against autonomous efforts in Lithuania.

Détente and Beyond Containment

The classic division within American foreign policy dividing the American politicians into a camp of isolationists and interventionists, of course, also touched on the tradition within the Republican Party. The original concepts associated with the conservative movement led by Robert Taft, which favoured post-war isolationism, gradually changed, after several of Taft's unsuccessful candidacies for the Republican nomination for president, and through the policy of easing tensions led by Kissinger and Nixon, the Republican Party's foreign policy finally shifted to a markedly proactive international policy under Ronald Reagan.

As part of this ideological division, we can include, among the isolationists in the Bush administration, for example, a group of experts within the National Security Council, headed by Brent Scowcroft, the Chief National Security Adviser. The aim of this group in the first months of the new administration's government was to persuade the president to pursue a cautious policy and not to interfere too much in what was happening in the Eastern Bloc. Foreign Minister Baker, on the other hand, held a much more proactive, and therefore interventionist, position. Above all, Bush tried to balance both principles when he tried to enter actively into international affairs through personal diplomacy, but at the same time, at certain stages of his presidency, he was somewhat passive, especially in relation to the USSR. This was mainly due to his need for a careful reassessment of the foreign strategy and the subsequent effort to avoid a decision that would cause either chaos or bloody repression by the Soviet side in Eastern Europe. Thus, especially in the first year of his tenure in the negotiations

with the Soviets, Bush's policy was more in line with Kennan's earlier concept, which was more reluctant to negotiate than to the détente policy.

However, the situation had changed since the Malta summit¹⁷, and over the next two years, Bush was more in favour of Kissinger's original idea of the need for frequent diplomatic relations between the two countries. It should also be borne in mind that Kissinger, as Bush's foreign policy adviser, had a direct influence on the direction of his decision-making in relation to the Soviets. However, there was no consensus within the Bush administration on the merits of Kissinger's original détente policy. While Kissinger himself was invited by Bush to advise the team and was even sent to Moscow to meet with Gorbachev, which was a sign of Bush's confidence in him and his views, according to Scowcroft, the détente was an unfavourable policy that favoured the Soviet Union for many years (Bush – Scowcroft 1998: 112).¹⁸

Yet it is beyond doubt that Kissinger's tenure as Secretary of State was largely a positive period for US-Soviet relations, which was inevitably reflected in America's foreign policy vis-à-vis the satellite countries of the Eastern bloc. Kissinger's policy of détente was characterised by an effort to achieve at least partial cooperation between the two powers of the then bipolar world. However, the geopolitical situation during the implementation of Kissinger's policy was very different from that of Bush's presidency, especially in view of his counterpart in the Soviet Union and the situation in which the USSR found itself.

During the period of détente, the US government had to negotiate with Soviet politicians mainly represented by Brezhnev and Gromyko. Those leaders were certainly not idealists as were those of the later administration around Gorbachev and Shevardnadze. They did not see improving relations with the US as a commitment to universal human values, but rather as a necessary response to the geopolitical situation at that time and the threat posed by the Soviet dispute with China, and the possible resurfacing of Russia's historical fear of a combined hostile siege from the West and the East. The most significant difference in an understanding of American strategies towards the Soviet Union was therefore a definition of the geopolitical power of the American arch-rival of the time. Nixon and Kissinger responded, in particular to the geopolitical position of the USSR and the gradual strategic alignment of forces within the bipolar structure of international relations, while Bush and Baker faced a more declining power that was no longer the global equal of the United States.

We can consider Kissinger's policy of détente from many perspectives. If, however, we look for the positives that it brought to the Americans, we mostly find them in the palpable outcomes of discussions on the restriction of strategic

17 Meeting between Bush and Gorbachev (December 2–3, 1989).

18 This statement is particularly interesting in view of the fact that Scowcroft himself was already Kissinger's collaborator at the time of his work in the Nixon administration, and thus at the time of détente policy-making.

weapons (SALT) or in the bilateral signing of the Helsinki Final Act on security and cooperation in Europe (CSCE). However, similarly positive results of cooperation agreements did not appear in all areas. It is important to remember that the 'Jackson-Vanik' addendum, which resulted in the restriction of bilateral trade and subsequently became one of the most contentious points of negotiations between the USA and the USSR under the Bush administration, and between the USA and other countries of the Warsaw Pact, was approved when Kissinger was at the Department of State. In spite of these problematic points, however, it was the policy of *détente* that Gorbachev wanted to return to, particularly during the 'pause' accompanied by Bush, and which would in his view have benefited not only the USSR, but other Eastern European countries too.

It was at the time of the 'pause' described above, just after Bush entered office, that the prevailing feeling in the new American government was that any significant concessions to the Soviet Union could harm the United States geopolitically over the long-term. Nevertheless, once the Bush administration had assessed new foreign policy strategy at the end of the spring of 1989 and following the university speeches that resulted in a policy of 'beyond containment', it was clear that Bush's aim would be to partly draw on Kissinger's policy. The principal aim of *détente*, i.e. greater involvement of the Soviet Union in economic and political ties with the West and a reduction in tensions, subsequently became one of the main objectives of American foreign policy even in the landmark year of 1989 as well as during the following years. The results that Bush's policy brought eventually outstripped the successes of the policy of the first half of the 1970s quite significantly. The Bush government was then able to add remarkable successes primarily in the issue of the Soviet satellites and in the gradual tying of those countries to Western military, economic and other structures during the 1990s.

Strategic approach to the countries of the Eastern bloc

Kissinger, who was initially strongly influenced by idealism from his academic career, gradually inclined more towards a realistic view of international relations in his policy, which was manifested, for example, in the fact that he somewhat neglected the influence of ideology in Soviet foreign policy. This was also seen in the fact that he considered Soviet policy to be almost purely opportunistic (Kissinger 1979: 119). In this view he concurred with the vast majority of the Bush administration. The policy of *détente* sought to prevent the Soviet opportunism by seeking to create an international environment in which the balance of power between the US and the USSR would work. The power of diplomacy was to have been a major part of achieving this goal. Kissinger considered this to be an essential accompaniment to the balance of power (Guzzini 2004: 113). Bush picked up on this view and dedicated much of his presidency to diplomatic

relations, attempting to win allies for his policies around the world using the 'art of diplomacy'.

But what made the use of diplomatic relations within the Nixon and later the Bush government different was precisely the countries at which diplomacy was directed. While diplomatic relations at the highest level under the Nixon administration, and subsequently the Ford government, were focused mainly on bilateral meetings of the representatives of the great powers themselves,¹⁹ Bush's diplomacy was able to focus more on summits with the leaders of the then more progressive governments of other Eastern bloc countries and multilateral meetings with European allies, mostly within the NATO summits. This trend began with Bush's visit to Poland and Hungary and a meeting with Jaruzelski or Grósz, which was symbolically held even before Bush's first meeting with Gorbachev in Malta.

The issues that could be discussed with representatives of the 'satellite countries' during talks also differed significantly. These issues stemmed not only from the Soviet Union's more accommodating policy towards the satellite countries and the soviet renunciation of Brezhnev's doctrine, but also from the gradual development of opinion within the Bush administration. Bush was not overly inclined to discuss broader issues with the Eastern bloc countries until announcing the 'Beyond Containment' strategy. This opinion chimed with the mentality of the Cold War, which Kennan and Kissinger, among others, had brought to American foreign-policy considerations from the 1950s to the 1970s. Although Kissinger generally tried to reduce tension in relations with the Soviet Union, his policy toward the Soviets also showed a certain mistrust of the moves made by the Soviet leadership. This policy was linked to awareness of the long-term opportunism in Soviet moves and the strong legacy of the policy of containment in American foreign policy. This 'inherited mistrust' was mainly reflected in those around Bush in the attitudes of Scowcroft and Cheney, who opposed possible concessions to Gorbachev in the belief that such action would necessarily be abused.

This view partly changed only in 1989 when it was already clear that the Soviet Union, under its by-now reformist leadership, had renounced the 'Brezhnev doctrine' and was not intent on violent intervention against ongoing changes in the countries of the Eastern bloc. The following year confirmed this trend, and the Cold War was considered by many politicians and experts to be over. Even those who had not yet committed to such statements, however, had to recognise the undeniable significant reduction in tension in mutual relations. According to Garthoff (1994: 426), for example, US-Soviet relations in the year 1990 reached the equal level of cooperation as in 1972–1973. In hindsight, even this view might be considered relatively conservative, because the relations from the early 1970s were in many ways surpassed during the Bush presidency.

19 Summits in Washington 1973, Moscow 1974, Vladivostok 1974, etc.

While the policies of the Nixon and Ford administrations are rightly interpreted as policies of reducing tension within the two blocs of power of the time, it should be stressed that, in relation to the 'lost countries' of the Eastern bloc, the United States had proceeded under Henry Kissinger almost as cautiously as it had done before under the influence of the Kennan strategy in the 1950s. The main reason for this was an attempt not to disrupt improving relations with the USSR by trying to interfere in the Soviet sphere of influence. The most significant initiative of the policy of détente toward the communist Eastern European satellite countries was therefore the Helsinki Conference, which resulted in a partial surge of East European dissent.

During the Bush presidency, however, American policy was now able to focus on a deeper reform of its relations with the countries in the Soviet sphere of influence. This was demonstrated, for example, in a direct meeting with representatives of Solidarity and particularly in economic issues. Although the ongoing talks on financial assistance to the Eastern bloc did not proceed as Gorbachev would have imagined, even partial concessions and compromises by the Americans were until-then unprecedented. In particular, Bush's offer of financial assistance to the countries of the still-existing Warsaw Pact, the allocation of most favoured nation status²⁰ to Hungary, and pressure on West Germany and international institutions to offer financial assistance to the Soviet economy were a strong sign of the new bilateral relations and, in their scope, a further outstripping of Kissinger's policy of détente.

Positive geopolitical development for the United States in the late 1980s was also visible in the difference in perceiving the Soviet Union as a bitter geopolitical rival. In the 1970s, owing to the Soviet Union's strength at that time, Kissinger recommended that the US approach the USSR as an equal partner in negotiations in order to secure some benefits within the international bipolar system of that time, characterised by the balance of power. This situation, however, no longer applied under President Bush. The Soviet Union began to crumble and lose its strength on the international stage, particularly during the second half of Bush's mandate. Although Bush favoured a balance of power over anarchy in the international environment, given the weakening of the Soviet Union, he was now able to take decisions on many matters from a position of strength. Kissinger's earlier policy of détente, based on an awareness of the military parity of the two powers, was no longer decisive for the Bush administration, meaning that the United States could start looking for new means in its approach to the Soviet Union in the knowledge of being in the clear strategic ascendancy. Bush then found himself in the situation of a unipolar world order, with the United States having the indisputable leading position, on which he

20 Countries, that were received 'most favoured nation status' gained more favourable trade conditions with the United States.

based his strategic decisions for the rest of his presidential mandate. This was subsequently also reflected in relation to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the establishment of unprecedented diplomatic relations after 1989.

Conclusion

This paper has compared the most important American foreign-policy concepts during the Cold War with the policy of the George Bush administration toward the countries of the Eastern bloc in 1989. These concepts were influenced by those that created these strategies as well as by the times that accompanied the policy. Kennan's original containment policy made a significant contribution to American post-war policy and helped curb the spread of communism, and in some areas stop it altogether. But to the Eastern bloc and satellite countries under the Soviet Union's control, the policy was uncompromising, recommending no American military or political interference in their internal affairs. This opinion in some cases even differed from the views of prominent government figures at the time, in particular from those of Secretary of State in Eisenhower's government John Foster Dulles, who promoted more significant aid to the 'lost countries' and even fired Kennan from the Department of State for his views (Kinzer 2016: 170).

This, however, does not change the fact that the containment strategy left significant marks on American foreign policy toward communist countries even after Kennan's departure from the Department. A policy that gained comparable status to the Kennan strategy in its importance was the policy of *détente* during the Nixon era. The fact that Kennan was able to draw on the relatively safe position of the United States within the international structure at that time when creating his article shortly after the Second World War, given the fact that the USA was the only nuclear power until 1949, played a significant part in the need in the early 1970s to come up with a new strategy. The proliferation of nuclear weapons to other parts of the world and awareness of Soviet-American military parity led to a gradual effort to reduce global tension. Both Kennan's and Kissinger's strategies can be considered successful, especially because both largely succeeded in achieving their main goal. In the case of containment policy, to contribute to halting the global spread of communism and, in the case of the policy of *détente*, to reduce the significant American-Soviet tensions of the previous two decades.

However, the success of Bush's foreign policy strategy is easier to assess than in the previous two cases, given the geopolitical circumstances of the day. Bush's policy, though often hard to defend, especially within his own party, helped in the smooth transition of most Eastern European political systems to a democratic arrangement and the strategic move of those countries away from the Soviet sphere of influence. The concept of the balance of power and

not interfering in each other's spheres of influence promoted by Kennan and Kissinger had already lost its meaning by that time and was gradually phased out by Bush in 1989. This phasing-out of Cold-War concepts was subsequently completed by the announcement of the 'Beyond Containment' policy, which meant a more proactive policy toward the Eastern bloc and helped Eastern European countries move from communist to democratic establishment and from a centrally-run economy to the free market, and as a result free themselves from the power of the disintegrating Soviet Union.

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