Necessary Illusions: Putative Intersubjective Beliefs During Détente, 1969-1972

Dissertation

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Abstract

Between 1972 and 1979, the United States and the Soviet Union entered into one of the most cooperative phases of the Cold War. During détente, the superpowers reached more than 150 agreements, established consultative committees, regularly held summit meetings, and engaged in crisis management. The turn from enmity to rivalry was so deep that many commentators predicted the Cold War’s end. Richard Nixon summarized it as a historic shift, from an “era of confrontation” to an “era of negotiation.” Why did U.S.-Soviet relations change so significantly during détente, moving from confrontation to cooperation?

Many International Relations (IR) scholars argue that increased information, common norms, or culture explain cooperation. Misperception causes conflict while mutual understanding contributes to peace. Against this received wisdom, the central claim of this dissertation is that cooperation can be enhanced when actors believe that intersubjectivity or common knowledge exists, even when they are wrong. This inaccurate belief that intersubjectivity is shared, which I term putative intersubjective beliefs (PIBs), is in many cases crucial to cooperation. A theory of PIBs provides a novel and understudied route to cooperation.

This dissertation is interested cases of imagined intersubjectivity (one of three types of PIBs). Imagined intersubjectivity occurs when actors inaccurately believe that they know what another will do, and also inaccurately believe they know why another
will do it. It is necessary for cooperation in cases in which revelations of either the future behavior or the reasons for an action in the present would undermine cooperation.

The dissertation tests a theory of PIBs against liberal institutionalist and constructivist arguments. The test operates at two levels. First, I analyze the macro changes in the U.S.-Soviet relationship during détente, testing a theory of PIBs against Wendt’s cultural theory of cooperation. The rules of rivalry during détente were not intersubjective. The superpowers held different principles concerning their relations; Brezhnev believed that the United States had accepted Soviet political parity, while Nixon and Kissinger believed that the superpowers were entering a period of competition for supremacy. This had consequences for their expectations of the behavior of the other. The Nixon administration believed détente meant issue-linkage; the superpowers would exert pressure to obtain dominance, and when negotiations failed, would resort to military threats. The Politburo did not share this prediction; they believed that the era of linkages and threats was over and that the United States accepted Soviet influence in the Third World. Through a structured, focused comparison, I show that these misperceptions promoted cooperation.

To show that imagined intersubjectivity plays a role at the micro level, I test imagined intersubjectivity against liberal institutionalism through an analysis of the ABM Treaty negotiations. Using process-tracing and counter-factual analysis, I argue that at three moments of the negotiations—Kissinger’s decision to offer to negotiate ABMs, the May 20th, and Nixon’s decision meeting with Brezhnev during an escalation in
Vietnam—concessions were made because of a lack of mutual understanding. Only because of these mistakes was the ABM Treaty reached.
For Mara
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Chapter One: Introduction

“To be sure, the international order had been founded on a misunderstanding and a misconception…” –Henry Kissinger, *A World Restored*.¹

When Captain Cook “discovered” Hawaii at the end of the 18th century, a remarkable case of cooperation began, perhaps one of the most remarkable in world history. As Marshall Sahlins recounts the story of Cook's first contact with Hawaiians, which is not without some controversy, a series of coincidences led the Hawaiians to mistake Cook for *Lono*, the god of peace, music, and fertility.² When the *Discovery* and the *Resolution* approached Hawaii, they chanced to circumnavigate Hawaii in a clockwise direction that mirrored the mythical process made on land by Lono. Cook's progression around the island occurred in the same direction and on the same days as predicted by the myth. By this accident, the “islanders knew Captain Cook as ‘Lono’ before they set eyes on him.” When Cook landed at Kealakekua, the Hawaiians dressed him as Lono, wrapping him in a red tapa cloth. Then they offered him a small pig as a sacrifice before ushering him into a temple for a lengthy ritual that culminated in a ceremonial “feeding.” The belief that Cook was Lono was so engrained that more than 100 years later his bones were carried in the annual religious procession.

¹ Kissinger 1966, 318.
When Cook first landed, the European explorers and Hawaiians happily cooperated. For the Hawaiians, the belief that Cook was Lono fulfilled their religious needs, and Cook’s willingness to engage in the ritual ceremonies enabled the religion’s views to go unchallenged. The sailors, especially Cook, acted the required role, wore the right clothing, engaged in the right rituals, and generally avoided mistakes. For the British, the story is more complicated. Before reaching Hawaii, a man on Kauai was killed by Cook’s expedition. Upon reaching Hawaii, Cook’s men were ready to fight. However, as they approached, they noticed white flags on the beaches. Cook’s sailors took these to be flags of truce and expected to be welcomed. In fact, the flags were ceremonial and indicated a taboo against going to sea during the period. Furthermore, when the Hawaiians provisioned Cook’s men with specific supplies (such as albacore), the Europeans were unaware that the reason was ceremonial and that the number and the timing of the feasts was in accordance with Hawaiian religious beliefs. This series of accidents was crucial for successful cooperation. If Cook had not landed at the proper time, or if the Hawaiians had not flown the white flag, then one can imagine that the reactions of the Hawaiians or the sailors may have been much less amicable, and the integration of European and Hawaiian beliefs may have been ruled more by the gun and less by the rites of Lono. Cook’s first departure was also successful, leaving the island on the schedule set for Lono. However, his ship’s mast broke soon after, forcing Cook to return to the island and meet his end.³ Had that mast not broken, cooperation would have

³ Cook’s return and subsequent death are discussed in the final chapter. He was killed by the Hawaiians, but not for the reasons that Cook’s men believed.
been a complete success, enabling the explorers to obtain food and water, and the Hawaiians to avoid challenges to their religious beliefs.

If there are Cooks and Hawaiians in international politics, then this episode presents a puzzle for much of International Relations (IR) theory. Can incomplete information generate cooperation in cases where complete information might lead to violence? Can actors cooperate, not despite, but because of a lack of mutual understanding? The prevailing answer is usually no.

Most IR scholars broadly agree that misperception tends to be a roadblock to peace and common knowledge, and that mutual understanding, or intersubjectivity, creates the conditions under which peace and cooperation bloom. A world of Cooks would be a violent world with little to no cooperation. Liberal institutionalists claim that a lack of information impedes efficient cooperation; realists argue that misperceptions frequently cause wars or costly arms races; and many constructivist scholars argue that shared norms or identities are critical to the creation of peaceful and cooperative outcomes in international politics.

Theorists who depict the world as fraught with misperceptions and misunderstandings tend to focus on war and conflicts such as the prevailing explanations for the First World War and the arms race during the Cold War; theorists that focus on common knowledge and intersubjectivity tend to focus on the most successful cases of international cooperation such as the European Union or the grand

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bargains struck by the West after the Second World War. Scholars of all stripes are able to agree at least on the need to improve communications and reduce misperceptions, if not also on the need to create durable and stable institutions to manage common problems.

Yet, this agreement might be premature: Cooks do cooperate. There are many cases in international politics where cooperation proceeds because of misperception, not shared ideas. During the Second World War, the U.S. relationship with several allies suffered from serious delusions. As discussed in the next chapter, during the war the American public supported the Russian war-fighting effort and the lend-lease program that provided Russia with material support, in part, because of the mistaken impression that the Soviet Union was a burgeoning democracy with which it shared fundamental values. Stalin, by contrast, believed that cooperation with the United States after the war would be made easier because of his belief that, like himself, Roosevelt would have a free hand in manipulating and controlling the American public. Reciprocal misunderstandings prevented lend-lease from coming under additional fire, encouraging U.S.-Soviet cooperation.

Misperception also created the conditions for U.S.-Vietnamese cooperation. During the Second World War, at moments when Europeans were shot on sight in Vietnam, the United States and Vietminh engaged in extensive intelligence cooperation. When American intelligence officers parachuted into Vietnam, the Vietminh “welcomed

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them warmly, displaying a large sign reading: Welcome to Our American Friends.”

While Europeans in general, and the French in particular, were viewed as imperialist enemies of Vietnamese nationalism, the U.S. legacy as a former colony and Roosevelt’s anti-imperialism convinced the Vietminh that it was a dependable ally. As Captain Herbert Bleuchel reported in 1945, “the Viet Minh leaders expressed the hope that Americans would view favorably their bid for independence, since we ourselves fought for and gained our independence under a situation considered to be similar to that as exists in Indo China today.”

Ho cooperated with the United States because of a mistaken belief that his impression of their relationship was reciprocated. Roosevelt did not share this impression of their relationship during the war, did not intend to support the Vietminh against the French, and there is no evidence that he was aware of Ho’s beliefs. 

During the war, if Ho treated the Americans like the French, rather than being offered intelligence, American agents would have been shot.

After the advent of the Cold War, misperceptions continued to create important alliances. For example, the United States continued its postwar relationship with Chiang Kai-shek in part because the China Lobby in Washington viewed Chinese nationalists as liberators of an oppressed people longing to become Christians. As David Halberstam explains, “The China that existed in the minds of millions of Americans was the most illusory of countries, filled as it was with the dutiful, obedient peasants who liked America and loved Americans, who longed for nothing so much as to be like them. It was

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7 Spector 1982.
9 Warner 1972, 381. See also Spector 1982.
a country where ordinary peasants allegedly hoped to be more Christian and were eager, despite the considerable obstacles in their way, to rise out of what Americans considered a heathen past.\textsuperscript{10} The origins of U.S. involvement in Taiwan, which has led to an unlikely and prolonged episode of international cooperation, was in part premised on a mistaken judgment of China and its people by Asia-First Republicans in the 1950s.

Many cases of cooperation among European powers are also, in part, the result of misperception. Before the First World War, for example, Great Britain and Germany formed a détente between 1911 and 1914 that resulted in the successful management of a crisis that developed after the First Balkan War, the division of Portuguese colonies in the event of the collapse of the Portuguese empire, an Anglo-German agreement on the Baghdad Railway, and an implicit agreement on naval arms. Sean Lynn-Jones argues persuasively that the Anglo-German détente was based on “mutual misperceptions” because Germany thought it was ensuring British neutrality in the event of a continental war, whereas Britain thought that détente meant a limitation of German military ambitions through cooperation.\textsuperscript{11}

**Misperception and Cooperation**

Misperception does not always lead to conflict, and, in certain cases, it is useful in securing cooperation. Mistaken beliefs are not always roadblocks to cooperation that must be overcome; in certain situations, they may be necessary conditions for gentler patterns of international conduct to take hold. This demonstrates that Robert Jervis, a prominent proponent of the role of misperceptions in conflict, is right to postulate that a

\textsuperscript{10} Halberstam 2007, 223.
\textsuperscript{11} Lynn-Jones 1986.
“difficulty is that historians and political scientists are drawn to the study of conflict more
often than to the analysis of peaceful interactions. As a result, we know little about the
degree to which harmonious relationships are characterized by accurate perceptions.”

Does misperception, in some cases, enhance rather than diminish chances for
cooperation? In brief, I argue that yes, it is possible to form what French President Valéry
Giscard d'Estaing called “a superb agreement based on complete misunderstanding.” In
many cases, cooperation is enhanced when actors believe that intersubjectivity—common
knowledge, common norms, or common identities—exists, even when they are wrong.
This inaccurate belief that intersubjectivity is shared, which I term putative
intersubjective beliefs (PIBs), is in many cases crucial for enabling actors to cooperate.

The intuition of this argument, which is fully presented in chapter two, is that in
certain cases, cooperation is more likely when people are wrong in their estimations of
one another. Examples occur in everyday life. Imagine two friends meeting for dinner.
One believes it is a first date while the other believes it is a friendly dinner. The evening
goes well, as neither behaves in a manner that contradicts the other’s understanding. The
evening would likely not be satisfying if the misunderstanding were revealed. Or,
imagine two children playing a game, not realizing that each has an idiosyncratic
understanding of the rules of the game, and the differences are not revealed during play.
If the children argued about the rules, rather than playing the game, they might never
become friends. Or, imagine playing a game of basketball against a friend. One person
believes there is a shared competitive spirit and that playing is about winning. For the

12 Jervis 1988, 68.
13 In Carter 1982, 118.
other, the game is about doing something together. If each found out the other’s principled reason for playing, each might choose not to play with the other in the future. But, so long as they happily do not know, the game continues.

The emergence of détente between the United States and the Soviet Union affords an excellent opportunity to trace these arguments. During the early 1970s, the United States and Soviet Union engaged in a remarkable process of cooperation, on issues ranging from trade to conflict management to arms control. As part of that process, the parties agreed to establish standing committees to discuss the terms of cooperation, created backchannels to ensure that signals were clearly understood, and Nixon and Brezhnev directly met at three summits. In addition, several agreements, such as the Basic Principles Agreement and the Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War, were explicit attempts to cooperate on the ground rules of the Cold War—that is, to enshrine the meaning of détente in international law. The result was, for the Soviet Union, a fundamental restructuring of international relations, and for many in the United States, an end to the Cold War.

In chapter three, I ask whether this process was driven by intersubjectivity, some meeting of the minds or a learning process, or whether putative intersubjective beliefs were necessary for cooperation. There is evidence for both. On the one hand, both parties understood that Soviet nuclear parity meant that relations had to change and that enmity carried too great of a risk. On the other hand, the meaning of military parity differed for both parties. For the United States, détente was a reaction to the growth in Soviet military power and the American public’s refusal, in the middle of Vietnam, to counter it. The
rules of détente, at least for Henry Kissinger, were intended to set rules that would enable the superpowers to compete for political supremacy without the risk of global war. For the Soviet Union, especially for Brezhnev, the American acceptance of détente did not portend a competition for political power, but rather American acceptance of Soviet political equality. Brezhnev believed that the strategic buildup compelled the United States to accept that the Soviet Union deserved a sphere of influence and an equal seat at the bargaining table. The existence of PIBs—beliefs that each party’s impression of the relationship was shared—created the conditions under which cooperation flowered. Through a study of the negotiation of the Basic Principles Agreements and U.S.-Soviet cooperation during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, I connect these different understandings to cooperation.

The role of PIBs in cooperation is not limited to broad ideational shifts. PIBs also play a part in the micro-dynamics of negotiation processes. In chapter four, I trace the process through which the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty was concluded, that is, the pattern of concession-making that led to its achievement and the decision to sign the treaty. I focus on the case of the ABM because arms control, as well as arms races in general, are often treated through the lens of liberal institutional concepts such as reputation, information, and the shadow of the future. In general, the failure to reach agreements on arms control policy is due to a lack of information, either of future intentions, the verification of agreements, or the credibility of signals.  

In the case of the ABM Treaty, however, incomplete information played a crucial role at three different stages in the negotiations. First, Kissinger offered to negotiate

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14 This literature is reviewed extensively in chapters four and five.
ABMs only because he thought the Soviets would refuse the offer. Then, the May 20th Agreement in 1971, which led to the separation of ABMs from the more complicated work of developing comprehensive limits to offensive weapons, was reached because each side believed that the other had made a set of concessions. In chapter four, I show that these concessions were more fictional than real: due to a set of translation errors that began a curious sequence of events, each party believed that the other made concessions that were not actually made. Finally, at the last moment, the signing of the ABM Treaty was at risk because of an escalation in the war by the North Vietnamese. Nixon did not want to go to the summit during the offensive; he agreed to attend the meeting only because he was convinced wrongly that Brezhnev would cancel. In each case, the United States and the Soviet Union made mistaken assumptions concerning the others. Due to this comedy of errors, the first significant arms control treaty of the Cold War was signed.

**Pluralism and International Social Theory**

The claim that incomplete information, unshared ideas, and idiosyncratic beliefs might be useful in securing cooperation is complementary to liberal institutionalist and realist approaches to explaining cooperation. As explained shortly, the intuition of this argument draws on the analysis of classical realists, such as Hans Morgenthau and E.H. Carr, who argue that, in the age of the modern nation-state, world leaders are less likely to share moral convictions with one another than they are to share them with those within their own societies. Furthermore, liberal institutionalists likely would agree that misperceptions plausibly can lead to cooperation; the interaction of PIBs and common
knowledge, a traditional concern for rational choice scholars and liberal institutionalists, is assessed in chapters two and four.

A theory of PIBs, however, may lead us to develop a different, and potentially deeper, reading of the social dynamics underlying the international system than has yet been pursued. Many constructivist theorists conclude that the international system is dominated by shared ideas that enable cooperation, socialization, and the formation of international society. These scholars draw on theories of society cast at the domestic level to articulate social theories of international politics. That is, they draw on theories traditionally used to explain local cultures, small societies, or the internal politics of a state in order to explain global cultures and international societies and to draw conclusions about the prospects for world state or non-state futures. In general, these theories highlight the importance of intersubjectivity, common norms, and common cultures in the creation of predictable and dependable patterns of behavior in the international system.¹⁵

By contrast, I suspect that there is a good argument against “rummaging in the ‘graveyard’ of sociological studies.”¹⁶ As a field, rather than borrowing the notion of shared ideas and norms from sociology and anthropology and arguments about language from philosophy, we should start from scratch. That is, we need to shift from a “social theory of international politics,” which draws on the assumptions of sociological literature designed to explain small communities, to an “international social theory” that begins from assumptions likely to be true of international politics that are untrue at the

¹⁵ I discuss this literature more fully in chapter two.
¹⁶ Katzenstein 1996, 1.
level of local cultures. This means that we should not draw on the theories that emphasize
dense societies, shared socialization practices, face-to-face contact, religious and
linguistic homogeneity, a common political culture, and common scientific and moral
beliefs. Instead, we should develop theoretical arguments that begin from the premise that
the domestic analogue does not apply; we should assume these conditions are weak or do
not exist in the international context. In IR, cooperation is not necessarily related to
shared ideas but may form as the result of two or more actors engaging in an encounter
with different definitions of the environment, different understandings of the interests of
others, different understandings of the set of strategies each might play, and so on. We
should replace the image of a homogeneous international system with an image of a
pluralistic one.

Homogeneity and pluralism seem to coexist within the international system.
Certain facts, such as the existence of international law, are shared system-wide, whereas
others, such as local morals and customs, are not widely held. Is the international system,
on balance, homogeneous or pluralistic? To resolve the question of the prevalence of
homogeneity or pluralism, one must push deeper to understand the reasons why
homogeneity is important.

At the beginning of the 20th century, classical social theorists rarely attempted to
explain social order by explaining the ways in which a single belief traffics in a society.
One reason may be that specific social facts or values are not sufficient to explain social
order as a single shared belief does not ensure the predictability of other actors. Common
knowledge of the immorality of stealing does not mean that no stealing will occur if the
impoverished must choose between stealing and eating. Similarly, states may share an understanding of sovereignty, but that does not determine which choices states will make in concrete situations where the norms connected to sovereignty interact with other norms, self-interest, or other factors.\textsuperscript{17} Single beliefs are often indeterminate in deciding specific actions.

To explain action, many sociologists focus on shared holistic definitions of social situations. This approach assumes that all action is subjective in the sense that any agent, whether it be corporate or individual, does something for a reason. To fully explain an action, one must know why an actor does it; to understand why an actor does it, one must know the reasons for acting.\textsuperscript{18} Furthermore, every actor holds a definition of a situation such that an actor is able to make plans for the realization of goals.\textsuperscript{19} This definition of the situation is holistic because it includes all of the circumstances that the actor takes into account when committing an act: the strategies that an actor might pursue, a set of means to achieve goals, and conditions that inhibit the realization of the actor’s end.\textsuperscript{20} These descriptions of the situations are necessarily subjective; an actor’s decision is in reference to subjective ends, means, and conditions.

In social actions, cases where an actor takes others into account when pursuing his goals, others become means and conditions for an action, becoming part of the definition

\textsuperscript{17} See Philpott 2001; and Reus-Smit 1997. On sovereignty’s indeterminacy, see Krasner, 1999; Krasner (ed) 2001; and Tickner 2003.
\textsuperscript{18} Campbell 1998; and Farr 1985, 1088. Many advocates of group intentionality agree that the group is only an actor insofar as the plural agent intends something and can rationally explain the action, e.g., Pettit 2001.
\textsuperscript{19} Thomas 1923.
\textsuperscript{20} Parsons 1937.
of a situation.\textsuperscript{21} In these cases, an actor cannot consummate an action successfully without an accurate understanding of the likely effects that the action will have on others. If others are required to realize a plan, they are means; if others stand in the way, they are conditions. For example, I may want to ensure my safety against a Russian invasion. One strategy to deter such an attack is to have my ambassador to Moscow make a threat. The Russians are a condition because they stand as an obstacle to my safety; the ambassador is a means because she is employable as part of my strategy.

Definitions of situations are almost always constituted by many elements: a situation may be composed of norms, values, sets of strategies, identities, beliefs about the natural world, beliefs about others, and so on. Many social theorists argue that it is possible to share definitions of situations such that actors know the circumstances under which others are making decisions. In game theoretic terms, this means that every actor involved in a situation will draw the same game tree of the interaction as every other. In sociological terms, it means that the reality of an interaction is defined identically for every actor. For Alfred Schutz, for example, ‘genuine intersubjectivity’ arises when, during communication, individuals put themselves in each others’ place, imagining that they themselves are selecting the signs being emitted by others.\textsuperscript{22} That is, each actor understands the stocks of knowledge on which the other relies when committing an action, and through a full grasp of the others’ situation, she can imagine herself committing the same act for the same reason. This resembles a case in which two actors

\textsuperscript{21} Weber 1978, 1376. On defining situations, see. See Goffman 1964; Perinbanayagam 1974; and Seeman 1997. On situational analysis in foreign policy, see George and Smoke 1974; Khong 1992; and Snyder, Bruck and Sapin 2002.

\textsuperscript{22} Turner 2002, 11. Schutz believes that this process is never successfully completed. See Schutz 1967.
know they are in a Prisoners’ Dilemma, and know that others know they are in a Prisoners’ Dilemma. Each imagines the other defecting because they share a common stock of knowledge and can appreciate the situation as it confronts others. When the process of achieving fully shared definitions of situations is successful, actors have achieved what I refer to as **situational homogeneity**. Situational homogeneity implies that every element of actors’ definitions of situations is intersubjective.

Situational homogeneity is important to social theory because it is thought to encourage order. Society is only possible because its members are able to cooperate, and cooperation is only possible if the reactions of others to one’s actions are predictable. For example, for George Herbert Mead, a founder of social psychology, individuals become full members of society when they are able to mentally put themselves in the place of others, that is, put themselves in another’s shoes so as to think through how they would react in a certain situation. This process enables actors to know how others will act in shared situations, enabling cooperation, the development of duties, and the creation of a fuller sense of self. 23

For Talcott Parsons, another influential sociologist, the consequences of failing to achieve situational homogeneity are stark. In his earliest work, Parsons argued that the alternative to shared definitions of situations was a Hobbesian state of war. If individuals lack common definitions of situations, and know that others know that common definitions are lacking, then they must always worry about the effects of others on their own plans. Without situational homogeneity, others become wildly unpredictable and one cannot coordinate plans of action with them. The result is violence: to prevent others

23 Mead 1936, 167.
from disrupting one’s plans, one must use force or fraud to subdue them. The claim that situational homogeneity encourages order runs through the concerns of early social theorists and is incorporated into Weber’s concerns over social action, Durkheim’s discussions of social facts, and more recent treatments of norms and identities. Society ensures predictability by creating common definitions of reality, and, as a consequence, enables the development of effective plans of action.

If situational homogeneity does not exist, that is, if actors never come to understand situations as they are experienced by others, then there is situational pluralism. Situational pluralism means that different actors hold different definitions of a situation and are unaware of these differences. It is more than a recognition of difference; if differences are recognized such that each actor fully understands the situation of the other, then the situation as a whole is homogeneous. Situational pluralism only occurs as the result of misperception or ignorance. Under conditions of situational pluralism, actors do not fully understand others’ definitions of a situation and thus cannot fully predict the response of others to a wide range of actions.

PIBs—erroneous beliefs that a belief is shared—encourage situational pluralism by making us confident that we share a definition of a situation despite significant differences. In these cases, actors believe they understand others’ situations, believe they can put themselves in the shoes of others, but never successfully bridge the differences between their definition of the situation and that of others. The case of Cook in Hawaii is the prototypical example: neither Cook nor the Hawaiians were aware of their differences.

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24 Parsons 1937, 89-94.
over the meaning and purpose of the visit and were, therefore, unable to think through the situation as others did.

A theory of situational pluralism does not imply that intersubjectivity never exists. Unlike situational homogeneity, situational pluralism expects that intersubjectivity and pluralism frequently coexist. To understand why, one must distinguish between the situation as cause and the situation as effect.\textsuperscript{25} Many studies conclusively show that elements of knowledge are spread in the international system, implying that bits of knowledge become shared elements of situations. Martha Finnemore, for example, shows that ideas as varies as the importance of science bureaucracies and the purpose of intervention have diffused.\textsuperscript{26} Studies such as these treat the definition of the situation as an effect, and in particular, elements of the situation as an effect of discussion, socialization, history, and imitation.

Although certain elements of situations are shared as an effect of these processes, situations as a whole may be pluralistic. Two definitions of situations may diverge greatly, even if many elements are shared, so long as crucial pieces are not shared. For example, the only difference between a Prisoners’ Dilemma, Battle of the Sexes, Assurance Game, and Bully Game is the pay-off structure. If one actor believes that both actors have Bully preferences, and the other that both have Prisoners’ Dilemma preferences, they may still share most elements of the situation (a language, set of possible strategies, and list of relevant players) but not be able to predict the actions of the other because a single difference—for example, the pay-offs—is important. In a

\textsuperscript{25} Ball 1972.
\textsuperscript{26} Finnemore 1996a and 2003.
socially pluralistic world, even if almost every idea is shared, there may be situational pluralism in most interactions if the remaining unshared ideas are important.

Evidence for Homogeneity and Pluralism

The rise and decline of détente shows that superpower relations during the early 1970s was often the product of situational pluralism. Despite the confidence of the leadership that the superpowers had overcome their differences such that mutual understanding was possible, the Nixon administration and the Brezhnev Politburo were not on the same page: there were vast differences between their appreciations of the situation, and putative intersubjective beliefs formed that precluded the recognition of these differences.

While this dissertation focuses on détente, I suspect that détente is not an isolated case. Situational pluralism is relevant to many more cases than détente and, possibly, is a fundamental fact of international life. In order to show that pluralism may pervade international politics, I briefly review three reasons that many scholars of International Relations (IR) argue that intersubjectivity, not pluralism is a basic fact of the international system: domestic analogues, the balance of empirical evidence, and arguments from abduction.

Domestic Analogues

Sociology, anthropology, psychology, and philosophy point toward sets of causal pathways through which situational homogeneity develops. In general, this literature points toward shared socialization, imitation, and dense systems of frequent interaction, especially face-to-face interactions, as likely causes of the development of thickly shared
definitions of situations. Are these pathways toward the development of situational homogeneity in the international system such that these domestic analogues are helpful? Here I consider two of these processes: socialization and imitation.

Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann’s *The Social Construction of Reality*, which is recommended by one influential IR scholar as the best introduction to constructivism, highlights the importance of these ideas for the formation of joint situational definitions. Their argument is, in part, that primary socialization—early childhood learning—provides the most powerful definitions of reality. Through direct and frequent contact with significant others (parents and teachers), children learn basic social rules such as, in their example, norms against spilling soup. Primary socialization is a very unlikely pathway to international socialization. International interactions are rarely face-to-face, and they include actors with different early socialization experiences, who may interact sparingly with individuals from other cultures. Cross-national differences in primary socialization likely generate different understandings of social situations, similar to the ways in which different social classes understand social reality differently.

If socialization proves a pathway to the development of situational homogeneity, it likely occurs later in life, during secondary socialization. For Berger and Luckmann, secondary socialization occurs when individuals learn new roles and join new

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27 Rational choice treatments of cooperation also draw on small-scale examples. See Coase 1960 and Hardin 1968. Even this is disputed. Many social theorists, philosophers, and others argues that differences are never fully overcome. See Athens 2005; Lyotard 1988; and Young 1986.
28 Wendt 1995, 76; also see Fierke and Jorgensen (eds.) 2001, 4, 44, and 179. In some cases, Berger and Luckmann’s role is shrouded in the references. Jeffrey Checkel’s complex learning is elaborated with reference to Alderson, who in turn cites Berger and Luckmann. Checkel 2005; and Alderson 2001.
organizational subcultures.\textsuperscript{30} This process appears to be at the heart of constructivist studies of socialization: the slow process of acculturation by which individuals, especially diplomats, learn the rules of the institutional system in which they are employed. In the most studied cases of socialization, international organizations (IOs) play a prominent role. IOs of act as “teachers” to publics, diplomats, leaders, and states, who in turn internalize new norms, enabling secondary socialization.\textsuperscript{31}

Does secondary socialization prove a reliable route to situational homogeneity? If one extends Berger and Luckmann’s account to IOs, likely not. First, secondary processes are usually less effective than primary socialization; they are “brittle and unreliable” because they compete with the definitions of reality achieved during primary socialization. This competition between childhood and adult socialization is usually won by the former; attachments formed during late socialization is rarely as emotionally charged as the primary definitions of reality. More troubling for IR theory, the conditions within IOs are not conducive to secondary socialization. There is significant evidence that individuals who enter IOs later in life are less likely than younger people to identify with organizational norms; there is little evidence that increasing the length of time that individuals are exposed to international institutions enhances their ability to learn; and, cultural differences affect the ability of diplomats to identify with international norms or

\textsuperscript{30} They also postulate that an individual may undergo a process of radical transformation. In IR, there are few examples of sudden conversions or studies attempting to document it in world politics. Berger and Luckmann 1966.

\textsuperscript{31} For the “teacher” metaphor, see Finnemore 1993; and Gheicu 2005. On internalization, see Alderson 2001; and Wendt 1999, 506-507. See also Bearce and Bondanella 2007; Checkel 2001; Finnemore 1996a; Johnston 2001; and Schimmelfenig 2005.
organizational ideals. In IOs, secondary socialization is less effective than primary socialization as early representations of reality compete with new situational definitions.

These arguments are exemplified in Jeffrey Checkel’s study of the role of the Council of Europe in German and Ukrainian citizenship policies. In Germany, the primary role of norms was their instrumental use by social groups to shame and pressure the government to change its citizenship policies. Older policymakers were unable to learn and did not change their principled views on citizenship. When learning did occur, it was the result of discussions and persuasion within Germany in which immigrant groups convinced young politicians to embrace different standards. By contrast, in Ukraine, the Council of Europe persuaded political elites to adopt more inclusive understandings of citizenship. These elites, however, were unable to persuade the rest of Ukraine of the importance of these rules. The reforms were thus short-lived as Ukraine moved from “rising star” to “problem child” in Europe. As other groups, who had not been resocialized, gained political power, they undercut important reforms. In both cases, primary socialization, especially for older elites, prevented secondary socialization from being effective. When secondary socialization was effective, it was either the result of persuasion from within (Germany) or short-lived due to its inability to reshape the views of others (Ukraine).

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34 Shaming and persuasion does not require socialization and is a pathway to the diffusion of norms that does not require situational homogeneity. Risse, Ropp and Sikkink 1999; and Keck and Sikkink 1998.
35 Checkel 2001, 577.
Socialization research may demonstrate that certain ideas are spread, but, on balance, it cannot establish that enough ideas spread to establish situational homogeneity. Through primary socialization, different actors develop different stock of ideas, and even if some of those ideas are modified later in life, there may remain significant differences between their actors’ holistic definitions of situations.

A second route towards situational homogeneity is imitation. The sociological literature related to globalization and imitation, especially the World Polity School, seems likely to support the position that intersubjective understandings of situations exist.\(^{36}\) Two leading constructivists, Alexander Wendt and Martha Finnemore, rely on the World Polity School to provide evidence that ideas can spread, creating the basis of intersubjectivity.\(^{37}\) In addition, structural realists, such as Kenneth Waltz, argue that imitation and emulation lead to the homogeneity of units over time.\(^{38}\) However, the central finding of the World Polity School is not simply that states imitate the policies of one another, but rather that each state, depending on its local circumstances, enacts different formulas: “The enactment of cultural models thus represented broad homologies, with actors everywhere defining themselves in similar ways and pursuing similar purposes by similar means, but specific actions in specific contexts vary almost without limit.”\(^{39}\)

\(^{36}\) On the World Polity School, see Meyer et al. 1977; Meyer, Nagel and Snyder 1993; and Meyer, Ramirez and Soysal 1992; Meyer et al. 1997; and Boli and Thomas 1997; and 1999.
\(^{37}\) Finnemore 1996b; and Wendt 1999, 325-6.
\(^{38}\) Waltz 1979.
\(^{39}\) Boli and Thomas 1999, 18.
These authors often argue that the large divergence in policies is the result of a failure to diffuse morals or values.\textsuperscript{40} This creates significant levels of situational pluralism because morals and values are connected to interests and preferences, which are crucial components of situations. Furthermore, imitation does not fully establish situational homogeneity because of world time. Anthony Giddens argues that every action takes place within unique “conjunctures of history that influence the nature of episodes.”\textsuperscript{41} In imitation, the differences between actions, in terms of place and time, are sufficient to ensure that the meaning of an imitative action is different from the original. The imitator establishes a precedent which imitators work from. For example, if I imitate my dissertation committee by wearing the same hat that they wear, the meaning of wearing the hat is different for me than them. The same dynamic likely occurs when states imitate the structure of others. The meaning of the precedent will greatly vary from the first state to the second, and from the second to the third, as observers endow projects with new meanings.\textsuperscript{42} Therefore, imitation does not imply situational homogeneity.

\textit{Empirical Arguments}

IR scholars also point toward empirical evidence to demonstrate the existence of intersubjectivity. The argument for situational pluralism does not maintain there are no shared ideas; in fact, I suspect that many pieces of knowledge are intersubjective, that there are shared norms, and, in fewer cases, transnational shared identities that condition their behavior. On balance, however, the empirical evidence does not decisively posit that

\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}\textsuperscript{40}}
\footnote{Giddens 1984, 377.\textsuperscript{41}}
\footnote{\textit{Ibid.} 244-255.\textsuperscript{42}}
intersubjectivity is prevalent and there is very limited evidence for situational homogeneity.

Many of the most interesting findings in IR scholarship point toward situational pluralism. The founders of modern realism, such as E.H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau, developed their accounts of the international system in reaction to the possibility of shared ideas.\textsuperscript{43} For Morgenthau, there once was a community of European monarchs who held more in common with one another than with their subjects: “They were joined together by family ties, a common language, common cultural values, a common style of life, and common moral convictions.”\textsuperscript{44} This common moral code created moral obligations; foreign policy invoked the honor of the prince and thus his prestige and power were at risk if he failed to fulfill his obligations. Morgenthau traces the “destruction of international morality” to the French revolution, where moral restraints became a “figure of speech.” In an age of nationalism, “the stage is set for a contest among nations whose stakes are no longer their relative positions within a political and moral system accepted by all, but the ability to impose upon the other contestants a new universal political and moral system recreated in the image of the victorious nation’s political and moral convictions.”\textsuperscript{45} Systems of moral obligation are no longer shared; they are particular to different national experiences. Even if we do not share Carr and Morgenthau’s pessimism, the empirical claim remains the same: with the rise of

\textsuperscript{43} Carr 1946, 162.
\textsuperscript{44} Morgenthau 1960, 245.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 256.
nationalism and borders, shared moral convictions have declined over time. Societies, and the leaders they elect, hold different values because they are no longer socialized into a single elite system like the monarchs of Europe.

The realist intuition is augmented by political psychologists who study international politics. In general, this literature points toward several sources of misperceptions that are frequent and unavoidable in international politics. For example, many cognitive biases leads to the inability to accurately interpret incoming information. Actors often ignore evidence that contradicts their initial assumptions, make attribution errors in explaining the conduct of others, misuse stereotypes, and engage in poor analogical reasoning. “Several of these processes are fueled by a lack of empathy, an inability to understand others’ worldviews,” writes Jack Levy. “The inability to empathize and see the world as the adversary sees it is compounded if two actors have different cultural, ideological or religious orientations.”

Borders and cognitive psychological biases lead to significant differences between persons in different societies. Different cultures understand self-reflective emotions (pride and guilt) differently, have different conceptions of love, ascribe different degrees of emotional intensity to one another, and even use different hand gestures to order beer. Concerning international politics, different societies remember

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46 Several recent studies support Morgenthau’s claim. Persuasion is more likely between states that share a common background, and cultural differences between groups within a state have significant effects on foreign policy. See Deitelhoff 2009; and Hopf 2002 and 2005. In high stakes cases in particular, these problems are compounded as diplomats become less important than elected leaders. Cohen 1996, 111.
47 For example, see Jervis 1976; Nisbett and Ross 1980; Khong 1992; and May 1973
48 Levy 2003, 266.
49 For an overview, see Fiske et al. 1998.
50 See, respectively, Eid and Diener 2001; Jackson et al 2006; Matsumoto, Anguas-Wong, and Martinez 2008; and Pika, Nicoladis and Marentette 2009.
World War II differently, rely on different levels of violence, have different perceptions of the Iraq War, justify war and terrorism differently, and have different understandings of suicide terrorism.\textsuperscript{51} Even within a state there are cross-cultural differences. The American North and South, for example, have different understandings related to honor, violence, and aggression.\textsuperscript{52}

These studies provide substantial evidence against the universality of situational homogeneity. International agents have difficulty predicting the behavior of others by understanding interactions from the perspective of the other; the cultural and psychological barriers to empathy are too high.

These situational differences become apparent in negotiating and strategic settings. In reference to international negotiations, there is significant evidence in IR and international business studies highlighting linguistic and cross-cultural issues.\textsuperscript{53} Rarely do these members overcome these barriers such that mutual understanding is assured.

For example, negotiations at the end of the First World War led to many cross-cultural negotiating problems. First, the negotiators encountered significant linguistic problems. “The ignorance of French on the part of Englishmen is very deplorable,” said Lord Wester Wemyss, the British naval representative to the armistice talks. As a result, the British were “reading translation word by word and nobody really understanding.”\textsuperscript{54} Later, at the Paris Peace Conference, these translation problems became increasingly severe because of German translation problems. When the German government offered a

\textsuperscript{51} See, respectively; Ember and Ember 1994; Fierke 2009; Halverscheid and Witte 2008; Lewandowsky et al 2005; and Paez et al 2008.
\textsuperscript{52} Nisbett and Cohen 1996.
\textsuperscript{53} Rivers and Lytle 2007.
\textsuperscript{54} In French 1998, 81.
counterproposal, they left it to the allies to quickly translate it into English and French. This required the employment of 30 translators who had to quickly work from the three copies provided by the German government, a process likely to lead to error.\textsuperscript{55} In addition, negotiators used stereotypes to make sense of others, leading to cognitive and emotional biases in crafting the settlement.\textsuperscript{56} The result was a confusing tangle of negotiations that culminated in one of the most far-reaching peace conferences in history.\textsuperscript{57}

The Paris Peace Conference was not the only event at which misunderstandings existed in international negotiations. In 1938, after a former Japanese ambassador to the United States died in Washington, Roosevelt decided to send the body back to Japan on the cruiser the \textit{Astoria}. Roosevelt, none too happy with Japan after events in China and the sinking of U.S. ships, did not intend the gesture as good will, nor did he expect Japan to treat it as such. In Japan, however, the act inspired positive public opinion of the United States leading to festivals, elaborate gifts for the crew of the \textit{Astoria}, parades, and an emotional outpouring of gratitude: “What had been intended as a simple mark of courtesy escalated into a major demonstration of esteem.”\textsuperscript{58} Roosevelt and the Japanese public did not share an understanding of the meaning of the cruise of the \textit{Astoria} because there was no mutual understanding of the situation.\textsuperscript{59}

In another intriguing example, the negotiation of the Fifth European Union Enlargement led to significantly different self-evaluations than evaluations of others. The

\textsuperscript{55} \textit{New York Times}. “Reply to Allies in German.” May 29, 1919, 1.
\textsuperscript{56} A similar dynamic occurred in the negotiations at Versailles. Bottom 2003; and Lippmann 1997.
\textsuperscript{57} For a more general argument about translation problems, see Fisher 1980, 59-66.
\textsuperscript{58} Cohen 1991, 5-6.
\textsuperscript{59} Also see the U.S.-Sino flap over “I’m sorry” in Avruch and Wang 2005.
negotiating teams from Hungary, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Poland, and Slovakia considered themselves lenient, whereas EU negotiators found them tough. Slovenia, Lithuania, Cyprus, and Estonia thought themselves tough, but EU negotiators found them lenient. Malta and Cyprus thought themselves dominant, whereas the EU found them to be bending. Perhaps most amusingly, Lithuania thought of itself as hostile, but EU teams found them to be the friendliest. The success of EU expansion is well-known, but mutual understanding did not fully develop. The negotiating teams did not understand the situation as it was experienced by others.

In each of these cases, linguistic or cultural problems led to misrecognitions of signs as actors did not fully understand the meaning of the situation from the perspective of the other. Students of strategic cultures have discovered similar dynamics. First generation security culture scholars find that important significant differences between national communities in regard to how threats are evaluated, strategies are formulated, and doctrines are decided. In particular, the first generation cautioned against the use of “mirror-imaging,” that is, imagining that others think like we think and thus consulting our beliefs is sufficient to understand others.

More recent work highlights specific differences that have more varied consequences. For example, the class structure of the French military in the interwar years led to a defensive doctrine because French officers believed their conscript army

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60 Smolinski 2008, 264.
61 For an overview, see Farrell 1998; Gray 1999; Johnston 1999; and Katzenstein 1996. Several scholars now argue that in certain cases military cultures are emulated, however even these scholars agree that this is not universally true and important differences exist. See Farrell 1998; and 2001; and Wendt and Barnett 1993.
62 See, for example, Gray 1986; and Snyder 1977. Also see Berenskoetter 2005; and Kagan 2003.
63 This third generation is exemplified by Johnston 1995.
incapable of fighting offensively. This differed significantly from the strategic culture that prevailed throughout the rest of Europe, which learned different lessons from the First World War and prepared for offensive operations.\textsuperscript{64} Similarly, Germany’s decision not to support the United States during the 2003 Iraq War, and to attempt to form a coalition to oppose the intervention, followed a cultural pattern that was the result of postwar lessons.\textsuperscript{65} There are significant differences in the ways in which different states, due to cultural, historical, and other differences, define security situations and execute security policy. There is also evidence that policy-makers are not attentive to those differences and do not fully empathize with others.

These idiosyncratic beliefs concerning security have been influential in maintaining peace. First, misunderstandings of allies’ strategic preferences can lead states to avoid war. For example, the Israel’s initial choice not to fight a preemptive war in May 1967 was in part caused by an Israeli misperception of U.S. interests.\textsuperscript{66} Second, specific sets of inaccurate beliefs may lead political elites to underestimate their own state’s military strength, overestimate their opponents, or believe that defense in dominant. In each case, peace may be more likely than war as states are falsely deterred. For example, Janice Gross Stein argues that in May 1973, the Egyptian military underestimated its ability to conduct a crossing of the Suez Canal against Israel’s fortifications and to defend itself against Israeli aircraft. As the events of October 1973 show, they drastically underestimated their capabilities and this miscalculation reinforced deterrence.

Interestingly, Israeli intelligence knew that Egypt was underconfident: “Egypt could but

\textsuperscript{64} Kier 1999.
\textsuperscript{65} Dalgaard-Nielsen 2005.
\textsuperscript{66} Zagare 1987, 97-113.
thought it couldn’t, while Israel thought Egypt could but wouldn’t because Egypt thought it couldn’t.”

The findings of decades of IR empirical research bears out the intuition that international negotiations, whether in international politics, international business, or informal international meetings, take place in an atmosphere of situational pluralism. When combined with evidence that the pathways through which intersubjectivity is reached domestically—face-to-face interactions, shared primary socialization, and imitation—are more narrow and more precarious internationally, there is ample reason to suspect that situational pluralism is common; actors are likely to have different understandings of situations and be unaware of their differences.

**Abductive Arguments**

Beyond empirical evidence and domestic analogues, an argument from abduction is also used to show the existence of intersubjectivity. The argument from abduction may be one of the oldest arguments in social theory. Durkheim, in *The Division of Labor*, makes the argument in its clearest form. For Durkheim, social systems characterized by the division of labor require extensive levels of cooperation. This cooperation cannot be explained without the existence of shared social rules, common knowledge, and shared understandings. If these did not exist, “at every moment there would be renewed conflicts and quarrels” because in every interaction, every right, duty, and enforcement concern would be an issue for discussion, preventing the conclusion of agreements. Actors must presuppose that situations are shared, know others’ places in the division of labor,

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68 Durkheim 1984. See also Hume 1978, 3.2.2; and Parsons 1937, 308-324.
understand the obligations, rights and conventions of others that may affect transactions, and jointly understand others’ goals (usually profit). This is an argument from abduction, or inference to the best explanation, because it postulates that no alternative explanation can explain the stability of the division of labor and the contracts necessary to support it; it is not a positive argument tracing the process through which stability is reached.69

The argument from abduction has recently made a reappearance in IR theory. Alexander Wendt, in defending his argument that the international system is ordered through shared ideas, writes that “far from facing profound uncertainty, states are confident about each other’s intentions almost all the time.” He reasons that without “a deep reservoir of common knowledge. . . the international system today would be far more chaotic and conflictual than it is—indeed there would not be an ‘international system’ at all.”70 Wendt’s argument is similar to Durkheim’s. Common stocks of shared ideas are crucial to predicting the behavior of others, others in the international system are predictable, therefore, common stocks of shared ideas must exist. In the absence of an alternative explanation, it is the only explanation for social order.

The argument of this dissertation attempts to undermine the argument from abduction. In the context of the international system, actors can cooperate without the existence of shared ideas. There is an alternative path to cooperation that does not require situational homogeneity. The chief arguments of this dissertation, that PIBs can effectively create the conditions under which cooperation occurs, can then be regarded as

69 An abductive argument infers the antecedent of a condition from its consequence, if and only if, there is no better explanation of the consequence than the antecedent. Its logical form may be simplified as: if A then B, B, therefore A (assuming there is not better explanation than A). See Wendt 1999, 62-7.
70 Wendt 2006, 211.
a ground clearing exercise, undermining the argument from abduction by showing that there is an alternative path to cooperation.

The primary aim of this dissertation is to demonstrate that, in certain cases, cooperation is possible in the presence of putative intersubjective beliefs, and in specific cases, PIBs are necessary for cooperation to occur. Important cases of international cooperation may have failed if actors actually understood others’ situations, values, interests, understanding of norms, and expectations for future behavior. In Chapter Two, I explain the process through which PIBs lead to cooperation and contrast this with theories of common knowledge and intersubjectivity. In doing so, I undermine the argument from abduction; international life is possible without shared definitions of situations because there is a route to cooperation that does not require the deepest levels of mutual understanding.

The study of détente shows how and why actors can cooperate without shared ideas. International life was largely predictable in the early 1970s. Brezhnev, Nixon, Kissinger, and others believed they knew the score, understood how the international climate of the 1970s affected the other’s situation, and expected that their understanding of the international situation was shared. These strong beliefs operated at the macro-level, by convincing each side that they jointly understood the broad contours of their relationship, and the micro-level, by creating specific beliefs that were conducive to cooperation. On many important counts, they were wrong. These PIBs were powerful enough, however, to create a subjective sense of order, a route to cooperation that dispels the argument from abduction.
Overview

In order to demonstrate how a pluralistic international system yields cooperation, this dissertation shows that during the U.S.-Soviet détente, cooperation improved because of a putative intersubjective belief.

First, in Chapter Two I outline the theory of PIBs and develop a research design for testing PIBs against liberal institutionalist arguments from common knowledge and constructivist arguments from intersubjectivity in the context of détente. I argue that PIBs are an example of public beliefs: beliefs that beliefs are shared by a group. They are distinguishable from intersubjectivity or common knowledge because they are false beliefs. Three types of PIBs are outlined, and the scope conditions under which they are likely to enhance cooperation are identified. During détente, one species of PIB, imagined intersubjectivity, developed that contributed to the growth and maintenance of cooperation. I outline a research strategy that derives hypotheses from imagined intersubjectivity, common knowledge, and intersubjectivity and assesses their relative importance.

Chapter Three compares the explanatory power of imagined intersubjectivity with that of intersubjectivity in the context of U.S. and Soviet beliefs about the rise of détente in the late 1960s and 1970s. Alexander Wendt argues that shifts from conflict to cooperation occur when a non-cooperative culture of anarchy (enmity) gives way to cooperation (rivalry). First, this chapter argues that détente is a likely case to inspect this shift. Second, I argue that Wendt’s theory is partly correct in this case. The leadership in both states understood their relationship as a rivalry but understood the aims and rules of
the rivalry differently, and believed that there impressions of the relationship were shared. I trace the effects of this PIB during the negotiation of the Basic Principles Agreement (BPA) and the ceasefire resolutions during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War.

Chapter Four examines micro-level issues, comparing imagined intersubjectivity to common knowledge in the negotiation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM). I argue that at three crucial moments during the negotiation process, imagined intersubjectivity pushed the parties towards cooperation. Through counterfactual analysis, I then show that if common knowledge had existed at these three moments, cooperation likely would have been shallow or not occurred.

Chapter Five controls for alternative realist and liberal institutionalist explanations. I evaluate the explanatory ability of power related variables by testing power transition and balance of power explanations for cooperation and conflict; and, I test liberal institutionalist variables relating to institutional design and trade. I maximize within-case variation by analyzing changes in the superpower relationship during détente’s decline (1974-1979). Each of these theories is able to explain elements of the rise and decline of détente. I show that a theory of PIBs complements realist and liberal institutionalist theories of cooperation. On balance, though, a theory of PIBs explains is better able to explain the decline of détente, and is therefore preferable over realist and liberal institutionalist theories.

The conclusion returns to the themes of the introduction. First, a theory of PIBs has significant implications for realist and liberal institutionalist hypotheses regarding regime design. These are briefly explored, and future promising lines of research are
discussed. Second, I return to the argument from abduction. If situational pluralism is capable of explaining cooperation, then how might social theories of international politics adjust to incorporate pluralistic elements into macro-level theories of the international system?
Many of the most interesting and widely used theories of international cooperation rely on common knowledge or intersubjectivity. For some, this intuition emerges from analogies to domestic markets in which common knowledge, for example of price or reputation, leads to efficient exchange. For others, the intuition draws more widely from the work of pioneering sociologists who argue that society itself is impossible without widely shared ideas. In either case, shared ideas are thought to provide sets of stable expectations for the behavior of others, enabling cooperation as agents can reliably depend on others to behave as expected. In IR, these arguments are perhaps the dominant paradigm in explaining the origins of international cooperation.

However, there are reasons to be suspicious of the existence of these deep intersubjective agreements at the domestic level and, in particular, at the international level. Unlike domestic systems in which children undergo similar socialization processes, and unlike local markets where there is a high density of interactions, international politics involves actors who are often from different walks of life, learn the language of diplomacy at an advanced age, and, for many of the most important policy-makers, interact more within their own society than outside of it. The literature on international negotiations, security cultures, and many other areas of research document significant

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71 For two interesting examples, see Greif 1989; and Milgrom, North, and Weingast 1990.
72 These arguments were reviewed in the previous chapter.
cases of situational pluralism—instances in which an interaction occurs with different agents who unknowingly hold different definitions of a situations.

One might disagree: in the international system, states coordinate their plans of action frequently. They cooperate with one another, sign agreements, execute joint actions, and engage in similar conduct. Actors simply would not undertake joint activities unless they shared a common understanding of the project or at least had dependable expectations of their partners in these projects. This intuition is captured by scholars influenced by economic theories, who argue that international cooperation occurs on the basis of common knowledge, as well as scholars inspired by social theory, who argue that cooperation occurs because of shared social norms or common identities. In the previous chapter, I compare this intuition to the argument from abduction that was made by the earliest social theorists. What else might explain the predictability of most aspects of international life if not for intersubjective agreement, common knowledge, norms, or common identities?

I posit that there is a second route to cooperation that may be particularly common in the international system, as opposed to local systems. Putative intersubjective beliefs (PIBs)—inaccurate beliefs that a piece of knowledge is common—may enable cooperation in many cases in which intersubjectivity would lead to failure. In this chapter, I explain how this occurs. In the following chapters, I test whether intersubjectivity or PIBs are more able to explain cooperation in a hard case, the agreements reached between the United States and Soviet Union during détente.

73 Keohane 1984; and Wendt 1999.
This chapter provides the theoretical outline for understanding the contrasting ways that intersubjectivity and PIBs lead to cooperation. The first section outlines the prevalent view that common knowledge or intersubjectivity is a necessary condition for cooperation. As this discussion is usually implicit, I discuss these claims in detail. Then, I present and outline the alternative theory of cooperation, putative intersubjective beliefs, and demonstrate that it can condition cooperation in the absence of intersubjectivity. Third, I derive hypotheses from each type of belief and outline a research design to test these theories in the context of Cold War cooperation.

**Intersubjective Beliefs**

While the role of misperception and incomplete information is often treated explicitly as a cause for the collapse of cooperation, the ways in which intersubjectivity generates cooperation is less clearly discussed. What do IR scholars mean when they say intersubjectivity? And how does intersubjectivity lead to cooperation? There are two approaches to answering these questions: a rationalist approach, influenced by economics, that focuses on the role of common knowledge, and a constructivist approach, influenced by sociology and the philosophy of language, that focuses on the role of shared meanings.
Common Knowledge

Common knowledge (CK) is often, if not always, treated as a necessary condition for cooperation to occur in accounts of international politics that rely on rational choice theory. What is CK for rationalists and how does it lead to cooperation?\(^{74}\)

CK is often defined as “any information that all players know, that all players know that all players know, and so on.”\(^{75}\) This definition distinguishes CK from other types of knowledge. It is different than “private knowledge” because all actors know the truth of a proposition.\(^{76}\) It is also distinguishable from mutual knowledge, where two actors know the truth of a proposition but do not know whether others know.\(^{77}\)

CK plays significant but varied roles in every application of game theory in IR and is often treated as a necessary condition for cooperation. Hume, an early advocate of this idea, reasoned that humans require CK—conventions—because it provides them with dependable expectations of the behavior of others. In explaining the origins of property, he writes, “I observe, that it will be for my interest to leave another in the possession of his goods, \textit{provided} he will act in the same manner with regard to me. He is sensible in a like interest in the regulation of his conduct. When this common sense of interest is mutually express’d, and is known to both, it produces a suitable resolution and behavior.” He then compares conventions to “two men who pull the oars of a boat, do it by agreement or convention, tho’ they have never given promises to one another.” CK

\(^{74}\) This is distinct from the problem of CK in economics, which often discusses cases in which actors are unsure of the state of the world and describes how they develop CK. The discussion below focuses on cases in which actors believe they know the state of the world, believe that this is CK, and are incorrect. Cf. Aumann 1976; and Geanakoplos 1992.
\(^{75}\) Morrow 1994, 55. Also see Aumann 1976; and Lewis 1969.
\(^{76}\) Morrow 1994, 61.
\(^{77}\) See Morrow 1994, 97-98; and Osborne and Rubenstein 1994.
enables people engaging in an activity that requires the coordination of individual plans of action to orient their activities toward others because they believe that others will engage in similar behavior.78

Rationalists have dramatically expanded Humean conventions to include a number of species of CK and in so doing have relied on different elements of CK to explain international cooperation. These are summarized in Table 2.1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms of Common Knowledge</th>
<th>Uses of Forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>Number of Players</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preference Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rationality of Players</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Possible Actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linguistic</td>
<td>Language (Syntax and Semantics)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meaning of Signals and Indices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situation Specific</td>
<td>Assorted, but in many applications includes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focal Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Precedents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cause and Effect Beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutional Rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Previous Game Play</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1: Forms of Common Knowledge

Each of these species of CK enable actors to effectively coordinate their actions with those of others.

First, most applications of game theory in IR require strategic common knowledge. Strategic CK is mathematical: it includes the elements necessary for orthodox game theory. The strategic form of a game, introduced by von Neumann and Morgenstern, includes, at minimum, a set of players and a set of actions available to and

78 Hume 1978, 3.2.2. On conventions in IR, see Kratochwil 1978.
a preference relation for each player.\textsuperscript{79} In many cases, the relevant players, actions, and preferences are CK. More recent treatments also emphasize the importance of the CK of rationality, “each player knows the details of the game and the fact that all the players are ‘rational.’”\textsuperscript{80} These elements of strategic CK enable actors to develop dependable expectations of others’ reactions to actions an actor might undertake through the mathematical form of the game. In explaining cooperation, every model in IR includes some element of strategic CK.\textsuperscript{81}

Second, \textit{linguistic common knowledge} is crucial for most approaches to international politics. Actors cannot negotiate cooperative arrangements unless key elements of language are CK. Linguistic CK provides the basic set of tools, such as syntax and semantics, for actors to understand the language used by others; words must have common meanings in addition to a common set of rules for linking words together. Furthermore, if actors rely on signals to communicate, the signals must be CK. Without CK of the meaning of a signal, an intended communication might be misunderstood or taken for noise.\textsuperscript{82} Models often assume that actors understand which strategy others are playing. This presumes there is a means of differentiating between strategies that is not captured in the mathematical structure of the game alone. This capacity for discrimination between two strategies relies on actors having a shared capacity to interpret a specific behavior as a specific strategy.

\textsuperscript{79} Von Neumann and Morgenstern 1944.
\textsuperscript{80} Osborne and Rubenstein 1994, 13.
\textsuperscript{81} For example, see Fearon 1998; Kahler 1998, and Weingast 1995.
\textsuperscript{82} Jervis 1970.
Linguistic CK is not trivial. Students of diplomatic history cannot help but be astonished by how much common understandings of words matter. The meaning of “strategic bomber” was crucially important in the SALT II discussions because of the Soviet Backfire bomber, which had strategic capabilities because it could reach the United States was not deployed in the northern areas of the Soviet Union where the bomber became capable of intercontinental flights and thus was not used “strategically.” In another case, during the negotiations of the Shanghai communiqué, which was the culmination of Nixon’s visit to China, the American and Chinese negotiators had CK of the nuances of words such as “will” and “should,” and phrases such as “all Chinese” and “the Chinese.” These nuances were the object of tangling throughout the trip, especially in the climatic meetings between Kissinger and Qiao where they wrestled at length over the precise formulation of the communiqué. Dean Acheson recites a similar anecdote regarding negotiations with the British: “In time it got around to a trouble Mr. Bevin and I had stumbled into that morning by believing that we had both been speaking a common language when, in fact, the common English word—in this case, “executive”—had a different meaning on each side of the table.” For the British, “executive” connotes arbitrary action, whereas for the Americans, an executive body has the power to act. These three cases show that the common meanings of terms cannot be taken for granted as they matter in important ways.

Third, situation specific common knowledge is a basket of types of CK that are required for cooperation but vary depending on the specific situation being modeled. It

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83 Talbott 1979.  
84 MacMillan 2007, 311.  
85 Acheson 1969: 391.
bears a resemblance to some accounts of culture, but I choose not to employ the phrase “cultural common knowledge” because rationalist approaches are only interested in the elements of culture that implicate a strategic situation, such as the provision of non-mathematical focal points. The phrase “situation specific” is intended to highlight the elements that by actors use to select equilibria or make to sense of others’ strategies. As such, no list of situation specific CK can pretend to be exhaustive because different scholars focus on different elements of CK. For example, Thomas Schelling relies on several pieces of CK to solve bargaining problems, including focal points, precedents, prior arrangements, identifications, delegations, and mediations.\textsuperscript{86} Situation specific CK draws on the rich details of diplomatic histories that are a continuing surprise and wealth of insights for rationalists and others.\textsuperscript{87}

The emphasis on CK may seems strange to some students of IR. Many IR scholars treat uncertainty over rivals’ future intentions, relative power, or the capabilities and allies’ resolve, as a fundamental feature of international politics.\textsuperscript{88} It may seem that emphasizing CK prevents a serious consideration of uncertainty. However, this is not the case because many discussions of uncertainty presume that the level of uncertainty is CK. For example, states know that the others’ future intentions are uncertain, and know that others know that this is the case. Further, in many cases actors have a false confidence, a certainty, concerning the state of the world. There is abundant psychological evidence

\textsuperscript{86} Schelling 1960. Also see Chayes and Chayes 1993; Goldstein and Keohane 1993; and Morrow 2002.
\textsuperscript{87} Wendt highlights a similar role for intersubjectivity: “the concept of common knowledge is equivalent to that of ‘intersubjective understandings’ favored by constructivists’ and his definition of CK is nearly identical to the rationalist definition of CK. See Wendt 1999, 159-60.
\textsuperscript{88} For example, see Blainey 1973; Kydd 2005; and Mearsheimer 2001. For an overview, see Rathbun 2007.
indicating that actors are certain about many of their beliefs.\(^{89}\) For example, in IR, states are often not uncertain about the intentions of other states in the international system.\(^{90}\) The United States is not uncertain about the prospects of a Canadian or British invasion, nor uncertain that North Korea and al-Qaeda harbor enmity.

Each type of CK enables efficient bargains to be reached. While Keohane develops this argument in relation to Coase’s theorem, the general intuition that CK is important resides deep in economic thought. Hayek, for example, argues that the impersonal forces of the market, combined with general legislation, create stocks of knowledge that a group of individuals can rely when cooperating.\(^{91}\) More recently, Douglass North responds to the free-rider problem by arguing that ideology renders the behavior of others predictable. Ideologies make certain patterns of free-riding behavior illegitimate, enabling complex forms of social cooperation.\(^{92}\)

The rationalist approach to the role that CK plays in cooperation can be summarized by the following proposition:

**Proposition One: Common knowledge contributes to cooperation.** Actors are able to cooperate once they identify relevant actors, determine the nature of the strategic situation including the pay-offs for others, develop a common language through which to communicate, and other items of common knowledge crucial to the specific bargaining situation.

\(^{89}\) Giddens 1991; see also McSweeney 1999 and Mitzen 2006

\(^{90}\) Wendt 2006, 210-212.

\(^{91}\) Hayek 1944; and 1960.

\(^{92}\) North 1981, 45-58.
Intersubjectivity

IR theorists inspired by sociology rarely use the rationalist term CK. Instead, they often argue that intersubjectivity or shared understandings are crucial for international cooperation. Since Friedrich Kratochwil and John Ruggie's statement of purpose for constructivist studies, shared meaning has been used to understand international events as dissimilar as the non-use of particular types of weapons the creation and maintenance of military doctrine, the creation of science bureaucracies, and the Red Cross, the promotion of human rights, and economic policies. The emphasis on intersubjectivity has been described as the central tenet of constructivist research, perhaps most prominently by Alexander Wendt who writes that there are “two basic tenet of 'constructivism': (1) that the structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces, and (2) that the identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature.” Similarly, Theo Farrell describes the contribution of constructivist security studies as the introduction of intersubjective beliefs. Furthermore, Christiansen and his coauthors, in an introduction to the study of ideas in European politics, argue that the study of intersubjectivity is the single most important contribution that constructivists have made.

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93 Kratochwil and Ruggie 1986. On non-use of weapons, see Price 1995; and Tannenwald 2007; on the Red Cross and human rights, respectively, see Finnemore 1993; and Risse and Sikkink: 1999; and on economic policy, see Goldstein 1989; and Widmaier 2003 and 2004.
94 Wendt 1999, 1.
95 Farrell 2001; see also Hopf 1998.
96 Christiansen, Jorgensen, and Wiener 1999.
What is intersubjectivity and how does it explain cooperation? Despite the significance of intersubjectivity for these scholars, the term is rarely explicitly defined. Beyond IR, there are countless definitions of intersubjectivity. For example, Habermas argues that intersubjectivity is simply the human capacity to use language; in psychoanalysis, the term has been used to describe the interaction between patient and analyst; and in sociology, it tends to refer to the mutual constitution of social reality by a community. IR scholarship tends to use the latter definition, drawing on the work of early sociologists such as Durkheim and philosophers such as John Searle, who argue that social facts are created by agents and then act as constraints on them. Even this latter definition is vague. Is intersubjectivity the outcome of social interactions, that is, the social facts themselves? Or, is intersubjectivity the process of interactions, that is, the way in which different subjective understandings of the world become aligned through discussion and practice? Or, is intersubjectivity the human condition, that is, the necessity that humans interact with others, the inescapability of society? Few are careful in their use of the term, creating much conceptual confusion.

Despite these problems, in IR the term is most often used in one of two ways. First, in many cases, intersubjectivity is synonymous with CK, that is, it refers to strategic, linguistic, and situation specific CK, or, in the parlance of sociology, social facts. Intersubjectivity is the outcome of interactions in which agents implicitly or explicitly agree on certain facts. Second, other scholars broaden the concept to include

97 Habermas 1984; and Stolorow and Atwood 1996. For alternative accounts, see Coelho and Figueiredo 2003; de Quincey 2000; Markova 2003; and Zahavi 2001.
98 Durkeim Roles, Searle, Giddens Wendt.
intersubjectivity as process as well as intersubjectivity as outcome. As is often emphasized, the formation of norms, identities, and other intersubjective items occur through a process that involves the co-constitution of actors by one another. These extra elements of intersubjectivity move beyond the first account by indicating that the process through which CK arises is also intersubjective.

The first interpretation directly equates CK to intersubjectivity. Wendt writes that “the concept of common knowledge is equivalent to that of ‘intersubjective understandings’ favored by constructivists.” Common knowledge is a set of beliefs that individuals share and realize that they share: “Knowledge of a proposition P is ‘common’ to a group G if the members of G all believe that P, believe that the members of G believe P, believe that the members of G believe that members of G believe P and so on.” This definition of CK is nearly identical to the definition proposed by Aumann and Lewis that characterizes the rationalist approach to CK. Similarly, Friedrich Kratochwil draws explicitly on Lewis and Schelling in describing the nature of custom, tacit rules, and explicit rules that are the foundation of the international social system. Therefore, this conception of intersubjectivity includes the three forms suggested earlier—strategic, linguistic, and situation specific. The purpose of the CK assumption in game theory is that CK provides dependable stocks of knowledge that actors can use to make sense of a strategic situation. Intersubjectivity plays the same role: intersubjective meanings are “shared notions of the nature of social relations which tend to perpetuate

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99 Wendt 1999, 159-160.
100 Aumann 1976; and Lewis 1969.
101 Kratochwil 1989, 72-83.
habits and expectations of behavior.”102 By sharing ideas, actors have a stock of knowledge through which they know how they are to behave and how others are likely to behave. As Wendt explains, “the empirical phenomenon to which each is pointing, shared beliefs that orient action, is the same.”103

This account of intersubjectivity is not idiosyncratic. A significant portion of the literature firmly entrenched in social theory paradigms relies on CK to explain international cooperation. First, the literature on learning and socialization implies that states learn from one another through the diffusion of knowledge from one state to another. This in turn implies that what counts as intersubjective is the knowledge that is shared after the completion of the socialization process.104 Furthermore, some of the earliest constructivist work on the development of international rules requires that these rules be CK.105 When referring to this account of intersubjectivity, I use the term CK to distinguish it from the approach discussed next.

A second account of intersubjectivity moves beyond the rationalist CK tradition to emphasize the importance of common norms and common identities. It is this account that IR scholars refer to when claiming that the focus on intersubjectivity is the central contribution of constructivist scholarship. The causal processes through which norms and identities effect cooperation are conceptually distinct from the roles that CK often plays. Identities and norms generate the interests of actors, produce the units that interact (states), and provide for relations between states by imbuing their relations between

102 Cox 1986, 218.
103 Wendt 1999, 161. See also Keohane 2000.
104 Checkel 1999 and 2001; Cortell and Davis 1996; and Finnemore and Sikkink 1998. See also Nye 1987.
105 See Kratochwil 1989; and Onuf 1989.
Rationalists often do not probe the underlying reasons for the generation of CK because they truncate the story of cooperation by only beginning the narrative after CK has been generated. Constructivist accounts push the story of cooperation a step backward by probing the bases for the stocks of knowledge that are not treated in the rationalist account.\textsuperscript{107}

This interpretation of intersubjectivity argues that common norms and identities lead to a stock of CK on which cooperation depends.\textsuperscript{108} Positing CK as an in-between step between norms or identities and cooperation might surprise some who favor this second interpretation. This tradition emphasizes how norms and identities are directly constitutive of the types of relations that states engage in. CK, as an intervening step, does not appear to have a place in the story. For example, Martha Finnemore shows that international organizations can change the preferences that states have, Wendt argues that mutual recognition between states can drive the international system towards more cooperative and larger frameworks of governance, and Richard Price argues that states’ adoption of “civilized identities” has led to a reduction in the use of chemical weapons because implicit in the identity of a civilized state is a requirement that these weapons will not be used against other civilized states.\textsuperscript{109} The directness through which these studies equate changing norms or identities with changing relations between states may

\textsuperscript{106} Wendt 1999.  
\textsuperscript{107} Hasenclever, Mayer and Rittberger 1997, 137-139.  
\textsuperscript{108} Often, this research does not intend to explain the sources of international cooperation. For example, research that attempts to demonstrate the existence of the state as an actor, the role of emotions, or even the diffusion of human rights practices to new groups does not require intersubjectivity to exist between states and do not necessarily attempt to explain cooperation. For example, see Finnemore 1996; Risse and Sikkink 1999; and Wendt 2004.  
\textsuperscript{109} Finnemore 1996, 5-8; Price 1995; and Wendt 2003.
lead one to believe that CK is not an element of the process through which ideational changes lead to cooperation.

However, the three forms of CK always play a role in these cases of ideational change, even if the ways in which it is done are not explicit themes. First, common norms and identities generate strategic CK that is often crucial for international cooperation to succeed. Common identities provide the set of possible partners for cooperation. For example, Michael Barnett argues that identity politics within and between Arab states explain patterns of inter-Arab alliances after their independence in the 1940s. He writes that “the history of the period exhibits numerous instances and episodes in which Arab leaders responded to the expectations that they develop . . . close strategic ties among Arab states and, at a bare minimum, that Arab states not adopt any policies that potentially might harm the security of the Arab nation. The fact of being an Arab state, therefore, generated certain expectations, and defying those expectations could have major consequences for an Arab leader’s domestic and regional standing.”

Barnett’s argument about the role of Arab identities in security cooperation indicates the ways in which strategic CK develops through identities: the relevant actors for cooperation are identified by the Arab identity. Identities also provided CK of the preferences of each actor by directing domestic pressure on every Arab leader to not engage in security arrangements that threaten the Arab security regime. Every Arab leader shared the knowledge that every other leader was subject to the same pressures, and this shared knowledge enabled cooperation because leaders knew what to expect from one another due to those pressures.

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Common norms also yield strategic CK by providing a set of dependable strategies that states will adopt in an interaction. Within IR, norms are often defined as “collective expectations for the proper behavior of actors with a given identity.”\footnote{Katzenstein 1996, 5. This definition has become standard and is relied on, for example, by Risse and Sikkink 1999. Other definitions are very similar, see Finnemore 1996, 22.} Norms provide actors with dependable knowledge of the actions that others will undertake. For example, Finnemore argues that when actors adjusted the norms governing the use of force for debt collection, it enabled cooperative and legalistic solutions. Actors now expect states not to use gunboat diplomacy to collect debts but to cooperate through international organizations to reach a resolution.\footnote{Finnemore 2003, 24-51.} This is a form of strategic CK because it provides a set of CK that is equivalent to the rationalist idea of a dominant strategy; it provides the expected actions of others within a situation and enables one to create a cooperative response to a problem in light of what one expects others to do.

Scholars who follow this second interpretation of intersubjectivity also argue that norms provide linguistic CK by providing shared meanings. Friedrich Kratochwil argues that all communication is norm governed behavior and when an actor signals, when we “demand, warn, threaten, claim, criticize, asset, consent” and so forth, it requires that a norm exists because the act “would not make much sense if there were no underlying norms which provided the meaning for these actions.”\footnote{Kratochwil 1989, 7.} Norms are critical for linguistic CK because, without norms, actors would not know what terms mean—they bear no relation to a fact in the world because they are constituted by the act of speaking itself—and a norm or convention is required in order for these acts to be meaningful. Kratochwil then argues that because norms enable communication, “norms enable the parties whose
goals and/or strategies conflict to sustain a ‘discourse’ on their grievances, to negotiate a solution, or to ask a third party for a decision on the basis of commonly accepted rules, norms, and principles.” For Kratochwil and others, the norms embodied in language provide linguistic CK that is essential for bargains to be struck.

Norms and identities also provide for situation specific CK. In the case of Europe, security communities scholars argue that common identities make conflict between states unthinkable. To stylize the argument, a common European identity has led states to feel more secure with their neighbors (cooperation) by providing CK of the costs of war, the likely actions of other states (no remilitarization), and an institutional framework for resolving legitimate grievances (European Union). This common identity constitutes the interests of European states, and in so doing, provides them with CK of the interests of other states. These elements of CK are not captured by the notion of strategic or linguistic CK; they are situation specific.

The second interpretation of intersubjectivity is summarized in proposition two:

**Proposition Two: Common identities and common norms contribute to cooperation. Identities and norms generate common knowledge that is the basis for cooperation.**

This review of the ways in which intersubjectivity and CK lead to cooperation has tried to make explicit a claim normally implicit. Most accounts of cooperation rely on intersubjectivity. The thrust of these traditions is that regimes and institutions should be crafted to increase information, increase shared meaning, and enhance socialization

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114 Ibid., 70.
processes. By doing so, the behavior of others becomes predictable, enabling cooperation. Conflict stems from an information or meaning deficit.

Later, I test whether an intersubjective understanding of the norms and identities of the superpowers during détente existed and whether it can explain the emergence of cooperation. There I focus primarily on Wendt’s description of a dyadic shift from enmity to rivalry. Were the rules of the relationship understood identically by the participants? Did the United States and Soviet Union understand the meaning of rivals in similar ways?

Putative Intersubjective Beliefs

Thus far, I have argued that most IR scholars focus on CK or intersubjectivity to explain cooperation. A lack of information or shared meaning is a cause of conflict, and increased information or increased shared international culture may ameliorate conditions under which conflict occurs. I argue that while intersubjectivity may play such a role in some situations, putative intersubjective beliefs (PIBs) may provide for cooperation in many other cases. In certain situations, the belief that there is CK or intersubjectivity is enough to cement international cooperation, even if this belief is erroneous and there is little CK or intersubjectivity. In this section, I (a) distinguish between public and private beliefs, (b) describe the elements of these beliefs that are crucial for evaluating the effects of public beliefs on tangible outcomes in international politics, and then (c) create a typology of public beliefs that follow from that framework and show how they lead to cooperation.

Public and Private Beliefs
All beliefs have at least two properties: a propositional content and a subject of the belief. The propositional property of a belief is its content. For example, if I believe that God exists, the predicate “God exists” is the propositional content of the belief.

When IR scholars investigate beliefs—whether cause-and-effect beliefs, norms, or identities—they typically focus on the effect of the propositional content.\textsuperscript{117} For example, do actors behave differently when they adopt new beliefs?

Only recently has the subject of beliefs become important to IR theory.\textsuperscript{118} The subject denotes the group of believers. For example, “we believe that God exists” includes a claim that a plural subject (“we”) exists that shares a belief. If a belief invoked a plural subject amongst whom it is shared, I refer to it as a public belief. In contrast, a belief not shared amongst members of a public, which has a singular subject such as “only I know the intentions of China,” is a private belief. CK or intersubjectivity is an example of a public belief because it requires a group to believe that a proposition is shared.

Plural subjects may have effects independent of the propositional content alone because beliefs with plural subjects might lead actors to believe they are part of a public. Michael Chwe, for example, argues that royal progressions, in which a monarch travels through the countryside to assert domination, depend less on the specific information communicated from the monarch (the propositional content), than on the spectacle of subjects meeting in large crowds. The public sees everyone else seeing the monarch and

\textsuperscript{117} Examples include Finnemore 1996; Goldstein and Keohane 1993; Hopf 2002; and Jervis 2006.;

\textsuperscript{118} Wendt 2004.
sees everyone else seeing them seeing the monarch, and so on. The public nature of the spectacle may have effects independent of the meaning communicated by the procession because it links spectators together. Similarly, in their novel *Fail-Safe*, Eugene Burdick and Harvey Wheeler imagine the effects of public beliefs on individuals who work in missile silos:

There was also another element in the subterranean life which was pervasive, perfectly known, understood, and never discussed. There was the knowledge that the enemy was doing precisely what they were doing. Somewhere half way around the world there was another set of silos, another pattern of hard sites, another organization of men—almost, they assumed, precisely like theirs. This is no easy knowledge to carry. It is one thing to arm the thermonuclear warhead on an immense missile. It is another to know that another person, with almost the same training, is doing the identical thing—and that he must be thinking of you—and knowing that you are thinking of him thinking of you, and on and on.120

Burdick and Wheeler believe that the effect of handling the bomb is complicated by the public nature of preparing for a nuclear exchange. Workers isolated underground are part of a public that stretches across the Iron Curtain, and this has psychological effects that are not simply the result of preparing nuclear weapons for launch, but of knowing that others are doing the same and reflecting on those facts.

Table 2.2 summarizes the interaction of the public and propositional properties:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Propositional Property</th>
<th>Subject of Belief</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identical</td>
<td>Intersubjective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different</td>
<td>PIB</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2: Typology of Beliefs

120 Burdick and Wheehler 1964, 75.
An intersubjective belief exists when a plural subject knows that a belief is shared identically amongst its members. As discussed earlier, for a belief to count as intersubjective, the propositional content must be identical. Similarly, the belief must be public to count as intersubjective because all actors must believe that all other actors share the belief. Price’s work on the chemical weapons taboo is paradigmatic. He argues that the crucial propositional element of the taboo is that each state independently believes that the deployment of chemical weapons is something that civilized states do not do to other states (plural subject). One might infer that this taboo had a public quality; each state believes that every other civilized state shares the taboo and will not use chemical weapons against other civilized states (identical public content). The subject is crucial. If states do not believe that other civilized states share the taboo, then their behavior may be significantly different because they would not feel as if they are participating in a community with shared beliefs.\footnote{Price 1995. Many empirical studies on the roles of norms do not bear out the importance of public beliefs. For example, Finnemore shows that during fighting between Austria and Prussia in 1866 and the Sino-Japanese War of 1894, one state abided by the Geneva Convention despite the failure of others to reciprocate. Finnemore 1996, 82. Similarly, Tannenwald argues that initially the nuclear taboo was only held by the United States. Tannenwald 2007.} The fact of joint recognition of the public nature of the belief allows Price to argue that the plural subject of the taboo has constitutive effects on the creation of a civilized public.

Whereas an intersubjective belief requires a belief to be public and the propositional content of a belief is identical among members of that public, a PIB inverts the propositional requirement. The belief must be public, but the propositional content must be different. Modifying Wendt’s definition of intersubjectivity, a PIB is a case where \textit{the members of group G wrongly believe that there is a shared proposition that all}
other members of group G believe. Wrongly believe, in this context, means that the propositional content of the two beliefs differs.

PIBs are very common in everyday life. In watching children play chess, I am often struck by the number of times in which children sit down to play a game, one believing they are playing traditional chess, the other believing they are playing Crazyhouse (a similar game). The game begins, a PIB is formed, only to be disrupted by the advent of a move that does not make sense from one child’s perspective. Entire games are played in which a disruption never occurs, making a disruption in the next game more traumatic. A similar dynamic often happens when children from different elementary schools meet and play tag. By agreeing to play, they assume that each plays with the same set of rules. The game begins, only to have arguments soon break out because the kids play different variants. If we could count the number of fights over whether I have to go between your legs to unfreeze you, whether being tagged three times makes you “it,” or whether going off the woodchips on the playground is out of bounds, it would most assuredly outnumber the wars that states have fought.

Similarly, voters may be members of the same political party and in virtue of being members of the same party believe that they share deep normative commitments to one another, only to be surprised that they in fact differ. For example, in the 2008 election, democratic voters were excited about “change” and felt themselves to be part of a movement. They read their aspirations into their candidate and each other. However, change means different things to different people and many of their views were directly

122 Laclau 2005.
at odds with one another. One is tempted to argue that part of the art of electoral politics is the encouragement of PIBs amongst one’s constituents, uniting people in a public belief that enables them to read their idiosyncratic propositional content into the beliefs of others.

The central intuition of the cooperation arguments that follow is that, unlike games of tag that degenerate into fights, cooperation may occur because actors believe that a belief is public, that they share something in common with others, and that cooperation is not only not hindered, but is sometimes also enhanced if the public belief is erroneous. The fact that a belief is public has powerful effects even if the belief is unfounded. To understand what these effects are, I will first discuss the two elements included in any belief about action—principles and behavior—so that an assessment of the importance of different types of unfounded public beliefs can be addressed in the next section.

**Elements of Beliefs**

In the previous section, I defined public beliefs and suggested that a belief’s public nature might have effects independent of its propositional content. In this section, I show that each public belief crucial for understanding action has two elements, principles and behavior, and a belief can be mistaken if either component is not shared.

The influential sociologist Talcott Parsons, in attempting to create a theory of action that bridged the divide between sociology and economics, proposed that every act has three features: an actor (a person), an end for that person (a changes future state of

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affairs), and a requirement that action in fact does change the future (not multiple realizable). Habermas helpfully simplifies this analysis by arguing that a social act is an *intentional movement* through which an “individual changes something in the world.” This implies that every act has two related elements, a movement and a belief about the effect of that movement, and an intention, a principle or reason that the movement was undertaken.

Through this definition of action, the principled and behavioral elements of beliefs related to action are distinguishable. The intention involved in a movement is logically distinguishable from the movement that carries out that intention. Behavior is the subcomponent of beliefs related to action that involve movement. In everyday life, this means that actors have a belief that indicates what the effects of a movement will be on the world. If one acts in relation to a material object, this subcomponent refers to the element of a belief that explains what the likely effect of the movement will be on the object moved. For example, if I make a pool shot by striking the cue ball slightly below its center, I expect it will spin back toward my cue stick after striking another ball. If one acts in relation to other actors, the behavioral subcomponent is the effect that a belief will have on the future movements of others. For example, if I intend to buy a loaf of bread and hand a clerk the bread to scan at the checkout register, the behavioral subcomponent is the clerk’s movement, scanning the bread and giving change. In short, the *behavior*...
that an action framework is interested in is the *movements* that individuals undertake as well as the *movements* that actors believe that others will undertake.

In international politics, behavior is primarily verbal or written communications. Unlike Gustavus Adolphus, the King of Sweden during the Thirty Years War, whose personal efforts in battle met with great success, modern elites’ physical actions rely on the word more than the deed.\(^\text{126}\) Signing an order, speaking at a UN General Assembly Meeting, ordering troops to fire weapons, or convening a parliament are examples of actions regularly undertaken by political elites. In addition, the likely reactions to these events are behavioral expectations and are included as elements of the action subcomponent. For example, if by signing a treaty of alliance a leader expects that a state will commit troops to the field in prescribed cases, this is the future behavioral element of signing a treaty in the present. The chain of expected behavior that arises tomorrow is an element in determining the efficacy of behavior done today. In short, behavior is what takes place, and what one expects to take place, everywhere but between the ears.

Principles are the reasons for an act, or put differently, the value of the future state of affairs for an actor. For Habermas, this is captured by the notion that every action can be explained, that its sincerity, truth, and rightness can be articulated.\(^\text{127}\) When buying a loaf of bread, I can explain that I am hungry, or will be hungry tonight, or that I enjoy eating sandwiches for lunch. The reason for the movement, the handing over of money, was to bring a less hungry future state of affairs, one that I find preferable. Similarly, I might tell the truth because lying is immoral, marry because of love, or read a book for

\(^{126}\) The account of Adolphus is indebted to Wedgewood 2005.
\(^{127}\) Habermas 1984, 98.
pleasure. In each case, actors can explain, if asked and they are honest, the reason that the future state of affairs is valued. In international politics, an action must be conditioned by principles; there must be a reason that an actor intends to bring about a future state of affairs.\textsuperscript{128} For example, if an action is undertaken because it realizes the values a community expresses, defends the national interest, permits material gain, or enables a political elite that wants to maintain power to do so, then the action is capable of reason-giving.

This analysis of principles might seem strange to students of rational choice. Preferences are often exogenous and rarely do actors have a “reason” for their preferences. Furthermore, preferences are the reasons, strictly speaking, for strategies. Does that make them identical?

Preferences are not principles, although the two are intimately connected. Following Arrow, preferences are social states evaluated in terms of their desirability for an actor, or, as Jeffrey Frieden observes, ranked outcomes of an interaction.\textsuperscript{129} For Arrow, preferences are a matter of “taste” and therefore subjective. The result is that there is no language to explain why actors rank outcomes in specific ways and there is no accounting for the subjective reasons for preferring some outcomes to others. Principles provide the reasons for preferences in two ways. First, \textit{a principle that guides an actor is the reason for the transitive ordering of preferences}.\textsuperscript{130} For example, one might evaluate

\textsuperscript{128} Therefore, movements that are not intentional, such as habitual movements, are not action. See Hopf forthcoming.
\textsuperscript{129} Arrow 1951, 17; and Frieden 1999.
\textsuperscript{130} The principle is the function that provides the rationale for preferring one social state to another. For example, the principle of wealth implies that a social state is preferable to another if and only if it leaves the actor with more wealth. If an actor justifies a preference, it involve a defense of the value function.
the relative values of a set of outcomes by a formula that ranks them in terms of their justness, egocentric benefits, or some other criteria. Here, a principle is not a preference because it is not a state of the world. It is a function used to evaluate social states. A second difference, which is only applicable in certain cases, is that the principle of an action in one interaction can, in certain cases, be a preference over outcomes that cannot be reduced to a strategy in another interaction.\(^{131}\) This captures the notion that actors are sometimes geared toward an endgame that is valued in and of itself. The notion of principle highlights this end state, providing it with a different quality (value) than other intermediate social states (means). The principle of an action is not that the action places the player in a better position for the next round, but rather it places the player in a better position for the end result, the final state of the world that the actor is trying to reach.

This brief digression into the relationship between principles and preferences points toward a central motivation for this dissertation: the problem of other minds. As with preferences, actors do not have direct access to others’ principles, but only their behavior. Since there is no necessary requirement that another’s entire preference schedule be fully revealed, we are always running around in the dark, to some extent, with one another. Complete information is at least unlikely, if not impossible. For two sorts of psychological reasons, however, we act as if we are certain. First, if we form a hypothesis about another person, and that hypothesis is confirmed in every action, we become increasingly confident in our predictions (Bayesian updating), perhaps to the point at which we no longer seriously doubt our understanding of the principles of the others. Second, there is a psychological need to be certain, due to either bounded

\(^{131}\) Frieden 1999, 45.
rationality or a psychological need to trust in our understandings of others. Sometimes, however, we are wrong. Actors can be mistaken in their expectations of others’ behavior or in their expectations that others share their principles. By disaggregating these two elements of a public belief, we can generate a typology of the ways in which beliefs condition action.

**Putative Intersubjective Beliefs**

Due to the problem of other minds, there will often be public agreement what behavior to expect as a consequence of an action, or the principles that will guide an action, but not necessarily both. By arranging the ways in which public beliefs might be unevenly held, four types of public beliefs are distinguishable:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agreement on Principles</th>
<th>Agreement on Behavior</th>
<th>No Agreement on Behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agreement on Behavior</td>
<td>Intersubjectivity</td>
<td>Functional Overlapping Principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Agreement on Principles</td>
<td>Functional Incompletely Theorized Agreements</td>
<td>Imagined Intersubjectivity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 2.3: Public Beliefs

An intersubjective belief, as defined earlier, requires that two or more actors share identical beliefs. Identical beliefs must have identical subcomponents: there must be agreement on the principles and the expected behavior involved in an action and all

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132 Mitzen 2006; and Simon 1982. The problem of other minds has also, in part, led to a significant body of work in cognitive psychology. However, the way in which public beliefs are analyzed is different from cognitive psychology. This dissertation is interested in actors’ perceptions about specific elements of the beliefs of others. In contrast, cognitive psychology in IR tends to focus on more abstract images, such as enemy, colony, and ally. See Cottam 1986; Herrmann 1985; and Herrmann et al 1997. When cognitive psychologists approach specific beliefs, the aim is often to show how specific beliefs are consistent with superordinate values or postures. Converse 1964; and Hurwitz and Peffley 1990.
actors must believe that there is agreement. A putative intersubjective belief (PIB) refers to the other three cases specified in the table. Each involves a case where actors unknowingly disagree about aspects of the public belief. These are cases in which actors believe that a public belief exists but unknowingly are wrong. Cases of functional overlapping principles occur when actors knowingly agree about principles and unknowingly disagree about the behavior that is expected. Cases of functional incompletely theorized agreements are instances in which actors knowingly expect the same behavior but unknowingly disagree about the principles that guide that behavior. Finally, cases of imagined intersubjectivity occur when actors believe there is an intersubjective belief but unknowingly disagree about the expected behavior of other actors and also disagree about the principle that should guide action in a case. In this section, I will explain each type of PIB and how each type might lead to cooperation.

- Intersubjectivity

*Intersubjectivity* has already been discussed in the previous section. However, the action framework for understanding a belief adds a second dimension to the definition of an intersubjective belief: it must involve identical content in the principled and behavioral subcomponents of the belief. For example, it is important for military discipline that there be a common belief of members of the military that order will be maintained during a battle. This belief is only possible if each soldier believes that others are willing to die next to them: there is a normative belief that order may be worth self-sacrifice (a principle). This principle entails specific behavioral rules, from the mundane standing at attention to the dramatic requirement not to leave anyone behind. The ways in which this
occurs have already been discussed in the first half of the chapter and summarized in propositions one and two.

- Functional Incompletely Theorized Agreements

Functional incompletely theorized agreements (FITAs) are instances in which all relevant actors have an accurate assessment of the expected behavior of others, but they rely on different principles to guide those actions. Technically defined, a FITA is a public belief in which two or more actors knowingly share expectations for the behavior of others with reference to an action, but inaccurately believe they know the reason that other actors are or will engage in those behaviors. For example, two drivers at a stoplight encounter a FITA if both are stopped, a near-sighted driver because running a red light is wrong, and another because a box of puppies is in the road. Glancing at each other momentarily, neither expects the other to run the red light and each believes that the other is not running the red light for a similar reason, but is unaware that the reasons are different.

This term is borrowed from Cass Sunstein’s work in constitutional law on incompletely theorized agreements. Sunstein argues that if a multimember institution, such as a court, includes actors who disagree over fundamental questions, then couching very specific cases in very broad terms may lead to disagreement. In a pluralistic society, in which members of institutions are likely to have different opinions on fundamental questions, achieving agreement on broad principles is difficult if not impossible. Therefore, Sunstein argues, incompletely theorized agreements are a primary mechanism

for achieving agreements in a pluralistic society. He writes: “Participants in legal controversies try to produce incompletely theorized agreements on particular outcomes. They agree on the result and on relatively narrow or low-level explanations for it. They need not agree on fundamental principle. They do not offer larger or more abstract explanations that are necessary to decide the case.”134

In Roe v. Wade, for example, different judges may concur that Roe should not be overturned but for different reasons (precedent, privacy, reproductive rights, religion, etc.). If every decision to uphold Roe includes a full explanation of the rationale, then other judges may not concur in their opinions leading to disagreement on the court. Incompletely theorized agreements, in contrast, produce “local pockets of coherence” by relying on low-level theories to reach agreement on particular cases without requiring participants to agree on abstract general principles to which they would not subscribe.135

*Functional* incompletely theorized agreements are different from those discussed by Sunstein directly.136 Sunstein is primarily interested in cases in which judges intentionally leave decisions incompletely theorized. While this line of analysis may be interesting to explore in international law, for example through the notion of intentional ambiguity, I am interested in cases in which incompletely theorized agreements develop unintentionally but serve a function.137 Unlike in the context of U.S. judicial politics, in international politics, FITAs might unintentionally emerge. That is, at least in principle, it

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135 Ibid., 127.
136 I am also restricting the use of the term FITA to cases in which agreement on principles is lacking. Sunstein also argues that cases in which constitution makers agree on an abstract principle but disagree on how to decide specific cases may be incompletely theorized agreements, but in the interests of precision I use the term functional overlapping principles to refer to cases of the latter type. See Sunstein 2000, 122.
137 See Byers 2004.
is possible for actors to arrive at agreements on how to decide a case, or behave in international affairs, without having a fully theorized agreement because they are unaware of the differences in principle between themselves and others.

For example, during World War II, U.S. cooperation with the Soviet Union was partly based on a FITA. During the war, the American public believed that Britain, not the Soviets, stood in the way of postwar cooperation. During the war, polls showed that more Americans believed that cooperation with the Soviets should encounter no difficulties and, as late as August 1944, only 20% of Americans believed that Russia would try to spread communism throughout Europe. In fact, 56% of the public believed that Britain, not Russia, was trying to divide the world into spheres of influence.  

The image of the Soviet Union in the eyes of much of the American public was essentially democratic: “Confronted with evidence that the Russian people were willing to fight for their government, many Americans jumped illogically to the conclusion that the Soviet Union suddenly became a democracy.” As a result, “these inaccurate perceptions left the United States ill-prepared for post-war developments, including Joseph Stalin’s firm assurance to all concerned that reports of his conversion to the liberal democratic tradition had been highly exaggerated.”

Roosevelt himself seems to have labored under an illusion. Roosevelt thought his meetings with Stalin afforded opportunities for “meetings of the mind,” however, like the American public, Roosevelt incorrectly inferred Stalin’s postwar intentions.  

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138 Gaddis 2000, 46, 56, 155.
139 Ibid., 62.
140 May 1973, 14. Roosevelt’s views regarding the Soviet Union are notoriously clouded as Roosevelt never wrote them down, but he was shocked about over Poland and other issues. Glantz 2005, 161.
behavior during the war confirmed the American public’s inaccurate belief that they shared principles with the Soviets, forming a FITA that enabled Roosevelt to send lend-lease aid to an ally without political costs. Yet this seemingly deep agreement was merely a FITA and post-war conflict in Poland and elsewhere revealed Soviet behavior that astounded the U.S. public and led to breakdowns in cooperation. Stalin’s behavior revealed that his conduct was not motivated by the principles of majority rule and self-determination, but by power and conquest.

In IR, FITAs enable cooperation by enabling actors to reach agreements that prescribe specific types of behavior when principled agreement does not exist. More importantly, they are a necessary condition for cooperation in cases in which an actor believes that the principle is more important than expectations of behavior (especially immediate behavior). This occurs in cases in which actors have emotional connections with a principle or believe that adherence to a principle may lead to greater gains in the future (compared to the immediate self-interest). FITAs enable actors to overlook, unknowingly, deep disagreements over the principles that guide international conduct in order to cooperate.

- Functional Overlapping Principles

Third, public beliefs that are functional overlapping principles (FOPs) occur when actors share a principle or a set of principles, but do not have similar expectations of the behavior that will follow an action. In virtue of their shared knowledge that

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141 Stalin believed that the U.S. public was more “realist” than they demonstrated. The lack of a timely second front and debates over lend-lease aid led Stalin to believe that US anti-imperialist slogans were rhetoric. See Glantz 2005.
principles are shared, actors may be tempted to believe that they also share accurate knowledge about when those principles will be applied and what the consequences of that application will be. This type of public belief is referred to as functional overlapping principles because if a group shares only one principle (understood identically) and is confronted with only one case, it is unlikely that the group will reach different decisions. Instead, the disagreement on behavior will likely stem from actors either agreeing on a set of principles but assigning those principles different priorities, or actors having different sets of principles in which some subset is identical.

The term “overlapping principle” is loosely borrowed from John Rawls’ *Political Liberalism*. Rawls argues that an overlapping consensus “consists of all the reasonable opposing religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines likely to persist over generations and to gain a sizable body of adherents in a more or less just constitutional regime.”^142^ This overlapping consensus is “deep enough to reach such ideas as those of a society as a fair system of cooperation and of citizens as reasonable and rational, and free and equal.”^143^ Rawls’ conclusion, that a pluralistic society might cooperate because they there are a few principles held in common, despite significant other differences, provides a lens through which to analyze how the reasons actors give interact transnationally.

Rawls’ argument for an overlapping consensus is insightful for international politics. Even more than in a pluralistic society, a pluralistic world of states is unlikely to generate identical sets of principles globally. Different societies hold different moral intuitions and, even in cases in which societies hold many similar intuitions, they may

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^142^ Rawls 1993, 15.
assign them different priorities. As a result, actors are likely to have overlapping
principles and different sets of actors may overlap in different ways. These differences in
overlap may lead to differences in the expected behavior of actors in three ways:
indeterminacy, different lexical priorities, and means-end conflicts.

First, actors may share a principle, but that principle may be indeterminate. In
legal scholarship, the Critical Legal Studies (CLS) movement attempts to show that any
legal norm is indeterminate and a “free-floating” text.\(^{144}\) Many of these legal scholars
believe that no legislative rule provides for its own interpretation, a fact that led Carl
Schmitt to refer to a decision as akin to a “miracle.”\(^{145}\) Fortunately, the complex reasons
for why law is always indeterminate need not concern us, as even the critics of CLS
concede that many legislative enactments create what H.L.A. Hart refers to as a
“penumbra of uncertainty” in which a statute is left vague and requires judicial
intervention to decide what it means in specific cases.\(^{146}\) In other words, many, if not all,
legal scholars agree that at least some legal norms are open to interpretation and lead to
different decisions in different cases. As Thomas Risse and Kathryn Sikkink explain,
“actors might actually agree on the moral validity of the norm, but disagree whether
certain behavior is covered by it.”\(^{147}\)

Second, and perhaps more frequently, actors may share sets of principles but
disagree about their relative importance. If different actors give different principles
different priorities, they may believe that there is an intersubjective agreement on both

\(^{144}\) See Spann 1988. In IR, these arguments are pursued in the literature related to Schmitt’s Political
Theology.
\(^{145}\) Schmitt 1985, 36.
\(^{146}\) Hart 1958. For an example in IR, see Kress 1989, 287.
\(^{147}\) Risse and Sikkink 1999, 13.
principles and behavior until a conflict between these principles emerges. For example, two actors may cooperate to promote human rights in a newly independent state and also cooperate to support a monarchy in order to exploit a natural resource. If the monarchy is overthrown, one state might expect cooperation to protect human rights and the other might expect cooperation to reinstall the monarchy to protect access to the resource. In this case, accurately gauging the expectations for others’ behavior depends on understanding the priority of principle; only one prefers human rights to security. A FOP exists because they share principle and they are unaware that these principles will lead them to different patterns of behavior.

A special case of different lexical priorities conflicting happens when actors agree on underlying principles, such as security or human rights, but disagree about the appropriate means for executing a policy in support of those principles. In these cases, actors might believe they can predict the behavior of others but are confounded when behavior is executed differently than expected. For example, the United States and Europe believe they hold a large set of common values. As Condoleezza Rice writes, “The United States does have permanent allies: the nations with whom we share common values.” These values include, for example, the goal of democratization and human rights. In particular, both jointly believe that security concerns are a valid principle for international action and that multilateralism is often the most appropriate tool. However, Europe and the United States, or at least the Bush administration, prioritize these principles differently. The United States places a higher premium on security than it does on multilateralism. Therefore, during the run-up to the Iraq War, the Bush administration

frequently distinguished between multilateralism, which is empty institutional rhetoric, and effective multilateralism, which is building coalitions to resolve outstanding problems. As a result, multilateralism was considered an instrument to achieve objectives and not a good in itself. By contrast, Europeans appear to place a higher value on multilateralism, such that for Europe, unilateral action appears to lead to a value trade-off. Unilateral actions conflict with the inherent value of global rule of law in Europe, whereas in the United States this trade-off is not acutely perceived. Thus, even though the West is a community that holds common values, the means of executing policy may lead to disagreement.

FOPs enable cooperation in cases in which actors make agreements in light of knowingly shared principles but when actors are unaware that each party has different beliefs about the expectations of behavior that stem from that agreement. Actors believe, because of the shared reasons for reaching an agreement now, that other actors shares similar beliefs about the behavior entailed by the agreement. FOPs are necessary conditions for cooperation if the discovery of the differences in expectations of behavior would undermine the agreement. In these cases, if there was no FOP there would be a flop because the realization that the principled agreements betrayed significant differences in interpretation that would lead actors to be wary of cooperation.

- Imagined Intersubjectivity

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149 Holmes 2003; and Woodward 2002, 48. Even before 9/11, the Bush Administration showed a reluctance to sign multilateral treaties if they conflicted with core values. Richard Haas, the State Department’s Director of Planning, argued that the administration did not favor “a la carte multilateralism” and Rice said on a Sunday morning talk show that “internationalism somehow becomes defined as signing on to bad treaties just to say that you’ve signed a treaty.” Shanker, 7/31/2001, New York Times, A1.
Finally, *imagined intersubjectivity* occurs when actors unknowingly rely on different principles and unknowingly expect different patterns of behavior to stem from an action. It is imagined because each actor believes that they understand the other and neither are correct, that is, the other with which an actor cooperates is in some senses more imagined than real. Imagined intersubjectivity is the PIB that is the most distinguishable from intersubjectivity because while it requires each actor to hold a public belief, every aspect of it is unfounded.

The term “imagined intersubjectivity” refers to the title of Benedict Anderson’s classic *Imagined Communities*. Within a state, Anderson argues, individuals come to believe in the existence of a nation because they are members of the same reading public. He argues that when reading a newspaper, “each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion.”150 The public that is constituted by the shared act of reading a newspaper need not have anything in common: it does not matter what they read but merely that they observe one another reading. It is no surprise to Anderson that nationalism quickly developed along linguistic lines and native Creole language movements played a key role in imagining nations. For Anderson, this imagined sense of belonging is so strong that “what the eye is to the love – that particular, ordinary eye he or she is born with – language – whatever language history has made his or her mother-tongue – is to the

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150 Anderson 1983, 35.
patriot. Through the language, encountered at mother’s knee and parted with only at the grave, pasts are restored, fellowships are imagined, and futures dreamed.”

In Anderson’s account, language is shared, but the details about what it means to share that common language are not necessarily shared. And, he argues, people are willing to fight and die for a community that is only imagined and in which there is no necessary intersubjective agreement about what that community means. The plural subject convinces us that something is held in common, but only this public element is shared, not the principled or behavioral component.

Cases of imagined intersubjectivity enable cooperation by allowing actors to coordinate their behavior with one another through a process of policy adjustments to meet the demands of another who is imagined. Each actor subjectively orients herself toward a set of reasons and expectations of behavior that do not exist. Imagined intersubjectivity is necessary for cooperation in cases in which the discovery of others’ actual principles or true expectations of behavior of others would disrupt this process of policy coordination. It is perhaps the rarest PIB because it is twice as easy to disrupt as FITAs or FOPS: the revealing of either the others’ principles or the expectations of behavior are a constant threat. I will argue that this rara avis of international politics played a role in both the ABM Treaty and the Basic Principles Agreement.

These three forms of PIBs and their relationship to international cooperation is summarized by the following proposition:

**Proposition Three: A lack of intersubjectivity contributes to international cooperation. In certain situations,**

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intersubjectivity risks undermining cooperation in cases in which a putative intersubjective belief can secure it.

Evaluating the Role of Public Beliefs in International Cooperation

In the next three chapters, I evaluate the role of intersubjectivity and PIBs in détente between the Soviet Union and the United States between 1969 and 1979. In chapter three, I argue that PIBs are able to explain the shift from enmity to rivalry in the early 1970s, and show how that shift conditioned cooperation in two instances: the Basic Principles Agreement (BPA) and the ceasefire resolutions intended to end the October War. This chapter tests PIBs against arguments that highlight intersubjectivity—norms, identities, and roles—at a macro level. Chapter four tests PIBs against arguments from common knowledge (CK) through an analysis of the negotiations that culminated in the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty.

Before turning to the empirical chapters, I outline the methodology employed in assessing the role of public beliefs in cooperation. First, I define the dependent variable: international cooperation. Then, I explain why I selected the case of détente and argue that it is a crucial and hard case for PIBs. Third, I outline a set of hypotheses in the context of détente that will be investigated in the next two chapters. Fourth, I explain the four-step methodology I employ to determine the efficacy of hypotheses related to PIBs. Finally, I respond to the most salient criticisms against relying on a single case to determine the conditions for cooperation.
Cooperation

The dependant variable is international cooperation. I rely on the standard definition of cooperation in the rationalist literature presented by Robert Keohane:

“Intergovernmental cooperation takes place when the policies actually followed by one government are regarded by its partners as facilitating realization of their own objectives, as the result of policy coordination.”

Cooperation requires actors to do something that they would not do in isolation from one another, and generally requires a process of negotiation and bargaining. Furthermore, following the conventional rational choice treatment of cooperation, the concept of cooperation is theoretically distinct from compliance and effectiveness. By compliance, I mean the honoring of agreements, and by effectiveness, I mean the ability of those agreements, if honored, to enable states to realize their goals. Questions about cooperation, compliance, and effectiveness are interrelated but conceptually distinct questions.

My question pertains to the explicit coordination of policy: What roles do common knowledge, intersubjectivity, or PIBs play in enabling policy coordination?

The reason is to separate cooperation from compliance is that cooperation might be required to establish a specific type of institution, but as a consequence of the creation of the institution, cooperation is no longer required. For example, imagine to criminals who know that, if caught, they will be placed in a Prisoner’s Dilemma. In advance, they decide that the best solution is to hire a third party enforcer to punish anyone who defects. At this stage, the prisoners are cooperating—coordinating their answers and

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153 On this distinction, see Downs, Rocke and Barsoom 1996.
hiring an enforcer. There is no harmony of interests as no party would hire an enforcer unless the other also agreed to do so. After this deal is struck, and the criminals are caught, their decision to comply with the deal is no longer cooperation because there is a harmony of interests; they would comply regardless what another does for fear of the enforcer. Cooperation present in an initial phase may end before questions of compliance become relevant.

This definition has several features that are convenient for testing the propositions advanced earlier. First, Keohane’s definition is often used as a standard for theories related to information and bargaining, theories that this dissertation cuts against.\textsuperscript{154} By relying on a definition that was created to show the importance of information to cooperation, I am holding myself to a high standard. Second, Keohane’s definition is social because it requires that behavior be altered due to the presence of other actors in the international system. By working from a social definition of cooperation, there is a clear picture of the connections between rational choice and social theoretic accounts. Third, the definition emphasizes the subjective perspectives of the participants. Keohane argues that cooperation occurs when partners regard the process as facilitating the realization of their interests. The claim that PIBs enable cooperation implies that actors may not believe that a cooperative arrangement was in their interests if they had more information. This definition allows for cooperation that damages an actor’s interests objectively, so long as the actor subjectively believes a gain is realized.

\textsuperscript{154} See Milner 1992, 467. Many other definitions of cooperation are similar. For example, Kenneth Oye defines cooperation as “conscious policy coordination” and Duncan Snidal similarly refers to it as “working together for mutual advantage.” Oye 1985, 6; and Snidal 1985; 926.
The agreements reached during détente, and especially the ABM Treaty, are intended as examples of cooperation—policy coordination—not of compliance. In the next section, I show that in a large number of issue areas, the superpowers began an active process of coordinating not only defensive deployments and foreign policy, but also working together to plan trade deals, establish joint commissions related to science, technology, and the environment.

Case Selection

There are two reasons that I focus on détente. The primary reason is that détente is a hard case for a theory of PIBs and an easy case for theories that focus on shared ideas or information. These theories often emphasize the importance of communication, bargaining, and regimes for the transmission of information. Détente sparked the most rigorous discussions between the superpowers during the Cold War. As Richard Nixon repeatedly made clear: “And now to the leaders of the Communist world, we say: After an era of confrontation, the time has come for an era of negotiation.” Nixon followed through on this promise.

Nixon met with the Soviets at three summits in three consecutive years, a record for Cold War diplomacy. In addition, he sent Kissinger to Moscow on several occasions to engage in direct bilateral talks with the Soviets, and he received Andrei Gromyko, Kissinger’s counterpart, many times. Beyond direct diplomacy, Kissinger entered into direct backchannel negotiations with the Soviet Ambassador to Washington, Anatoly Dobrynin, in an almost endless web of negotiations. In lower level channels, the two states’ negotiating teams met regularly to discuss issues as diverse as arms control, trade,
space exploration, the environment, and regional crises. For example, the centerpiece of détente during the Nixon era, the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, where, for over three years, the teams met in seven rounds of negotiations in Helsinki and Vienna, the longest of which lasted 120 days. Unlike what one might imagine from two enemies sitting down to hammer out their differences, these negotiations were amiable. The chief negotiators, Gerald Smith and Vladimir Semenov, often discussed business in social settings and had an affinity for one another. They exchanged novels and recited poems, along with the respective views of their governments on arms control.155 As Brezhnev summarized, “Probably never before have ties and contacts between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America in different areas of political, economic, and cultural activity been as lively as they are today. Nowadays thousands of people annually travel from America to the Soviet Union and from the Soviet Union to America.”156 The result, I explain in the next chapter, was the establishment of more than 150 agreements on a variety of subjects.157

This cursory review of détente shows that it should be an easy case for theories that hold that increased information or shared meanings are important for cooperation. An unprecedented level of discussion was followed by an unprecedented level of cooperation. Indeed, several IR scholars argue that this is what occurred. Deborah Welch Larson argues that the superpowers overcame their distrust of one another to reach agreements during détente.158 Theo Farrell claims that the language of deterrence and its

156 Brezhnev 1979, 74.
158 Larson 1997.
basic concepts were CK, enabling cooperation between the United States and Soviet Union. Furthermore, Janice Bially Mattern argues that the nature of the relationship in general was intersubjective and the states understood their respective roles. Therefore, détente is a hard case for PIBs to explain became the institutional structure and density of interactions make an explanation based on intersubjectivity likely.

Beyond the high level of interaction, there are two other specific sets of reasons to focus on détente for theories of intersubjectivity and rational choice theories of CK. For social theorists, the ability of states to develop clear guidelines for behavior is often crucially important. These guidelines often takes the form of norms, such as the types of justifications a state can advance for intervention, or the formation of identities, such as the claim that a crucial element of postwar European identity precludes the use of force between Germany and France. Often these norms and identities are ambiguous because they are not directly discussed. In the case of détente, the rules of the road became an important issue. The discussion of the Basic Principles Agreement, which was intended to provide a clear set of norms for the superpowers’ interactions, was thought of as exactly this type of agreement. This makes it a crucial case for theories that highlight the importance of norms, identities, and communication: if the superpowers, after much study and debate, were unable to develop a shared understanding of the rules of the great power game, how likely is it that rules are shared with any degree of precision in cases in which the rules are implicit, not discussed, and undertheorized?

159 Farrell 2005.
160 Bially Mattern 2005.
161 A least likely case for a hypothesis is a most-likely case the negation of the hypothesis. Insofar as the hypotheses generated from CK/intersubjectivity and PIBs negate one another, selection of critical cases that are least likely for the new proposition related to PIBs is justified. Flybjerg 2006, 230-231.
The second reason to focus on détente is a theory of PIBs draws different novel lessons from the period. After the decline of détente, many commentators argued that a critical reason for the failure of détente was not enough discussion. Coit Blacker, for example, writes that the United States and the Soviet Union should “participate in the search for a ‘common language’ as proposed by Brezhnev in an April 1981 speech. . . A more active and sustained superpower dialogue on issues of joint concern would not eliminate the confusion, misunderstand, and tension that has plagued the relationship since its inception; it could, however, facilitate communication and restore an element of predictability to the interaction between Washington and Moscow.”  

Similarly, in his brilliant *Détente and Confrontation*, Raymond Garthoff concludes that the cause of the failure of détente was not enough mutual understanding: “Each side was unprepared to understand the perspective, and the interests, of the other. Although better understanding would not have removed conflicts of interest, it would have helped to reduce frictions caused or exacerbated by the failure even to recognize the perspective and interests of the other side.”  

When cooperation did succeed, in particular the reaching of the ABM Treaty, it is often credited to enhanced information, a shared understanding of the link between offense and defense, and the creation of institutions. In short, the lesson that many historical accounts draw from détente is that there was not enough discussion, or at least not enough earnest discussion, and when there was, cooperation ensued.

While I agree with these authors that the relationship was plagued by a fundamental misunderstanding from the start, there is reason to be suspicious of the claim

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162 Blacker 1983, 135.  
163 Garthoff 1994, 1163.  
that mutual understanding would have improved the superpower relationship or enhanced cooperation. If détente succeeded because key actors labored under a PIB, increased information may have made cooperation impossible. Therefore, beyond providing a theory test, this analysis also contributes to the historical debate concerning the origins and decline of détente.

Hypotheses

To test the three propositions discussed earlier, I deduce several hypotheses from each to maximize the number of observable implications that each provides. The first proposition relates to the role of the rationalist treatment of CK in securing cooperation.

Proposition One: Common knowledge contributes to cooperation. Actors are able to cooperate once they identify relevant actors, determine the nature of the strategic situation including the pay-offs for others, develop a common language through which to communicate, and other items of common knowledge crucial to the specific bargaining situation.

Following the discussion in the first section of this chapter, CK might secure cooperation according to rationalists in three ways: strategic CK, linguistic CK, and situation specific CK. Therefore, to test proposition one, I divide it into three hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1a: The parties had CK of the relevant players, the pay-offs, the state of the world, and other related issues that were important for understanding the strategic nature of their interaction. This CK enabled cooperation by allowing actors to coordinate their moves with the moves of other parties.

Hypothesis 1b: The parties shared a common language related to strategic issues and the negotiating process itself was developed that enabled decision-makers to communicate effectively. In addition, the parties understood the meaning of the negotiating offers made by others. This enabled cooperation.

Hypothesis 1c: The parties shared an understanding of critical situation specific CK related to the negotiation process.
If the parties share strategic CK (1a), then their beliefs about who the relevant players are, their preferences, and their understandings of the order of moves should be identical. If the parties share linguistic CK (1b), the parties should know what others mean, and if some expressions are ambiguous, both parties should know that they are ambiguous. If the parties share situation specific CK, such as focal points, then those elements should be understood in similar ways. Each of these elements of CK should also contribute to cooperation, or at least not hamper the prospects of cooperation.

Proposition two summarizes the second form of intersubjectivity discussed in relationship to cooperation. This proposition and the hypotheses derived from it are:

**Proposition Two:** Common identities and common norms contribute to cooperation. Identities and norms generate common knowledge that is the basis for cooperation.

**Hypothesis 2a:** Common norms, which either existed before or developed during the negotiations, led the parties to develop predictable and stable relations that culminated in détente.

**Hypothesis 2b:** A common identity, which either developed existed before or developed during negotiations, enhanced the prospects that the superpower relationship would shift from enmity to rivalry.

In chapter three, I concentrate on Wendt’s discussion of changes in cultures of anarchy. I argue that a constructivist understanding of the growth of détente would likely posit that the changes in the superpowers’ understandings explains that shift from enmity to rivalry. This may imply shared norms, related to the rules for the conflict, or shared identities. If a shared norm existed (2a), then both parties should understand the rules implied by the norm similarly, that is, they should hold the same set of rules for rivals. Similarly, if the United States and Soviet Union held a shared identity (2b), the identity should be
understood identically by the parties. For both hypotheses, the emergence of shared norms and identities should contribute to cooperation and not hamper it.

Third, I investigate whether PIBs played a role in creating cooperation during détente. I argue that the relevant PIB during the period was imagined intersubjectivity:

**Proposition Three:** A lack of intersubjectivity contributes to international cooperation. In certain situations, intersubjectivity risks undermining cooperation in cases in which a putative intersubjective belief can secure cooperation.

**Hypothesis 3:** Cooperation during détente was, in part, premised on imagined intersubjectivity in which actors believed that agreement existed on both principles and behavior, when neither was the case. This enabled cooperation by allowing actors, from their perspective, to coordinate their policies with others in cases in which the revealing of either the principled or behavioral differences would undermine cooperation.

**Methodology**

To test these hypotheses, I use a four-step method. First, I identify the decision-makers whose beliefs mattered. Then, I compare the beliefs of decision-makers about one another to see if their public beliefs were well-founded. Third, I use process-tracing to follow the negotiations in order to determine what beliefs were relevant and whether a causal process existed that related certain public beliefs to the success of the negotiations. Finally, depending on the case, I engage in either within-case analysis or counterfactual analysis to show which public beliefs were necessary for cooperation.

The identification of the decision-makers whose beliefs matter is far from easy. During the negotiation process, ultimate authority to make and accept offers rested with the President—Nixon, Ford, or Carter—and Brezhnev. However, there are also other veto players that either had the institutional authority to block agreements (the Senate and the Politburo), or had the ability to make crucial decision-makers pay heavy costs for

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165 This focus is traditional to foreign policy analysis. See Snyder, Bruck and Sapin 2002.
making an agreement to which they did not agree.\textsuperscript{166} In chapters three and four, I focus on the beliefs of a much smaller group of decision-makers: those with the authority, including the delegated authority, to make and accept offers. These actors are those who are actively involved in the negotiation process and make the ultimate decisions about the details of the negotiating positions. In chapter five, I extend the analysis to include additional actors, especially conservative critics of détente in both states.

In the second step, I identify relevant beliefs as those that are central to the negotiation process in an episode of cooperation. The test of whether these relevant beliefs are consequential is determined by tracing their influence on the negotiation process and asking, counterfactually, what would have occurred if actors had held a different type of public belief.

The identification of actors’ beliefs takes two forms. In the first case, the study of détente in chapter three, the beliefs of U.S. and Soviet decision-makers is first determined through an interpretive analysis. This is a two-step process. First, I identify the beliefs that each decision-maker believed was shared, and then compare these public beliefs to see if they match. This step is interpretive because the comparison of beliefs requires an interpretation of the meaning of an action from the subjective perspective of the individual who commits the action. As Charles Taylor notes, “a successful interpretation is one which makes clear the meaning originally present in a confused, fragmentary, cloudy form.”\textsuperscript{167} This meaning is always “for a subject,” is “of something,” and makes

\textsuperscript{166} Tsebelis 2002.

\textsuperscript{167} Taylor 1979, 34.
sense only in relation to a larger situation or “field” of meanings. In the context of détente, as I will show, nothing is more obscure and cloudy than the reasons that successive administrations acted as they did in pursuing détente.

In the case of the ABM Treaty, in chapter four, I perform an interpretive analysis of three subcases: Kissinger’s decision to offer to negotiate ABMs, the May 20th Agreement negotiations, and Nixon’s decision not to cancel the Moscow Summit. There is, however, a difference between this analysis and that of the preceding chapter. Whereas in the study of détente, one can study the beliefs of decision-makers before their decision to negotiate, it is much more difficult to do so in the case of the ABM. Unlike détente in general, where the beliefs of decision-makers were fixed in advance, the ABM negotiations were a stream of learning where Kissinger and Dobrynin, and Nixon and Brezhnev, changed their beliefs as they negotiated. To analyze this process, one must, in part, abandon the attempt to find decision-makers’ pre-existing beliefs and instead interpret the interaction as a whole to determine whether CK exists.

If the beliefs did not match, but the actors believed that they were public, I classify those beliefs as PIBs. Then I analyze them to determine whether they were examples of Functionally Incompletely Theorized Agreements, Functional Overlapping Principles, or Imagined Intersubjectivity.

The third step uses process tracing to create an analytic narrative that reconstructs the history of the negotiation process. I show how decision-makers relied on a public belief to guide their actions and the role that this process had on cooperation. Process-

168 Ibid., 41.
169 On analytic narratives, see Bates et al 1998; and 2000.
tracing and analytic narratives holds a number of advantages. By tracing the process throughout a decade, I will be able to generate a large number of observable implications in order to offset the limitations of a single case study.\(^{170}\)

Process tracing that demonstrates a role for public beliefs in cooperation is useful. If may demonstrate that PIBs are one route to cooperation and provide substantial evidence that they are necessary for cooperation to occur. In particular, it may disconfirm proposition one and two, and conclusively demonstrate that in détente, a crucial case for rationalist and constructivist theories, cooperation occurs in the presence of PIBs.

Fourth, I use two different techniques in order to maximize within-case variation. First, in the case of détente, chapter five provides within-case variation by examining the beliefs of alternative decision-makers. If these other decision-makers rely on different public beliefs, and if these beliefs are not conducive to cooperation, then there is significant evidence that the specific constellation of beliefs relied on by Nixon, Kissinger, Brezhnev, and others mattered.\(^{171}\) This provides additional evidence that the unique process through which PIBs lead to cooperation was, perhaps, the only route open during détente to improve relations between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Within-case variation is more difficult to establish in the case of the ABM Treaty, as Kissinger and Nixon (in the United States) were the only decision-makers that had unfettered access to the negotiation record. Therefore, I engage in a two-part counterfactual analysis of the decision-making situation. First, I construct an extensive form game tree that shows each decision-maker's beliefs about the nature of the

\(^{170}\) George and Bennett 2005, 205-232; and Munck 2004, 106-112.
\(^{171}\) This is similar to the process used by Khong 1992.
negotiation. Game trees make the complicated history of the negotiation process clear; detail each offer and counter-offer that might be made from the perspective of an actor; and, most importantly, enable one to see what each actor thinks is the state of the world, the likely responses of others to a behavior, and the types of moves that each actor considers. The second step is to counterfactually manipulate the game tree: What if the actors had known there were differences in the principles that guided an action, or differences in the behavior that each expected after an action? If the response to these counterfactuals is that only the type of public belief that empirically existed in the case would allow for cooperation, then that type of public belief is a necessary condition.

While counterfactual analysis is often employed in studies of international politics and every method, both qualitative and quantitative, involves some form of counterfactual analysis, the type of counterfactual analysis I use has several potential pitfalls. By posing the question, “what if the world had been different,” one risks inserting a psychological bias towards theory confirmation into the counterfactual example. To avoid these pitfalls, I endeavor to meet as many of criteria outlined by Tetlock and Belkin for counterfactual experiments as possible. First, I ensure that the counterfactual is clear by specifying the elements of the belief counterfactually altered. Second, the counterfactuals are logically consistent, relying on the explicit nature of the extensive form game trees and analytic narratives to enable precision in specifying the

172 See Weingast 1996.
173 See also Breslauer 1996.
174; Fearon 1991; Lebow 2000; and Tetlock and Belkin 1996.
175 Olson, Roese, and Deibert 1996.
logic of the counterfactuals. Third, the counterfactuals minimally rewrite history by only making minor manipulations to the structure of the game.

**Single-Case Studies**

Many critics of qualitative case-study research object to a single-case research design. These debates are long-standing and heated. Advocates of the utility of single-case tests of theories argue that single-case studies can test theories in part because of the depth of analysis that they provide. Through process-tracing and counterfactual analysis to demonstrate causation, one can increase the number of observable implications of a theory in the analysis of a single case and thereby generate a tremendous amount of data to confirm a theory.

Even if one is generally suspect of single-case studies, détente evades the criticisms of other single-case studies. Gary King, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba, critics of single case studies, list three reasons why these studies fail: a single case cannot account for alternative explanations, is prone to measurement error, and presumes that the world is deterministic. However, these three problems are not reasons to reject détente. Alternative explanations do not pose a problem because the empirical work is designed to maximize in-case variation by analyzing the causes of the decline of détente. Between 1969 and 1979, many elements of the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union were constant, but there was variation in the amount of cooperation. By analyzing a single relationship over time, I trace the role of changing beliefs while keeping many factors constant, as well as providing direct evidence of the causal process.

\[177\] Fearon 1991; George and Bennett 2005, 205-232; and Munck 2004, 106-112.  
\[178\] King, Keohane and Verba 1994, 208-212.
As King, Keohane, and Verba concede, increasing the number of observable implications makes alternative explanations less troublesome.\(^{180}\)

Measurement error and determinism are also not persuasive in the study of détente. The authors of \textit{Designing Social Inquiry} are concerned with measurement error because it is possible that our measurements are not precise. Studying détente reduces the chances of measurement error because there is so much public information concerning the case including robust archival information, secondary sources, and memoirs. By relying on multiple sources, measurement error is less likely. Further, by investigating several periods in the negotiation process, the case is decomposed in a series of independent measurements at different times relying on different data.

Similarly, the problem of determinism, that “some nonsystematic, chance factor” leads to the occurrence of the dependent variable, is both unlikely and resolvable. First, it is not likely that perhaps the most pressing worldwide problems in the 1970s improved by chance. The agreements were the products of an extraordinary process of deliberation. Of all the agreements in all of human history, agreements related to the control of nuclear weapons between two states armed to the teeth is the least likely arena in which chance has an opportunity to reign. Second, I minimize the possibility that chance plays a role by disaggregating cooperation between the superpowers into separate cases, lending greater confidence to the results.\(^{181}\)

\(^{179}\) Bernstein, Lebow and Stein 2000; Goldstone 2003, 47-52; and Steinmetz 2004.

\(^{180}\) King, Keohane and Verba 1994, 212. See also Lieberson 1991.

\(^{181}\) See Munck 2004, 117-118
Chapter Three: Détente

There will be much talk about the necessity for “understanding Russia”; but there will be no place for the American who is really willing to undertake this disturbing task. The apprehension of what is valid in the Russian world is unsettling and displeasing to the American mind. He who would undertake this … the best he can look forward to is the lonely pleasure of one who stands at long last on a chilly and inhospitable mountaintop where few have been before, where few can follow, and where few will consent to believe he has been.

--George Kennan, September 1944.182

During the early 1970s, the United States and the Soviet Union began a remarkable process of cooperation intended to develop an enduring relationship that would end the excesses of superpower competition. Superpower cooperation was so successful that many prognosticators predicted the end of the Cold War. Perhaps most impressive was the timing. Détente occurred less than ten years after the Cuban Missile Crisis, at the height of Vietnam, and nine years before the Soviet incursion in Afghanistan. What enabled the United States and the Soviet Union to improve relations? Was the change from what Richard Nixon called an “era of confrontation” to an “era of negotiation” premised on mutual understanding?

Kennan’s statement in the epigraph to this chapter—one who understands Russia is of no use in American foreign policy and the effort to do so will leave oneself alone “on a chilly and inhospitable mountaintop”—may seem strange to students of diplomacy and international politics. In the previous chapter, I showed that IR theorists often explain peace and cooperation through shared understandings. In particular, constructivists might argue that the shift from mortal enemies to cooperative rivals was the result of a change

182 Kennan 1967, 530-531.
in the superpowers’ social relationship. The early years of the Cold War, rooted in enmity and ideological warfare, gave way to rivalry and coexistence. These scholars highlight the importance of shared ideas—intersubjectivity—in managing the superpower rivalry. On this account, Kennan is wrong; ‘understanding Russia’ or ‘understanding America’ is useful and likely played an important role in superpower diplomacy.

This chapter develops a different account of the period. During détente, cooperation succeeded only because mutual understanding failed. Even though the leaders of both superpowers thought they understood each other in the early 1970s, their détente was not the result of intersubjectivity; to paraphrase Kennan, neither Brezhnev nor Nixon really grasped what was valid in the world of the other. Nixon and his foreign policy team, especially Henry Kissinger, thought that an understanding had been reached about the nature of U.S.-Soviet relations that emphasized political competition, linkages, and threats. Brezhnev and his foreign policy team also thought the fundamentals of the superpower relationship were shared: the United States had been compelled to accept Soviet political equality and the danger of political competition and threats, and that the United States accepted a Russian sphere of influence in sensitive parts of the Third World. Both wrongly thought that their public beliefs were shared, a phenomenon I

183 Wendt 1999, 251.
184 Superpower relations have received surprisingly little attention from constructivists. While specific elements, especially the role of nuclear weapons, have been extensively treated, discussion of the relationship as a whole is often only mentioned in passing. Bially Mattern 2005, 22-23; Farrell 2005; and Tannenwald 2007; and Wendt 1999, 36. Cf. Ringmar 2002. Most work is dedicated to understanding the end of the Cold War rather than its conduct. Evangelista 2001; and Herrmann 1996. This does not mean the period has escaped attention; scholars have focused instead on specific relationships between states within a single bloc or shown the importance of a single superpower’s culture. Barnett 1998; Bially Mattern 2005; Hopf 2002; and Risse-Kappen 1996. The lack of a systematic attempt to determine whether the superpower rivalry was mitigated by shared ideas is odd: it is clearly a paradigmatic case, crucial for understanding U.S. foreign policy, and an important case in the sense that if constructivism cannot contribute to understanding the Cold War—if the balance of power is sufficient—then one may question the utility of the paradigm as a whole.
referred to in the previous chapter as putative intersubjective beliefs (PIBs). PIBs enabled détente and cooperation by enabling the leadership in both states to overlook their fundamental differences.

This chapter examines the general relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States during détente. I show that constructivist accounts capture a turn from enemy to rival that was indicative of the period. However, the underlying idea of détente was not shared. Soviet and American decision makers had two very different understandings about what détente meant. The change in the superpower relationship was premised on imagined intersubjectivity—an inaccurate belief that others share one’s principles and expectations of behavior. Détente had two ideational midwives, not a single set of shared ideas as constructivists often suppose. I also show that the existence of imagined intersubjectivity was productive. Because each party believed that the other recognized the meaning of the relationship, each was willing to engage in cooperative actions that might not have been taken had either side recognized the extent of their differences.

I first outline Wendt’s account of the relationship between rivalry and cooperation so as to draw a sharp line against theories that claim that shared ideas constitute cooperation. Then, I summarize the beliefs of U.S. and Soviet decision makers to show that détente was premised on imagined intersubjectivity. Finally, I show how imagined intersubjectivity enhanced the prospects for the Basic Principles Agreement and the resolution of the October War.
A brief digression is warranted to explain the relationship of this chapter to its successors. This chapter traces the importance of imagined intersubjectivity at the macro-level; chapter four discusses the micro-level by examining the specific issues at play in the negotiation of the ABM Treaty; and, chapter five shows that variation on the independent variable—decision makers’ beliefs—alters the prospects for cooperation by tracing the causes of the decline of détente and evaluating alternative explanations.

Whereas the next chapter relies heavily on archival documents, this chapter relies more heavily on secondary sources. The major empirical claim concerning different interpretations of détente is documented by a number of historians and political scientists and is consistent with first-hand accounts. In addition, when major turning points are discussed or there is tension in secondary source material, I rely on archival documents. In the effort to cover such a long period in detail, I have been forced to rely primarily on secondary sources, but the consensus among authors adds weight to each author’s claims.

**Constructivist Explanations of Detente**

This section provides a plausible constructivist account of the origins and importance of détente. While few constructivist scholars have examined superpower relations during détente, it is an exemplary case to detect the causes of a shift from enmity to rivalry, the sort of shift that lies at the heart of Alexander Wendt’s seminal *Social Theory of International Politics.*

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185 For a small selection of these works, see Dobrynin 1995 Garthoff 1994; George 1980; Kissinger 1979, 1982 and 1994; Israelyan 1995; Lebow and Stein 1994; Nixon 1990; and Saivetz 1997, 73-76.

186 Wendt 1999. The selection of Wendt’s theory is appropriate for three reasons. First, there are few explicit empirical considerations of Wendt’s theory and thus an empirical test is useful. Second, because Wendt’s theory is cast broadly, it may incorporate narrower theories, such as norms and socialization.
Wendt argues that shared ideas are able to establish cooperative (or conflictual) behavior by creating social regularities that enable states to pursue specific patterns of behavior. In the case of enmity, the international system is characterized by a culture that prescribed behavioral rules, such as non-recognition and no limitation of violence, that are constitutive of conflict. In a culture of rivalry, which is exemplified by détente, Wendt argues that shared ideas constitute the social basis for cooperation. Rivals differ from enemies in that rivals do not believe others will attempt to conquer or dominant them. Rivals accept, at least in principle, that opponents have legitimate interests within their borders, are sovereign, and therefore will not engage in unlimited violence to destroy others. When states accept the sovereignty of others, there are fewer security fears; this enables states to pursue absolute gains, mutes concerns over the use of force, and leads to limits on the use of violence. A shift in international culture, from enmity to rivalry, enables cooperation.

At first glance, détente appears to bear out Wendt’s insight. Cooperation during the early 1970s was an emerging pattern. Between 1969 and 1980, the United States and the Soviet Union met at five summits, arranged 11 bilateral commissions, and reached 150 agreements. The ABM Treaty, often been referred to as the most important arms control treaty in history, was the crown jewel of the first SALT round. This was quickly

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Third, there are few constructivist theories of changes in the superpower relationship and therefore are few off-the-shelf constructivist explanations for détente. 
187 Ibid., 251.
188 Ibid., 260-2.
189 There are few systematic tests of Wendt’s theory and even fewer attempts relating to the Cold War. See McLeod 2008; Thies 2008; and Widmaier 2003 and 2004. In the context of the Cold War, see Sala, Scott and Spriggs 2007.
190 Wendt 1999, 279.
191 Ibid., 282.
followed by the limitation of offensive weapons and the agreed code of conduct in the Basic Principles Agreement (BPA). Further, Nixon and Brezhnev established a joint commercial commission and agreed to enhance cooperation in science and technology, medicine, public health, the environment, space, and the avoidance of naval accidents.\textsuperscript{193}

At a second summit, the Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War was signed, and four joint committees were established related to oceanography, transportation, agriculture, and atomic energy. The superpowers also agreed to expand air service, cultural and scientific exchanges, and establish a joint chamber of commerce. The 1971 Indo-Pakistan War, the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, Vietnam, Angola, Mozambique, and the Iranian Revolution each generated international crises that risked spilling over to sour U.S.-Soviet relations; for the most part, the superpowers recognized a common interest in preventing escalation.

This pattern of cooperation was accompanied by a shift in the superpowers’ perceptions of one another. In 1973, Brezhnev declared, to a group of American businessmen no less, that the Cold War was over. Two days later, in a televised address to American viewers, Brezhnev declared, “Mankind has outgrown the rigid ‘Cold War’ armor which it was once forced to wear.”\textsuperscript{194} The Nixon administration’s views closely paralleled the Soviet attitude. In his inaugural address, Richard Nixon made his intentions

\textsuperscript{193} Garthoff 1994, 326.

dramatically clear: “And now to the leaders of the Communist world, we say: After an era of confrontation, the time has come for an era of negotiation.”

During détente, U.S. public opinion regarded the Soviet Union in more positively than at any other time during the Cold War. In 1973, 45% of the public had a favorable impression of the Soviet Union. In contrast, this shrunk to only 13% in 1980, when the “Second Cold War” began. The Soviet Union experienced a similar shift. At the Twenty-Fourth Party Congress in 1971, the ideological content of Brezhnev’s speech was toned down and class antagonisms were hardly mentioned in his discussion of superpower relations. The Soviet leadership began to prepare its public for détente. Politburo members’ speeches changed remarkably: the theme of détente was referenced 7,075 times between 1972 and 1979, compared with only 217 references to class struggle. Beyond the Politburo, the tone of Soviet publications shifted, with a dramatic move toward favoring improved relations.

The elements of rivalry highlighted by Wendt were emphasized by the leadership in Washington and Moscow. Before Nixon, few in power in the United States believed that the Soviet Union was willing to respect U.S. sovereignty or would limit its use of violence. In 1967, Nixon promoted the image of a Soviet Union bent on the destruction

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196 Russett and Deluca 1981, 389-391; and Smith 1983. The period also saw public support for a reduction in support for military spending, an issue of significance for relations. See Russett 1974 and 1975.
197 Volten 1982.
198 Stewart, Warhola and Blough 1984.
199 Husband 1979.
of the United States. Peace with the Soviets was unlikely “until they give up their goal of world conquest.” By 1969, Nixon’s tone had changed in his public speeches and private correspondence. No longer did he use the language of enmity to describe the Soviet Union; instead, it became an actor with legitimate interests. Writing to his Secretary of Defense, Melvin Laird, shortly after taking office, Nixon explained that the basis of relations “is a mutual recognition of our vital interests. We must recognize that the Soviet Union has interests; in the present circumstances we cannot but take account of them in defining our own.” This was the cornerstone of the era of negotiation. The Soviet Union had reached the status of a world power and, to ensure peace, the United States would have to take account of it when conducting foreign policy. The superpowers must become rivals, not enemies.

Détente is a likely case for constructivist theories that highlight the importance of shared ideas. There is a shift from a culture of enmity, where the parties do not believe that the other respects its sovereignty, its interests, or will restrict its use of violence, to a culture of rivalry, where cooperation becomes possible. The intuitive appeal of arguments premised on culture is that they capture the underlying deep ideational changes that appear to be necessary for success in changing long-standing patterns of foreign relations. It is certainly plausible that détente was premised on new ideas and that these ideas were

shared. Indeed, in the 1970s, there was a buzz about the sudden bridging of worlds occurring in the wake of Vietnam, the surge in public support for the Soviet Union in the United States, and the softening Soviet tone concerning the United States. In fact, I believe that a constructivist study seeking to understand the consequences of ideational change from the late 1960s through the 1970s would largely follow the line of argument pursued here thus far.

I argue that this type of constructivist account is only partly right. On the one hand, the shift from enmity to rivalry was important for cooperation. This confirms the claim that anarchy is “an empty vessel and has no intrinsic logic; anarchies only acquire a logic as a function of the structure of what we put inside them.” During détente, factors other than material ones mattered and, in particular, the death of enmity mattered quite a bit.

However, rivalry was not sufficient to provide the ideational basis of cooperation. Two “best friends” might have very different understandings about what is required to be friends, believing that because they call themselves best friends, the other consents to a set of responsibilities. This relationship might quickly degenerate into rivalry or even enmity if each discovered that they cannot count on their friend to do what they believe friends should do. Not knowing can bring the bliss of friendship, but only to the happily ignorant. Similarly, rivalry is an empty term, devoid of a concrete set of practices necessary to sustain a pattern of relations. Rivals with two very different conceptions of

203 Wendt 1999, 249.
204 The role of material factors is explored in chapter five.
205 A similar dynamic may occur in romantic relationships. The most satisfying relationships are those where lovers idealize their imperfect partners. See Murray, Holmes, and Griffin 1996.
the rules of the rivalry, like the disparate conceptions during détente, may quickly degenerate into enemies. Perhaps there was no bliss in becoming rivals during détente, but at least there was a sense of relief that enmity had been overcome, a collective exhale as we pulled back from the brink. During détente, this breath was possible only because it was premised on a misunderstanding, a putative intersubjective belief.

One objection to this characterization of Wendt’s theory is that it conflates the dyadic analysis with the systemic. Wendt argues that the international system as a whole can be characterized through patterns of enmity, rivalry, or friendship. By concentrating on dyads, one risks missing the systemic effects. However, while Wendt focuses on macro-structure, he also argues that subjective beliefs about self and other—bilateral relationships—are “a micro-foundation for cultural forms.” Once the structure of the international system as a whole shifts toward rivalry, only then do macro-cultural roles supervene on the individual beliefs of states. Until then, bilateral relationships matters.

**Imagined Intersubjectivity and Détente**

In the 1970s, détente referred to a diverse set of policies pursued by the United States, the Soviet Union, and Germany. In diplomatic parlance, *détente*, or the Russian term *razryadka*, means a relaxation of tensions. Despite its use to describe the policy of all three governments, the term meant different things to each. This section shows that the overarching relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union was a putative intersubjective belief (PIB). Both the U.S. and Soviet leadership believed that their image

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206 Wendt 1999, 283.  
207 Ibid.  
208 Bluhm 1967, 1-3; Edmonds 1983, 137-139; and Garthoff 1994, 27.
of détente—their understanding of the meaning of the relationship—was shared. Both superpowers were wrong. This belief was premised on a misperception; neither party accurately understood the others’ principles of détente (the values each side sought to realize from the relationship) nor their expectations for behavior (the policies the other would likely to pursue).

In this section, I show that the meaning of détente—the rules of the rivalry—was different for each superpower. I first describe the emergence of strategic parity, the event that triggered each side to rethink its preexisting beliefs. The brute fact of strategic parity was common knowledge; what it meant for their relationship was different for both parties. Specifically, the aims of détente (political parity) differed, as did the rules of the road each expected the other to follow. The Nixon administration, in particular Henry Kissinger, thought that emergence of strategic parity meant that the geopolitical contest had moved toward the use of linkages and threats, by both parties, to enhance political influence. Strategic parity had reshaped the means, but political dominance remained the end. The Soviets, in contrast, believed that by reshaping the means, strategic parity had changed the ends. Military parity meant the United States had been compelled to accept the Soviet Union as an equal, meriting equal prestige, and would no longer rely on linkages or threats or prevent the Soviets from enjoying influence in the Third World. Table 3.1 summarizes these differences:
To establish the value of the independent variable (the beliefs of actors), I analyze the beliefs of U.S. and Soviet decision makers, their beliefs about one another, and whether, if their beliefs differed, they were aware of those differences. If the beliefs were the same, or if their differences were common knowledge or intersubjective, then the belief is not a PIB. If, however, their beliefs differ in meaningful ways and they are unaware of those differences, then I classify the belief as a case of imagined intersubjectivity.

**Military Parity**

Détente began with a mutual recognition of the emergence of Soviet military and strategic parity with the United States. Brezhnev and others in the Soviet leadership, along with Nixon and his influential aide Henry Kissinger, accepted this fact.

The road to parity began in the mid-1960s when Brezhnev and Kosygin came to power. In response to apparent Soviet weakness during the Cuban Missile Crisis, as well as U.S. interventions in Southeast Asia and the Dominican Republic, the Soviet Union began a rapid expansion of its strategic and conventional arsenals.\(^\text{209}\) Statistics vary, but at a minimum, from 1964 to 1970, the Soviet arsenal increased from 472 strategic

\(^{209}\) Leffler 2007, 238.
weapons to 1,470, annual production of tanks grew by 25%, and their stock of armored vehicles almost doubled. The Soviets were intent on reaching military parity and pursued it despite the economic damage such a large diversion of resources to the military required. This formidable addition to Soviet military strength, especially in strategic weapons, reinforced in both the United States and the Soviet Union the importance of mutually assured destruction and the impossibility of winning a nuclear war.

Brezhnev held a deep conviction that strategic parity meant that global war was unthinkable. The horrors of the Second World War deeply impressed themselves on Brezhnev, who continually referred to the experience when elaborating his foreign policy. Soviet policy was geared toward ensuring that a world war would not recur and reducing the chances of nuclear conflict. Military parity was a key step toward obtaining that goal. Raymond Garthoff’s analysis of the reception of military parity in the Soviet Union during the period shows that its implications were widely shared and understood in the Soviet government. At the Twenty-Fourth Party Congress in 1971, for example, Semenov, the deputy foreign minister, remarked that “the political significance of a stable strategic balance is indisputable; it is the guarantee not only of the security of the two sides, but of international security as a whole” and “the existing military-strategic parity undoubtedly exerts a stabilizing effect on the international

210 Ibid. See also Podvig 2008; Schilling 1981; and Steinberg 1990.
211 The perception of parity was not accurate; the United States in fact remained dominant. See chapter five.
213 Dobrynin 1995, 192-3; and Gromyko 1989, 278.
214 Garthoff 1994, 42-73
situation.” In the 1970s, Soviet strategic power grew enough that the Soviets need not be concerned about threats from a potentially superior American military.

Not only did the Soviet leadership believe it had reached military parity, but it believed (rightly) that the American foreign policy leadership also believed that parity had been reached. Soviet analysts note that “by the beginning of the 1970s not only the fact of the absolute vulnerability of American territory, but also the inevitability of a crushing retaliatory strike if the United States delivered a nuclear missile strike against the USSR, had become completely evident to everyone in the American ruling class.”

The Soviet Union knew that the Nixon administration knew that the Soviet buildup and assured destruction was common knowledge.

The Soviets were right that strategic parity was common knowledge. Nixon and Kissinger knew the strategic world they met upon entering office was significantly different from that which greeted their predecessors in the mid-1960s. By 1969, the Soviet Union had reached, or would soon reach, strategic parity. In the United States, the media reported almost weekly stories of warnings that the Soviets were closing the missile gap and might soon move ahead of the United States. This became a campaign issue in the Nixon-Humphrey contest as Nixon pledged to prevent the Soviets from

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215 Ibid., 66. Garthoff shows that this view prevailed in leading military journals, political speeches and deliberations.
216 in Ibid., 64.
closing the gap.\textsuperscript{218} If American decline is the buzzword in the foreign policy community today, parity was the buzzword in the late 1960s and early 1970s.\textsuperscript{219}

Nixon and Kissinger understood it would be impossible to restore nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union. This led to a drastic shift from “superiority” to “sufficiency” as the foundation of U.S. defense policy.\textsuperscript{220} Sufficiency was intended as a middle position between deterrence and dominance. Dominance was unobtainable and costly: the effort would lead to costly arms races. At the same time, relying on assured destruction was insufficient because it limited military options to retaliation against civilian targets. In the effort to restore flexibility to U.S. strategic policy, the doctrine of sufficiency meant the United States should be able to strike civilian targets, military assets, or both, but without the capacity to overwhelm the Soviet nuclear arsenal.\textsuperscript{221} Like the Soviets, Nixon’s team understood that establishing dominance was impossible and parity had set in.\textsuperscript{222} Like their Soviet counterparts, Nixon and Kissinger believed the strategic balance was roughly equal and unlikely to change soon. The “fact” of parity was common knowledge or intersubjective. However, what parity meant was not.


\textsuperscript{219} For example, Foreign Affairs included articles related to parity in every issue. Brzezinski 1972 and 1973; Buchan 1972; Kennan 1972; Schulman 1971; and Stone 1970.


\textsuperscript{221} Kissinger 1979, 317. See also Burr 3006, 52-56; and Dallek 2007, 136-137.

\textsuperscript{222} American policymakers were aware that the Soviet Union was not trying to obtain dominance. See CIA. “Memorandum From Director of Central Intelligence Helms to Secretary of State Rogers: Gromyko’s Review of Current Soviet Policy.” 14 July 1969. FRUS: Soviet Union, January 1969-October 1970, 200.
Principle: Political Parity

In the previous chapter, I divided public beliefs into two component parts: beliefs about principles (reasons) for action and beliefs about behavior (expectations of behavior). The principle of détente for decision makers in the Soviet Union and the United States related to their views of political parity. To the extent that each side understood political parity differently, the principles of détente differed. The Soviet view was that détente meant the United States had accepted the Soviet Union as a political equal, whereas the American understanding was that through negotiations, détente was a competition for political supremacy with limited risks. The Soviet Union acted as if Nixon and Kissinger had accepted political equality; the United States acted as if Brezhnev knew that there was a continued geopolitical contest for political supremacy.

From the Soviet perspective, détente was, in large part, a way to convert Soviet strategic parity into political parity. Brezhnev and others believed that the Soviet Union had suffered a significant decline in prestige under Nikita Khrushchev. The emerging Brezhnev clique was concerned that Khrushchev’s reckless conduct, especially the Cuban Missile Crisis, unnecessarily risked war and damaged Soviet prestige. In the meetings in which the leadership overthrew Khrushchev, they lectured him for hours on the damage he had done to the Soviet image. The leadership shared the belief that

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223 In many ways, this is similar to the argument that rising powers demand prestige. See Gilpin 1981, 30-2. I use political parity, prestige, and influence interchangeably.
224 Khrushchev argued that nuclear weapons meant that confrontation should be peaceful. Khrushchev 1959. However, his rhetoric was not taken seriously. See American Bar Association 1964; Brandt 1963; and Kennan 1960.
225 Fursenko and Naftali 2006, 537-538.
Khrushchev attempted to bluff from a position of weakness, rather than establish a position of strength, and the bluff was called.

The Soviet weapons buildup in the mid-1960s and early 1970s was therefore intended to secure more than Soviet safety. The aim of this buildup was not to generate a first-strike capability, as many U.S. conservatives supposed, but to obtain political equality. As Melvyn Leffler, a noted Cold War historian, explains, “They yearned for American respect, despised America’s strength, and demanded equal security.”226 As Khrushchev’s failures were compounded by further trials in the 1960s, such as the failure of Soviet clients to win a war against Israel in 1967 and the slaughter of communists in Indonesia, the Soviets decided to build their way out of the morass of U.S. global dominance.

As their military power grew, the Brezhnev leadership began to feel that political parity was setting in. At least by the time of the Soviet intervention during the Prague Spring, Soviet leaders began to comment on their renewed political prestige and its relationship to military parity. The Soviet Union believed the United States had meddled in Czechoslovakia, and the lack of a strong American reaction to the Soviet intervention was attributed to mounting Soviet military and political strength.227 Andrei Gromyko, the Soviet Foreign Minister, remarked that before the Prague Spring, “the Politburo had to think carefully time and again, before taking any foreign policy step—What would the

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226 Leffler 2007, 238.
US do? What would France do? This period is over. . . Whatever noise they can make, the new correlation of forces is such that they no longer dare to move against us.”

Political parity was the Soviet principle for cooperation during détente. Military parity meant that the United States could no longer negotiate from “positions of strength” and the Soviet Union would have a sphere of influence and an equal seat at negotiations. The Soviets pursued détente to help “manage the transition of the United States into a changing world, one no longer marked by American predominance but by a political parity of the Soviet Union with the United States that matched their military parity.” In short, equal power should translate into equal prestige.

Not only were the Soviets convinced that political parity was achievable, but they also believed the United States was prepared, however reluctantly, to accept it. Brezhnev and others believed military parity had compelled the Nixon administration to accept political equality. For this reason, they frequently discussed peace in militant terms: “the Soviet view was that a ‘struggle to compel’ the imperialists to accept peaceful coexistence was required.” For example, arms control talks were designed to compel the United States to negotiate with equal standing, not from positions of strength.

Unsurprisingly, the Soviets were wrong to assume that the United States was ready to cede political equality. For the Nixon administration, military parity did not mean equality but rigidity. Kissinger thought a bipolar international situation turned

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228 Leffler 2007, 240. See also Lerner 2008.
229 Husband 1979.
230 Garthoff 1994, 42.
231 Ibid., 45; and Litwak 1984.
international politics into a zero sum game.\textsuperscript{233} In a nuclear world, if every issue is zero-sum and thus matters to the overall strategic balance, then every issue is related to the prospects for survival. The Nixon team’s approach to foreign policy was designed to find a way of moving in a world of strategic bipolarity, to reinstate creativity in a world that otherwise might remain static and dangerous.

The solution to the dangers of military bipolarity was suggested by the emergence of political multipolarity. For Nixon and Kissinger, political multipolarity emerged during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations because other states, concerned about their own security, were driven to seek agreements with both superpowers to enhance their status and ensure their security.\textsuperscript{234} This created flexibility because the balance of power might be managed through creative diplomacy, that is, through forming alliances with former enemies, such as China.\textsuperscript{235} Kissinger intended to rely on this flexibility to increase American political power.

The trick was to increase U.S. influence without alienating the Soviet Union or risking war. Kissinger analyzed this problem extensively before entering office. He begins his study of 19\textsuperscript{th}-century European diplomacy, \textit{A World Restored}, by making a distinction between legitimate and revolutionary international orders. States in a legitimate international order are not dissatisfied because every state accepts certain rules of the game for the resolution of conflicts. As Kissinger explains, “diplomacy, in the classic sense, the adjustment of differences through negotiation, is possible only in

\textsuperscript{233} Kissinger 1979, 69.
\textsuperscript{234} Ibid. For Kissinger, independent French and German foreign policies and an independent China evidenced an emerging multipolarity. See Chang 1990; Costigliola 1992; Hofmann 2007; and Sarotte 2001.
\textsuperscript{235}
‘legitimate’ international orders” because every state has a stake in the present international system. This does not exclude the possibility of war, but wars, in classical European politics, are limited. In contrast to legitimate systems, revolutionary international orders are systems in which one or more states want to reinvent the “system itself.” In a revolutionary system, “only absolute security—the neutralization of the opponent—is considered a sufficient guarantee, and thus the desire of one power for absolute security means absolute insecurity for all others. Diplomacy, the art of restraining the exercise of power, cannot function in such an environment.”

Kissinger was concerned that continued competition without a strategy for managing the Soviet rise to power risked alienating the Soviet Union, turning it into a revolutionary power. The Soviet rise to parity needed to be managed, ensuring that the Soviets were satisfied while maintaining American political dominance.

The differences between the U.S. and Soviet views are, in retrospect, quite apparent. But in the confusion of the 1970s, policymakers on both sides believed they fundamentally understood the worldview of the other. The Soviet Union believed that a world of political equality was developing and believed that the Nixon administration was accepted it. As Garthoff summarizes, the Soviet Union believed that “American acceptance of parity meant a readiness to accept a degree of shared and equal power by the two superpowers, which carried implications of cooperation—or even condominium—in avoiding challenges to each other’s vital interests, even while

236 Kissinger 1964, 2.
237 Kissinger 1974, 141.
competing. In the United States, the Nixon administration believed that Brezhnev had accepted the foibles of mutually assured destruction and prepared to enter a competitive period of negotiations in a multipolar world. Kissinger and Nixon did not understand the Soviet motivation; they believed the Soviet Union, like the United States, was motivated by the desire to seek unilateral and relative advantages. They assumed the Soviets understood that the United States was not willing to cede political parity.

These two disparate understandings of the nature of political equality betray the lack of intersubjective agreement on the principles that would guide the superpower relations during détente. These misunderstandings over principle imply that the agreement was a putative intersubjective belief. In chapter two, I describe two types of putative intersubjective beliefs that contain disagreements over principles: functional incompletely theorized agreements and imagined intersubjectivity. If these differences over the principles of détente led to differences in the concrete sets of policies that each state expected the other to pursue, then the relationship is characterized as imagined intersubjectivity.

Behavior: Linkages and Threats

The differences between the two superpowers over détente’s principle—political parity—led them to pursue and to expect different patterns of behavior from one another. In particular, this was manifested in differences in the negotiation strategies each expected the other to pursue, addressed in this section, and the relationship of the superpower conflict to the Third World, discussed in the next. Kissinger sought to use his

Garthoff 1994, 1164.
toolkit for détente—linkages and threats—to obtain political dominance over the Soviet Union and to evict it from key areas of the Third World (e.g. the Middle East). By contrast, the Soviet Union expected negotiations to proceed without linkages or threats, tools used to undermine political parity by forming negotiating advantages. These disparate expectations of behavior followed from the two states’ different formulations of détente’s principles.

The Nixon administration sought to use issue-linkages to maintain American political supremacy. Shortly after Nixon entered office, he announced his intention to link progress with the Soviet Union in some areas to progress in others. This strategy of linking negotiations was the cornerstone of his Soviet policy. As Nixon recalled:

Since U.S.-Soviet interests as the world’s two competing superpowers were so widespread and overlapping, it was unrealistic to separate or compartmentalize areas of concern. Therefore we decided to link progress in such areas of Soviet concern as strategic arms limitation and increased trade with progress in areas that were important to us—Vietnam, the Mideast, and Berlin. This concept became known as linkage.

Linkage, for the Nixon administration, was détente—it enabled the United States and the Soviet Union to negotiate and, through negotiation, to reach agreements that led to common gains. Linkages were intended to manage the Soviet rise to power, giving them a stake in the status quo and thus preventing them from becoming a revolutionary power. Linkage meant granting the Soviets some increased influence and explicit demonstrations of respect. But, these were intended to concede something less than the equality that

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might be gained by a revolutionary Soviet foreign policy. This was the meaning of the "era of negotiation"; the use of linkage and diplomacy to ensure political superiority.  

The linkage strategy would have two benefits. First, détente was intended to enhance mutual gains. By working together, the United States and the Soviet Union could obtain gains that were not possible without cooperation. More importantly, the United States sought to use linkages to enhance U.S. power without alienating the Soviet Union. Kissinger intended "to build the Soviet stake in maintaining cooperative relationships and in eschewing confrontations that would imperil or disrupt them." It was a strategy of competitive coexistence, one that sought to contain Soviet power without alienating it. "Détente was expected to provide leverage for managing the emergence of Soviet power, and in doing so would draw the Soviet Union into de facto acceptance of the existing world order." It was in this context that seemingly unimportant agreements, such as joint space missions, commerce commissions, technical exchanges, and cultural programs mattered. They added up, albeit in small increments, on a balance sheet that the Soviets would see as a cost of backing out of détente to pursue a revolutionary foreign policy. Each link drove another Soviet stake into the existing order that would need to be pulled to pursue a belligerent policy.

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242 Kissinger also suggests a third benefit; linkages enable a grand strategy to relate different areas of foreign policy. Kissinger 1979, 139.  
244 Garthoff 1994, 33.  
246 Welch Larson 1997, 185.
The desire for unilateral gains through negotiation became most apparent when Nixon and Kissinger linked threats to expected gains. This darker element was expressed in a dangerous pattern of brinksmanship. In 1969, Nixon secretly conducted strategic exercises designed to force the Soviets into dealing on North Vietnam. Brezhnev resented U.S. threats and the linkage failed. Similarly, Nixon raised the readiness level of U.S. nuclear forces in October 1973 to convince the Soviets not to intervene to save the Egyptian Third Army. These are only two dramatic episodes in a chain of events through which Nixon linked threats to policy goals.

Kissinger also used linkages and threats in an attempt to negotiate political supremacy without alienating Brezhnev. Détente was designed to use carrots and sticks to ensure American gains. Kissinger expected the Soviet Union to understand the superpower game in the same way as he did: he expected the Soviets to use negotiations to obtain unilateral advantages. He did not understand the depth of the gulf between them.

The Soviet leadership had a fundamentally different understanding of appropriate negotiating behavior. Because Soviet foreign policy emphasized equality instead of dominance, negotiations would proceed with the parties on equal footing, in specific areas (not linked complexes of issues), where mutual gains were possible. The Soviet Union, therefore, sought negotiations that were independent of one another, with one set of negotiations on trade, another on arms control, and another on science. They rejected attempts to link issues or to create positions of strength by relying on bargaining.

248 Blechman and Hart 1982.
249 Garthoff 1994, 52-53; and Husband 1979, 504.
advantages. Furthermore, unlike the Khrushchev era, the Soviet Union did not rely on nuclear threats during détente and, as discussed later in this chapter, were puzzled by U.S. threats. Brezhnev believed the United States recognized that parity meant equality in negotiations and did not expect U.S. policy to continue to rely on linkages.

As the United States and the Soviet Union moved to negotiate with one another, neither had its eyes wide open. Kissinger thought the Soviet Union would and did attempt to make unilateral gains through negotiations. Brezhnev believed his relationship with the Nixon administration portended some measure of equality in negotiations; he interpreted Kissinger’s and Nixon’s behavior through this lens. Neither came to grips with the position of the other; neither understood that, in the future, their behavior would diverge remarkably.

Behavior: Third World

The Nixon administration’s and the Brezhnev Politburo’s expectations each other’s conduct in the Third World also differed. For Nixon and Kissinger, détente meant continued geopolitical competition in the Third World and the use of linkages and threats to reduce Soviet influence. For the Soviets, détente implied the superpowers would work cooperatively to resolve conflicts that risked undermining U.S.-Soviet relations, and that Soviet political prestige would be considered equal in relation to global settlements.

The Soviet attainment of military parity had important political consequences for how the Politburo expected to be treated in the Third World. Czechoslovakia was the first instance of a trend in which the overcoming of strategic inferiority meant that the Soviet

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250 Garthoff 1994, 52. Garthoff also notes that linkages implied the Soviets needed détente more than the Americans, a political affront.
Union had become a global power. Brezhnev, especially after Nixon’s hands-off approach in Eastern Europe and the continued U.S. entanglement in Vietnam, believed he had secured the safety of Soviet competition with the United States in the Third World in “National Liberation Movements.” Brezhnev believed military parity meant political parity in terms of global influence. The United States could not, and should not, hold U.S.-Soviet relations hostage to prevent Soviet involvement in peripheral conflicts.

During the 1970s, the Soviet Union dramatically increased its influence around the world, bringing regime changes to 14 different governments. The 1970s saw a global quest for influence, with sub-Saharan Africa playing as important a role as Southeast Asia and the Middle East. The competition in the Third World, which was a corollary of peaceful coexistence between the superpowers, meant that Soviet influence could safely increase. Indeed, from the intervention in Angola to less direct entanglements, the Brezhnev leadership believed that Soviet assertiveness on the periphery risked neither damaging U.S.-Soviet relations nor escalation. “The idea that the United States and Soviet Union could someday share responsibility for managing the entire world, perhaps even divide it up between them, appeals enormously to Soviet leaders. Originally, détente looked in Moscow like a first step toward just such an arrangement.”

The Nixon administration did not understand the Soviet view on the Third World. It did not intend to allow the Soviet Union to pursue increased global influence, at least

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251 Garthoff 1994, 41.
253 On Soviet beliefs escalation and détente, see Bennett 1999, 137—150; and MacFarlane 1990, 35-48.
not without challenge. “In retrospect, the Soviets were wrong in their evaluation that the
United States was ready to accept the changed correlation of forces as they appeared to
Soviet leaders in the early 1970s,” writes Raymond Garthoff. Kissinger actively
attempted to reduce Soviet influence, refusing to acknowledge that his efforts risked
undermining détente; he continually attempted to use carrots and sticks to limit Soviet
influence in the Middle East, Angola, the Horn of Africa, and elsewhere. For Kissinger,
these linkages were compatible with détente, not with increased Soviet influence. “The
Soviet leaders harbored illusions not only that the United States was ready to accept
changes in the Third World but, even more, that it would regard active Soviet support for
‗progressive‘ changes in the Third World as compatible with Soviet-American
détente.”255 This false Soviet optimism, that the United States had accepted political
parity, translated into a false optimism that the United States anticipated and would not
attempt to curtail increased Soviet influence across the Third World.

These differences in how the two sides viewed competition in the Third World
would affect U.S.-Soviet relations and have practical consequences. Later in this chapter,
I discuss these differences in relation to the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. However, their
importance is not limited to the Middle East. For example, in 1976, Kissinger was
concerned about growing Soviet influence in Angola. He suggested to Brezhnev that
Angola was a dangerous situation that, if left unresolved, would sour U.S.-Soviet
relations. This was not a subtle threat; he imposed a linkage between Soviet policy in
Africa and arms control. Brezhnev resisted connecting Angola to SALT, noting that he
did not believe the United States would risk a war over Angola. Brezhnev separated the

255 Garthoff 1994, 56. Also see Westad 1997, 18.
issues, asking “Are we here to discuss SALT? Or Angola?” Brezhnev believed that the Soviet sphere of influence, accepted by the United States, was broad enough to ensure that Soviet participation in peripheral conflicts did not risk damaging détente. The same episode repeated itself throughout the 1970s, especially in the case of the Ogaden War, where the Carter administration, taking a page from Nixon’s team, attempted to link SALT to Soviet influence in the Horn of Africa, with much the same result.  

**Summary of Beliefs**

The beliefs of Soviet and U.S. decision makers formed a PIB. The principles that guided U.S. and Soviet foreign policy (their views on political parity) were not intersubjective, nor did they understand the differences between their positions. Consequently, both were unjustifiably confident that they understood the foreign policy of the other. Both mistakenly believed they could predict the types of actions the other would pursue in negotiations and in the quest for global influence. Table 3.2 summarizes these mistaken understandings:

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<th>Principles</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Political Superiority</td>
<td>Linkage/Threats</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Competition in Third World</td>
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<tr>
<td>Soviet Union</td>
<td>Political Equality</td>
<td>No Linkages/ Threats</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Equality in Third World</td>
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Table 3.4: Summary of Beliefs

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257 See chapter five.
This is an example of imagined intersubjectivity: Kissinger, Nixon, and Brezhnev believed they were engaged in an intersubjective relationship in which they understood the principles that guided the other’s foreign policy and could predict what types of behavior stemmed from that principled understanding. However, they were wrong. The leadership in each superpower held an idiosyncratic view that was read into the position of the other, creating a mirror image of their beliefs in their opponent.

**Imagined Intersubjectivity and Two Cases of Cooperation**

The first half of this chapter argues that Soviet and American understandings of détente were premised on imagined intersubjectivity. This section shows that rationalist and constructivist theories of cooperation predict that such misunderstandings stand in the way of cooperation. In the rest of this chapter, I intend to show that the opposite might be true. These misunderstandings did not stand in the way of cooperation, but were integral to it. The confusion over détente led to the successful conclusion of the Basic Principles Agreement (BPA) in 1972, and contributed to crisis management during the October War between Israel and the Arab States in October 1973. In both cases, the parties cooperated, in part, because they believed the other agreed to the rules of the superpower rivalry. In both cases, the Soviet Union thought that the United States had accepted it as a political equal and was willing to cooperate because this guaranteed equal access to political power. By contrast, the United States thought that because of strategic parity, the Soviet Union was willing to let complex negotiations, including threats and incentives, decide their respective political status, with the inevitable result that the
United States would retain political dominance over the Soviet Union, particularly in the Middle East.

The BPA and the October War examples of two classes of agreements. The BPA is an example of broad philosophical agreements.\textsuperscript{258} The BPA sought to lay out what détente meant, what each party expected of the other in the broadest sense, and to lay the groundwork for cooperation. Broad philosophical agreements, such as the BPA, should be easy cases for constructivist theories because actors are intentionally trying to develop an explicit account of their relationship. This broad agreement is theoretically interesting because it shows that PIBs can explain agreements in which actors believe they are explicitly codifying an intersubjective set of rules. That is, even when actors try to reduce misperception and create intersubjective rules of the road, they might come up far short of their goal because of a false confidence in mutual understanding—imagined intersubjectivity.

In contrast, attempts at cooperation during the October War, including Brezhnev’s efforts to prevent the war and the ceasefire resolutions, are examples of specific agreements. Imagined intersubjectivity not only plays a role in the broad contours of the relationship, but in agreements that are specific, suggesting concrete policies and expectations for specific future conduct. The ability of imagined intersubjectivity to explain both classes of agreements shows the myriad of ways in which unshared ideas can constitute cooperation.

\textsuperscript{258} The Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War had a similar dynamic. Garthoff 1994, 376-86.
Basic Principles Agreement

Reciprocal misunderstandings were enshrined in the Basic Principles of Relations Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (Basic Principles Agreement or BPA), signed in Moscow in 1972. The BPA is an interesting case because it shows how two rivals can agree to two different sets of rules to rivalry without realizing it. An analysis of the BPA is a particularly important empirical test for the comparative role of intersubjectivity and putative intersubjective beliefs in détente. During the BPA negotiations, the central issue was what the roles of the superpowers would be, vis-à-vis each other and the world. It is, therefore, a likely case in which an intersubjective understanding of rivalry could develop. The following analysis is brief. The negotiating history of the BPA is not long and the account that follows agrees with the consensus of historians and political scientists on the misperceptions that were instrumental to the agreement.

The first article of the agreement includes the Soviet understanding of détente: “They will proceed from the common determination that in the nuclear age there is no alternative to conducting their mutual relations on the basis of peaceful coexistence. Differences in ideology and in the social systems of the USA and the USSR are not obstacles to the bilateral principles of sovereignty, equality, non-interference in internal affairs and mutual advantage.” The second article, drafted by Kissinger to incorporate the American understanding of détente, is quite different:

The USA and the USSR attach major importance to preventing the development of situations capable of causing a dangerous exacerbation of their relations. Therefore, they will do their utmost to avoid military confrontations and to prevent the outbreak of nuclear war. They will always exercise restraint in their mutual relations, and will be prepared to negotiate and settle differences by
peaceful means. Discussions and negotiations on outstanding issues will be conducted in a spirit of reciprocity, mutual accommodation and mutual benefit.  

The first article, drafted by the Soviet Union, highlights the three elements of the Soviet understanding of détente. First, it incorporates political parity by recognizing sovereignty, equality, and guarantees of non-interference in domestic affairs. This “had special significance for Soviet leaders,” explains Alexander George, because it was “an acknowledgement by the United States that Soviet achievement of strategic military parity entitled the Soviet Union to be treated by the United States as a political-diplomatic equal as well.” Second, it suggests that linkages would end. The first article explicitly includes reference to “mutual advantage,” contrasted in the Soviet understanding with positions of strength. Third, the first article makes no reference to the Third World, implying there is no relationship between their conduct and superpower relations. Further, the article implies that the Soviets can safely support National Liberation Movements—the ideological element of the superpower struggle—and explicitly claims that this will not affect bilateral relations. The first article thereby tacitly approves the Soviet doctrine of “peaceful coexistence,” permitted Soviet influence in the Third World.

The second article is extraordinarily different on all three counts. First, the second article makes no reference to political equality, sovereignty, or non-interference, the Soviet principles of détente. Second, it highlights reciprocity—the linking of issues in a tit-for-tat—instead of mutual advantage, approximating the spirit of linkage. Third, and

261 Ibid., and MacFarlane 1985, 303.
most importantly, the second article suggests a different approach to the Third World. The superpowers should prevent dangerous situations from erupting that risk souring U.S.-Soviet relations. As noted earlier, for Kissinger, this implies that Soviet attempts to aid progressive struggles would damage relations.

There are two reasons for these ambiguities. First, the successive drafting of the proposal, with the Soviets taking the lead on the first article and Kissinger on the second, is a problematic method of developing an agreement. Second, the parties were overconfident that a mutual understanding had been reached: “there was too little attempt at the time and later to understand the views of the other side and to seek to reconcile, or at least identify, differences in understanding.”

Not only did this document rely on two different meanings, but its importance was different for each party. For Brezhnev, the agreement was fundamentally important. Brezhnev described it as “the most important document” to be signed at the Summit, making it more important than the ABM Treaty. The recognition of political equality was enshrined in the document and signified the drastic change that the Soviets felt had accompanied the achievement of parity—a goal sought since the founding of the Soviet Union. One cannot overstate the degree of enthusiasm with which the BPA was greeted in Russia. Half of the department involved in drafting the language of the BPA was given an immediate merit promotion, and media accounts and public statements

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263 Ibid., 335.
264 NA. Memcon “Meeting between President Nixon and General Secretary Brezhnev.” 22 May 1972. SARDY, 835.
265 Halloway 1983, 89; and Ringmar 2002.
focused heavily on BPA.\textsuperscript{266} It was publicly touted as evidence that the United States accepted parity and equal security and had placed U.S.-Soviet relations into a juridical setting; peaceful coexistence had been enshrined in international law.

For Nixon and Kissinger, the agreement was less important. Nixon, who played no role in negotiating the document and was only sparingly briefed on it, may never have read the short agreement.\textsuperscript{267} When the BPA was first raised by Dobrynin before the summit, Kissinger did not find it important enough to even record in his memorandum of the meeting.\textsuperscript{268} The entire U.S. negotiating effort entailed Kissinger and a few of his staff spending only a few hours going over the Soviet draft. Kissinger’s assessment was that “if any of these principles is flouted, we will not be able to wave a piece of paper and insist that the illegality of the procedure will, in itself, prevent its being carried out.”\textsuperscript{269}

The result was not an agreement for a “roadmap,” as Kissinger and Nixon publicly claimed, nor did the BPA establish a successful juridical foundation for international relations as many Soviet commentators thought. The BPA was a “pseudoagreement”: an agreement that prevented the parties from understanding the extent of their disagreement. “It gave an erroneous impression that the United States and the Soviets were in substantial agreement on the rules of the game and the restraints to be observed in their competition in third areas.”\textsuperscript{270} However, this did not make the agreement unimportant; when these differences became known, as the 1970s moved

\textsuperscript{266} Garthoff 1994, 331-333; see also Welch Larson 1997, 185.
\textsuperscript{267} Garthoff 1994, 328.
\textsuperscript{269} In Garthoff 1994, 328. Only a few years later, Kissinger did wave the piece of paper at the Soviets on several occasions. See Declassified Documents Reference Service. “Department of State Cable. Kissinger to Graham Martin.” 23 April 1975. CK 3100498927.
\textsuperscript{270} George 1983, 110.
along, “this ambiguity later contributed to the unraveling of détente, as each side accused the other of violating its conception of the Basic Principles Agreement.”

The BPA is theoretically fascinating because it shows that PIBs can occur even when two parties sign a piece of paper that is intended to document a change in international norms, that is, a document intended to produce an intersubjective agreement concerning either a roadmap or a legalistic basis for understanding great power relations. This document preserved an misunderstanding, enshrining imagined intersubjectivity into international law. The actors cooperated because of a misunderstanding, a putative intersubjective belief: imagined intersubjectivity.

The Basic Principles Agreement is a hard case for a theory of PIBs to explain. The parties sought to outline the basis of their intersubjective relationship, a rarity in great power politics. The actual agreement, however, required little policy coordination. The next section, on the October War, treats the role of détente in a case where crisis management and policy coordination are dramatically important.

_Crisis Management during the October War_

The first dramatic challenge to the superpowers’ ability to moderate their competition occurred during the Arab-Israeli October War in 1973. Egypt and Syria, two Soviet clients, along with limited assistance from Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and others, launched the war on the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur. The attack, which largely took Israel and the United States by surprise, led to one of the tensest standoffs of the 1970s.

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271 Welch Larson 1997, 185.
272 The following account of the superpower perceptions draws on Garthoff 1994, 404-457; Kissinger 1982, 450-613; and Quandt 1977a and 1977b.
Decision makers thought the conflict had enormously high stakes. On the one hand, both superpowers worried that the failure of a client might undermine the credibility of its patron. On the other hand, both were acutely aware that an overwhelmingly successful client would damage its patron’s position in the region. For the United States, too much Israeli success risked alienating Arab friends, stalling a future peace process, and creating tension with the Soviet Union. Similarly, too much Egyptian success might lead to less control by Moscow and jeopardize U.S.-Soviet relations. This paradoxical situation presented a unique set of strategic dilemmas. For Kissinger, who had reached the pinnacle of his power as Nixon became embroiled in Watergate, and for Brezhnev, who tightly controlled decision making in the Kremlin during the conflict, the October War would constitute a crucial test for détente.

The following analysis of U.S. and Soviet decision making during the October War shows the role of imagined intersubjectivity in crisis management in two ways. First, imagined intersubjectivity played a crucial role in negotiating the critical ceasefire resolution (Resolution 338). During negotiation of the agreement, Kissinger thought the Soviets felt backed into a corner and had agreed to reduce their influence in the settlement of the conflict; Brezhnev, however, believed the United States had agreed to accept the Soviets as equals during implementation of the ceasefire and at a future peace conference. These differences in understanding the meaning of Security Council Resolution 338 mirrored the differences in their understandings of détente in general.

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273 Kissinger 1982, 486.
Imagined intersubjectivity was, therefore, crucial for explaining cooperation during the crisis. Second, during confrontational moments—the outbreak of war and the nuclear alert—each party interpreted the other’s behavior as operating within the bounds of détente. For the Soviets, the nuclear alert was explained by domestic politics (Watergate), whereas for Kissinger, the outbreak of the war and the suggestion of unilateral Soviet intervention in the conflict were evidence that the Soviets were playing for dominance. Because neither’s behavior contradicted the spirit of détente, as understood by each, détente played a restraining influence, channeling competition into cooperation.

To isolate U.S. and Soviet decision makers’ beliefs at different stages during the war, I will discuss four moments during the crisis—the outbreak of the war, the Moscow visit (ceasefire negotiations), the nuclear alert, and the resolution. One limitation in the following analysis is that some of the crucial documentation remains classified; however, a circumspect judgment is possible because of the confluence of sources. The following account draws on already declassified documents, memoirs, and the historical and biographical literature that sets the crisis in the context of U.S.-Soviet relations. 276

The Outbreak

The surprise Egyptian and Syrian offensive began on October 6 and was immediately seen by policymakers in the United States and the Soviet Union as a crucial test of détente. For American decision-makers, the central question was how to use the Middle East crisis to obtain increased political influence through linkages. For the

Soviets, the crucial question was how to use the crisis to obtain political parity without jeopardizing U.S.-Soviet relations.

At first, many in the United States believed the war was a Soviet plot. Initial intelligence reports received by the Washington Special Actions Group (WSAG), the committee chaired by Kissinger to respond to crises,\(^\text{277}\) indicated that the Soviet Union knew Egyptian and Syrian intentions in advance and intended to provoke a showdown in the Middle East.\(^\text{278}\) To many critics of détente, especially conservative journalists, this demonstrated Soviet failure to abide by détente and required a show of force to stand up to aggression.\(^\text{279}\)

Kissinger publicly and privately disagreed with the conservative assessment of the situation. For Kissinger, the aim of détente was not to prevent a crisis but to limit Soviet influence in the Third World, in particular the Middle East.\(^\text{280}\) Détente did not require the Soviets to abandon the effort to exert pressure on the United States by unilaterally reducing their influence in the Third World. Rather, through diplomacy, détente was to provide for stakes in the status quo that would cajole the Soviet Union, over time, to reduce their footprint in areas such as the Middle East. Potential Soviet involvement in the outbreak of the war was thus consistent with Kissinger’s beliefs.

\(^\text{277}\) See Siniver 2008.
\(^\text{280}\) Kissinger 1982, 600.
In contrast to the American impression of Soviet belligerence, Brezhnev attempted to warn the United States about the potential for war and to prevent Egyptian President Anwar Sadat from beginning the war. Victor Israelyan, a member of the small Soviet taskforce assigned to make recommendations during the October War, recalls that Egypt’s decision to attack Israel was unpopular.\textsuperscript{281} First, the success of such an attack against a superior Israeli military was unlikely and might be an embarrassment to the Soviet Union. Furthermore, Sadat’s decision to expel Soviet military advisors from Egypt upset Soviet-Egyptian relations. Most importantly, Brezhnev worried that an Egyptian attack might disrupt détente: “A military confrontation with the West, and in particular with the United States, was by no means on the Kremlin’s political agenda. A war in the Middle East could only worsen relations with the West, which is why the Soviet leadership tried to steer the Arabs toward a political solution to the problem.”\textsuperscript{282}

Brezhnev tried to avert the war and maintain détente. On at least four occasions, Brezhnev and others attempted to persuade Sadat not to attack.\textsuperscript{283} Further, Brezhnev personally warned Nixon and Kissinger about the likelihood of another war in the Middle East.\textsuperscript{284} When Soviet dependents were evacuated from Egypt before the crisis, the Soviet leadership made no efforts to disguise their removal, providing forewarning that an attack might be coming.\textsuperscript{285} Brezhnev showed no interest in allowing the conflict to disrupt the gains expected from détente.

\textsuperscript{281} Israelyan 1995. On the veracity of Israelyan’s account, see Golan 2000, 147.
\textsuperscript{282} Israelyan 1995, 17.
\textsuperscript{283} Garthoff 1994, 207.
\textsuperscript{285} Lebow and Stein 1994, 165-166.
While neither Kissinger and Nixon nor the Israelis appreciated the Soviet warning and thus did not head off the crisis, the Soviet Union did try to avert the conflict. Both parties were concerned about the effect of the crisis on détente. Détente provided the best chance for cooperation to avert the war before it began, and concerns over possible damages to the superpower relationship would haunt the crisis.

**The Ceasefire Negotiations**

By October 18, Brezhnev began to circulate a draft proposal for a ceasefire, and after two days of stalling, Kissinger agreed to travel to Moscow on October 20 to discuss a ceasefire. When they met, Brezhnev’s and Kissinger’s aims were divergent. In a Politburo meeting before the meeting with Kissinger, the Politburo agreed that a ceasefire resolution should concentrate on an immediate ceasefire, be a joint U.S.-Soviet action, and provide provisions for the Soviet Union and the United States to enter the peace process with equal standing. The final element of the Soviet position, that it be involved in the eventual outcome, would play a dramatic role in the coming weeks. This, combined with an appeal from Sadat to Brezhnev to get a ceasefire, made the Soviet Union eager to work out a settlement.

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288 Kissinger 1982, 553.
Whereas the Soviet Union sought a joint approach toward the Middle East, Kissinger sought to exclude the Soviets from the region. First, he wanted to stall as long as possible, delaying the deadline for the actual ceasefire so that Israel could continue to make gains. He also wanted to avoid the appearance of a joint U.S.-Soviet condominium in the Middle East.\(^\text{289}\) To increase U.S. influence in the region after the war, Kissinger wanted to ensure that the United States played the crucial role in whatever peace process occurred postwar. This meant that in the interim, he had to avoid the appearance of collusion with the Soviet Union, which would lead Egypt and Israel to resent the United States and damage its political influence.

At the meeting, Kissinger proposed the basis for what would later become United Nations Security Council Resolution 338. The first two articles call on the parties to cease firing within 12 hours and to begin to implement Resolution 242, the resolution passed at the end of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. The third article was the most important for U.S. and Soviet decision makers. It indicated that the Security Council “decides that, immediately and concurrently with the cease-fire, negotiations shall start between the parties concerned under appropriate auspices aimed at establishing a just and durable peace in the Middle East.” The phrase “under appropriate auspices” is, to say the least, not a precise term.\(^\text{290}\) Neither party was content to leave “appropriate auspices” without qualification. At Soviet insistence, Kissinger and Gromyko signed an “Understanding” clarifying that “the negotiations between the parties will take place with the active


\(^{290}\) The first two articles are also ambiguous. The first does not specify whether the ceasefire begins immediately or at the end of the 12 hours and whether the “positions they now occupy” means those before or after the 12 hours had elapsed. In addition, “implementation” in the second article was left ambiguous to ensure that neither party rejected the inclusion of the contentious Resolution 242.
participation of the United States and the Soviet Union at the beginning and thereafter in
the course of negotiations when key issues of a settlement are dealt with.”

The term “Understanding” was a misnomer: as with the BPA, each party
unknowingly read its own understanding of détente into the agreement. For Kissinger, the
Understanding implied a significant U.S. presence in the negotiations, first by excluding
Europe because appropriate auspices called only for a joint U.S.-Soviet role, and second
by excluding the Soviet Union from the negotiations before the final
conference. During the war, Egypt began to negotiate directly with the United States. If
the Soviets were excluded from the peace process, Egypt might be brought into the U.S.
orbit. When combined with Israeli battlefield success, this promised enhanced U.S.
influence. The Understanding, by promising the Soviets a seat in the final conference,
was Kissinger’s carrot to prevent the Soviets from attempting to revise the new status
quo. This accords with Kissinger’s impression of détente: the careful management of the
balance of power in the region, combined with a carefully selected set of incentives to
ensure the Soviets did not rock the boat, maintaining U.S. superiority.

The Soviet understanding of the third article was very different. As Israelyan
recalls, the interpretation in the Kremlin was “crystal clear.” The third article provided
the United States and the Soviet Union with a special role in the peace process
throughout its life-cycle, guarantees of Israeli compliance with Resolution 242, and a
commitment to ensure compliance with the agreements of the superpowers. This meant
that if a party violated the ceasefire, active U.S. and Soviet pressure might be used to

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291 In Israelyan 1995, 137.
292 On Europe, see Kissinger 1982, 555.
return the parties to their original positions. The Soviet Union saw a more thorough role for the superpowers, in which they jointly managed the crisis on equal footing.

This is consistent with the Soviet impression of détente. They would negotiate with the United States only if political parity in the process was assured, in order to reduce the chances of great power conflict. Their goals were realistic. As Raymond Garthoff explains, so long as each state enforced the ceasefire, “the Soviet objectives were modest: to retain and if possible recoup lost Arab confidence, and to bank on the possibility that the new collaborative relationship with the United States would allow the USSR to share in the peace process.”293 When the Resolution was approved on October 22, the misunderstanding was codified into international law.294

These misunderstandings were based on imagined intersubjectivity. The Soviet Union thought the principle behind Resolution 338 was that the United States had agreed that the Soviet Union merited political parity and that the United States was willing to reduce superpower competition. By contrast, for Kissinger, this was part of an elaborate set of linkages, the culmination of a strategy that painted the Soviets into a corner in the Middle East. He thought the reason the Soviets accepted Resolution 338 was a preponderance of U.S. political power; they were granted the bare minimum to prevent them from undertaking a revisionist policy in the Middle East. The Soviets, who did not understand that Kissinger believed they were boxed in, could not understand his interpretation of the agreement.

293 Garthoff 1994, 419-420.
294 The misunderstanding was not limited to the superpowers. Many members of the United Nations decided that “under appropriate auspices” implied the Security Council or the UN Secretariat. Israelyan 1995, 141-142.
The Nuclear Alert

The differences in Kissinger’s and Brezhnev’s understandings of the Understanding would have important consequences in the coming days. For Kissinger, the third article granted a Soviet role only at the final peace conference. For the Politburo, it implied a joint responsibility for enforcing the ceasefire. These differences would quickly become consequential as Israeli forces continued to fight after the deadline, surrounding the Egyptian Third Army on the bank of the Suez. Cut off and without food or medical supplies, the Third Army needed rapid resupply.

This would become the most dramatic moment of East-West confrontation during the war. As the Third Army was encircled, Sadat requested assistance from both the United States and the Soviet Union. The Israeli offensive risked hijacking U.S.-Soviet relations and undermining détente by alienating the Soviet Union. As Kissinger recalls, “there were limits beyond which we could not go, with all our friendship for Israel, and one of them was to make the leader of another superpower look like an idiot” for accepting a ceasefire that would not be enforced.295

On October 24, with the crisis mounting, Brezhnev sent Nixon a brief letter that became the pretext for the U.S. nuclear alert. In the note, Brezhnev wrote that Israeli violation of the ceasefire was a violation of the will of the superpowers. He requested U.S. assistance in implementing the ceasefire through a joint mission: “Let us together, the Soviet Union and the United States urgently dispatch to Egypt Soviet and American military contingents, with their mission the implementation of the decision of the Security Council.” Finally, and for Kissinger threateningly, he wrote, “I will say it

straight that if you find it impossible to act jointly with us in this matter, we should be faced with the necessity urgently to consider the question of taking appropriate steps unilaterally.”

Washington read the letter as a threat because it implied that the Soviets were considering deploying combat troops. From the Soviet perspective, however, the proposal did not mean a large-scale joint intervention. The phrase “military contingents” did not mean massive intervention. Premier Kosygin’s recommendation was that 200 to 250 observers be sent to monitor the ceasefire, and Kuznetsov, an influential adviser, thought that, by convention, the term “contingents” meant personnel with limited functions.296

The Soviets thought the proposal was consistent with détente. As Israelyan recalls, the Politburo met on October 23 and 24 to discuss the violation of the ceasefire, and there was near unanimous agreement that the political agreements reached where in 1972 and 1973 indicated that both parties needed to constrain their clients. In addition, the Politburo read the text of Nixon’s and Brezhnev’s correspondence, which indicated that each power needed to use its influence over its clients, as evidence that Nixon accepted the need for joint action. Furthermore, the Kremlin leaders came to believe that the correspondence indicated that each party had guaranteed that its client would honor the ceasefire. This implied, to them, that military force would be used if necessary. Finally, this interpretation fit with what they were hearing in other bilateral channels, where Sadat and third parties suggested that this notion was in the spirit of a proper resolution to the crisis.297 “This language served to meet Sadat’s appeal for help

regardless of the U.S. view. . . At the same time, in urging Washington to act jointly in accordance with the ideas shared by the superpower leaders, the Kremlin was fostering détente. Everything looked very nice, certainly from the Kremlin’s point of view.”

Unfortunately, everything did not look nice in Washington. The United States read the letter as an overt threat to send Soviet combat troops to the Middle East to contain the Israeli army. That evening, the decision was made to raise the readiness of U.S. nuclear forces to Defense Condition III.\(^{299}\) The reason for U.S. alarm was a misunderstanding of the Soviet position. Kissinger was convinced the Soviets intended to intervene in the region to increase their influence.\(^{300}\) He recalls, “I attached a very high probability to Soviet intervention.”\(^{301}\) Kissinger, who was not familiar with the nuanced Soviet position on the meaning of “military contingents,” read Soviet intentions through the mirror image of U.S. intentions, as a bid for influence.

For Kissinger, the consequences of either forming a joint deployment with the Soviet Union or allowing the Soviet Union to deploy troops in Egypt were unsavory. His aim throughout the conflict was to reduce Soviet influence in the region; if Kissinger caved to the Soviet threat, the United States risked being locked out of the peace process. Kissinger writes:

\(^{298}\) \textit{Ibid.}, 170.
\(^{299}\) Lebow and Stein 1994, 246-7; and Siniver 212-6.
\(^{300}\) Schlesingler and William Quandt, a NSC staff member, agreed that the odds of a Soviet intervention were low. See Lebow and Stein 1994, 249; and Kissinger 2003, 212.
\(^{301}\) In Lebow and Stein 1994, 249. The threat in Brezhnev’s note was augmented by other information. First, Dobrynin’s cold response in a discussion with Kissinger “dominated the deliberation that our government was about to start” because “he might have indicated in the hundred ways available to a seasoned professional that we were overreacting.” Second, supplementary military information made the threat seem more menacing. William Colby, Director of the CIA, believed that Soviet units were being readied to intervene. See Kissinger 1982, 585.
If Soviet forces appeared dramatically in Cairo with those of the United States—and even more if they appeared alone—our traditional friends among Arab moderates would be profoundly unnerved by the evident fact of U.S.-Soviet condominium. The strategy we had laboriously pursued in four years of diplomacy and two weeks of crisis would disintegrate: Egypt would be drawn back into the Soviet orbit, the Soviet Union and its radical allies would emerge as the dominant factor in the Middle East, China and Europe would be dismayed by the appearance of U.S.-Soviet military collaboration in so vital a region.  

The WSAG meeting concluded that a nuclear alert designed to deter the Soviets from placing troops in the Middle East was necessary.

Kissinger did not believe that either the Soviet threat or the U.S. nuclear alert were inconsistent with détente. Each was an effort to link issues in bids for influence. Specifically for the United States, détente was “partly a tranquilizer for Moscow as we sought to draw the Middle East into closer relations with us at the Soviet’s expense.”

In the coming days, Kissinger would highlight the fact that the United States, despite the nuclear alert, was not seeking a confrontation with the Soviet Union but was leaving the door open for cooperation. At a press conference, Kissinger explained, “We are not seeking an opportunity to confront the Soviet Union. We are not asking the Soviet Union to pull back from anything it has done. The opportunity for pursuing the joint course in the Security Council and in the diplomacy afterward is open.”

By providing avenues through which the Soviet Union could hope to gain future access, Kissinger hoped to provide the Soviets with enough of a carrot that, when combined with the stick of the nuclear alert, cooperation would ensue. Even if some may consider his strategy absurd, it was intended to generate cooperation. He wanted to pressure Brezhnev to comply with

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304 Ibid., 595.
305 Lebow and Stein 1994.
the U.S. proposal, but he wanted to do so without creating a direct public confrontation with the Soviet Union: “A public challenge could provoke the Soviets to dig in beyond what the Politburo might consider prudent. Many wars have started because no line of retreat was left open. Superpowers have a special obligation not to humiliate one another.”

**The Resolution**

Surely the nuclear alert should have disrupted imagined intersubjectivity as it directly contradicted the Soviet understanding of détente. However, the October War demonstrates the resiliency of preconceived beliefs about relationships. Fortunately for the Middle East and U.S.-Soviet relations, Brezhnev ignored the U.S. threat. At a Politburo meeting on October 25, every participant expressed outrage at the U.S. overreaction. Most Soviet officials believed the nuclear alert was caused by Nixon’s domestic problems. As Lebow and Stein explain, “many Soviet officials saw the alert as so inconsistent with the ongoing negotiations and the frequent communication between the two capitals that they could find no explanation other than Watergate.” When it was suggested that Brezhnev’s letter provoked the American response, the Politburo could not understand. Brezhnev asked, “What has this to do with the letter I sent to Nixon?” Nikolai Podgorny, the Soviet head of state, replied, “Who could have imagined that the Americans would be so easily frightened?”

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307 This is discussed in more length in the conclusion.
308 In Israelyan 1995, 179-183; and Lebow and Stein 1994, 266-268.
Despite being angry over the nuclear alert, Brezhnev chose to ignore it. While several Politburo members recommended a reply by force, Brezhnev disagreed. Brezhnev asked “What about not responding at all to the American nuclear alert? Nixon is too nervous—let’s cool him down.” The Politburo agreed that because they had provided Nixon with no pretext for the alert, they should wait for an explanation. Brezhnev decided on this option in part to prevent escalation, but more importantly to safeguard détente. As Israelyan recalls, Brezhnev worried about the risk that a response to the alert would pose for U.S.-Soviet relations. During the meeting, he argued, “No matter how complicated the situation might be, our wish is to develop our relations with the United States.” The decision was welcomed by several Politburo members because of its consistency with détente.

Even though U.S. behavior was inconsistent with the Soviet understanding of détente, imagined intersubjectivity was maintained because the Soviet leadership was able to place the blame on Watergate. The Soviet Union then relied on its own understanding of détente to deescalate the conflict. By contrast, Kissinger surely would have reacted to a Soviet threat. To do nothing was inconsistent with Kissinger’s understanding of détente. When Kissinger believed the Soviet Union was trying to bargain, he raised the U.S. nuclear alert level, creating a stick to prevent Soviet involvement in Egypt.

309 Ibid.
310 Israelyan 1995, 183.
On October 25, Kissinger penned a letter for Nixon to Brezhnev.\textsuperscript{311} It rejected the notion of a joint American-Soviet action, as well as the unilateral ceasefire, but it did not directly explain the nuclear alert. In particular, Nixon (Kissinger) remarked that we should act with “cool heads,” which the Politburo considered a cruel joke in the middle of the U.S. nuclear alert. However, the letter called for joint U.S.-Soviet participation in a United Nations force. Nixon (Kissinger) wrote, “If that is what you mean by contingents, we will consider it.” From the Soviet perspective, this letter was perplexing, in part because it provided no explanation for the alert, but even more importantly, because the letter indicated that Nixon was willing to jointly send personnel to monitor the ceasefire, which is what the Soviets had proposed in the letter that triggered the alert!\textsuperscript{312}

\textit{Conclusion}

In the end, the crisis was fortunately anti-climatic and resolved faster than it started. UN Security Council Resolution 340 created an emergency force without the aid of U.S. or Soviet troops, and the ceasefire, which was soon enforced, making joint U.S.-Soviet action unnecessary.\textsuperscript{313} The crisis was over.

The crisis is often depicted failed crisis management and confrontation rather than conflict. For the participants, however, it was an example of cooperation. As Raymond Garthoff notes, “during the October War both powers sought—in addition to

\textsuperscript{311} Nixon to Brezhnev, October 25, 1973, delivered to Soviet Embassy, 5:40 a.m. NPMP, HAKO, box 69, Dobrynin/Kissinger Vol. 20 (October 12-November 27, 1973). NSA Website.
\textsuperscript{312} Israelyan 1995, 188.
\textsuperscript{313} Scowcroft to Dobrynin, October 26, 1973, enclosing message from Nixon to Brezhnev, October 26, 1973, delivered at 1:00 p.m. MPMP, HAKO, box 69, Dobrynin/Kissinger Vol. 20 (October 12-November 27, 1973). NSA Website.
maneuvering for political advantage—to defuse the crisis and to end the war.”

Throughout the crisis, both parties refused unilateral action and each ensured that its ally stopped fighting and maintained the ceasefire, however belatedly. The superpowers initialed two ceasefires that led to two Security Council resolutions, navigated a nuclear crisis and a naval standoff in the Mediterranean, and managed a war without escalation.

Each party, through its own idiosyncratic understanding of the nature of the rivalry, adjusted its policies to ensure that the “rules” of détente were obeyed. As Nixon opined, “Without détente, we might have had a major conflict in the Middle East. With détente, we avoided it.” Or, as Schlesinger, Nixon’s Secretary of Defense, put it, “to work out in collaboration with the Soviets the arrangement for two cease-fires is, I think, a tribute to the strength of détente—the communications that existed.” Moreover, for the Soviets, “the experience of détente had, in their view, helped to regulate the American-Soviet competition at a time of potential danger.”

Cooperation during the October War occurred, not despite imagined intersubjectivity, but in part because of it. Two different understandings of rivalry constituted cooperation.

**Explaining Cooperation**

My analysis of détente is intended to test constructivist theories that highlight the importance of norms and identities. Because the advent of détente marked a cultural change in relations between the United States and the Soviet Union—a shift from enmity to rivalry—intersubjectivity, broadly defined, should play a role in explaining cooperation. Did intersubjectivity play a role in the creation of détente? Or was détente

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315 All three quotations in this paragraph are in Garthoff 1994, 437-440.
premised on a putative intersubjective belief (PIB)—a belief by both the Brezhnev leadership and Nixon and Kissinger that there were new rules of the road that were shared by both actors—such as imagined intersubjectivity?

In chapter two, I summarized the intended role of intersubjectivity in constructivist research in the following two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2_a: Common norms, which either existed before or developed during the negotiations, led the parties to develop predictable and stable relations that culminated in détente.

Hypothesis 2_b: A common identity, which either developed existed before or developed during negotiations, enhanced the prospects that the superpower relationship would shift from enmity to rivalry.

There is some evidence that common norms (Hypothesis 2_a) may have played a role in the development of détente. The superpowers began a process of consultation that relied on a pattern of behavior (norm) that would yield consistent results concerning the form that diplomacy was to take. When a crisis broke out, Kissinger would talk to Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin, Nixon and Brezhnev would exchange correspondence, and at significant junctures, there would be direct conversations in Moscow between Kissinger and Brezhnev. Furthermore, both parties appreciated strategic parity and its implications for nuclear deterrence. One should be circumspect in referring to this as a norm, however, because of the difference between Kissinger’s nuclear brinksmanship and Brezhnev’s attitude toward nuclear weapons.

There is less evidence that a common identity played a role in détente (Hypothesis 2_b). The identity of rivals, as described by Wendt, was not understood intersubjectively except in the most abstract sense. The rules of rivalry were not shared and each superpower understood its logic in different terms. The rules concerning violence varied,
with Kissinger believing in the efficacy and rightness of nuclear threats and Brezhnev believing that such threats risked war. The rules of sovereignty and legitimacy also varied, with Brezhnev believing in Soviet equality and the importance of a sphere of influence, and Kissinger attempting to undermine Soviet equality and influence. Thus, it is unlikely that a single shared identity played a role in cooperation during détente.

Imagined intersubjectivity played a crucial role in creating and sustaining détente. In chapter two, I defined imagined intersubjectivity as an instance in which actors unknowingly rely on different principles and unknowingly expect different patterns of behavior to stem from an action. Each actor subjectively believes they understand the other and neither is correct. For the Soviets, the principle of détente was the importance of political parity, and for the United States, détente was intended as a relationship that would enable the United States to continue competing with the Soviet Union, to ensure U.S. political primacy. These principled differences led the parties to expect different patterns of concrete behavior. Kissinger expected linkages and negotiating ploys, the use of nuclear threats, and less Soviet influence in the Third World. In contrast, Brezhnev expected to be treated as an equal in negotiations, the abandonment of linkages and threats, and U.S. acceptance of Soviet influence in the periphery.

The following hypothesis explains the role of imagined intersubjectivity in international cooperation:

Hypothesis 3: Cooperation during détente was, in part, premised on imagined intersubjectivity in which actors believed that agreement existed on both principles and behavior, when neither was the case. This enabled cooperation by allowing actors, from their perspective, to coordinate their policies with others in cases in which the revealing of either the principled or behavioral differences would undermine cooperation.
There is significant evidence for this hypothesis. The warming of relations happened because of specific sets of beliefs held by U.S. and Soviet decision makers. The differences between their understandings of détente did not stand in the way of cooperation while Nixon was in office. They were enshrined in the Basic Principles Agreement and employed with some success in gaining a ceasefire resolution during the October War. These differences enabled cooperation because neither superpower would have accepted the understanding of détente advanced by the other. Kissinger likely would not have accepted political parity, and Brezhnev certainly would not have conceded to a position of inferiority. There was no principled harmony of interests. Détente was a success because imagined intersubjectivity made a harmony of interests appear to exist, enabling actors to believe they shared a set of common norms (as in the BPA) and a shared identity (revealed through their respective interpretations of U.S. and Soviet roles in the October War), when there was neither. The success of détente was based, to a significant extent, on the existence of imagined intersubjectivity.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to show that changing patterns of interstate relations are not necessarily the product of an intersubjective understanding of a relationship, but may instead be the result of actors developing two idiosyncratic understandings of a relationship that are not shared or known to be shared. In the context of détente, this relationship, which I refer to as imagined intersubjectivity, led the United States and the Soviet Union to sign agreements (the Basic Principles Agreement) and to manage crises (the October War) despite having two drastically different understandings about what
rivalry meant. The shared label of détente, while important, was itself an empty signifier filled with two different logics of interstate relations. Cooperation occurred because of the shift from enmity to rivalry, but contra-Wendt, this shift was premised on different ideas, not shared ones.

This does not deny that the United States and the Soviet Union shared certain ideas. As explained in chapter one, imagined intersubjectivity plays a role in situational pluralism, where different actors understand situations differently because of the existence of putative intersubjective beliefs. Situational pluralism does not deny that no belief is intersubjective, but instead focuses on actors’ holistic definitions of situations. The fact of military parity was common knowledge, the rules of consultation were shared, and each understood the other as a superpower, providing some evidence for the importance of identity. No part of this chapter should be construed to imply that there were no intersubjective ideas during the 1970s; the common knowledge of military parity, at the very least, appears to have been necessary for the growth of détente.
Chapter Four: The Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty

Brezhnev: There is an anecdote about the Tsar who had before him a case of an arrested man. The question was, would he be executed or pardoned? The Tsar wrote out a piece of paper with only three words on it: “Execution impossible, pardon,”... It should have read: “Execution impossible, pardon.”... the Tsar wrote it without commas and then the lawyers had to decide which he meant.

Kissinger: What happened to the man?

Brezhnev: I will tell you that at the end of our discussions, before you go. My answer will depend on how our talks go.

Gromyko: Maybe the answer should be given only at the Summit.

Brezhnev: No, Dr. Kissinger has to leave Moscow with clear answers to all his questions. Because you might want to tell the president this story. He will want to know the ending. If you don’t know it, he will wonder what you were talking about here.

Kissinger: From my experience with bureaucracies, they probably did both.

I never did receive the answer.

--Kissinger’s First Meeting with Brezhnev.316

The story about the Tsar, recited by Brezhnev during Kissinger’s secret trip to Moscow in the spring of 1972, is indicative of the stumbling path that culminated in the ABM Treaty later that year. The most remarkable element of the process through which the ABM Treaty was reached was the circuitous path that it took. The process was plagued with misjudgments, misunderstandings, and simple mistakes. Whereas many theories in International Relations (IR) maintain that these should stand as a barrier to cooperation, I will argue that, at least at three critical moments in the negotiations, these misunderstandings were necessary for cooperation to occur. Neither President Richard Nixon and his National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger, nor Leonid Brezhnev and other Soviet decision-makers, understood the reasons for or the patterns of the

316 Kissinger 1979, 1141.
negotiating behavior of the other. The result was a more or less clumsy set of negotiations in which actors were frequently surprised as they limped their way toward the ABM Treaty. If they had understood one another, the ABM Treaty would either not have been signed or would have resulted in much shallower cooperation.

Arms control agreements are often treated as a paradigmatic case for the importance of information in international cooperation. Thomas Schelling’s initial insights about common knowledge, especially regarding the importance of focal points and the credibility of signals and other issues, were in part developed to solve problems related to arms races and arms control.\(^{317}\) Much recent work, especially in discussions of tacit bargaining strategies and the production of information as the result of the development of regimes, relies on arms control as a critical case.\(^{318}\) In particular, the ABM negotiations are often treated as an example of common knowledge leading to regime success. Condoleezza Rice, for example, argues that the ABM Treaty was a product of shared knowledge of the link between defensive and offensive weapons.\(^{319}\) This means that the success of the negotiations for the ABM Treaty should be a hard case for a theory of putative intersubjective beliefs. The contention of this chapter is that, while arguments related to information and cooperation are party true, a series of misunderstandings enabled cooperation.

In this chapter, I test whether the rational choice concept of common knowledge (CK)—information that every party knows, knows that every other party knows, and so on—may in certain cases stand in the way of cooperation. In chapter two, I divided CK

\(^{317}\) Schelling 1960 and 1966.

\(^{318}\) Downs and Rocke 1990; Abbott 1993; and Guzman 2008.

into three types: strategic or information about the structure of the game, linguistic or shared communication systems, and situation specific or additional elements such as focal points. During the ABM Treaty negotiations, there were moments where CK was lacking in regards to certain pieces of crucial information concerning all three species of CK. In these cases, Nixon, Kissinger, Brezhnev, and others held imagined intersubjective beliefs—incorrect beliefs that they knew what others would do and why they would do it—and these beliefs were crucial for cooperation.

This argument does not deny a role for CK, and in fact, CK plays a crucial part as noted in the final sections of this chapter. Without CK, trivial issues such as where meetings would be held, and complicated issues such as whether Europe was an important actor or the details of radar sites, would have been impossible to resolve. On balance, there was much more CK than imagined intersubjectivity in the process of reaching the ABM Treaty. However, the elements that were not shared were crucial. The U.S. and Soviet negotiators did not fully share the same definition of the bargaining situation because of different understandings of the pay-offs of other actors, linguistic difficulties, and psychological biases. The failure to reach a shared definition, however, was a positive development and one that lay at the basis of the most successful bilateral arms control regime of the Cold War.

In what follows, I first set the stage for the ABM negotiations, briefly rehearsing the history of the ABM debate in the United States and the Soviet Union before the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT). Second, I recount the beliefs that the actors had at three key moments in the negotiations, April 1970, May 1971, and May 1972, and
show how these beliefs conditioned cooperation. Third, I explain why the beliefs that led to cooperation are examples of imagined intersubjectivity. Finally, I demonstrate that imagined intersubjectivity was a necessary condition for the ABM Treaty through a counterfactual analysis that shows that more information would have led to less cooperation. I only consider counterfactuals intended to test PIBs against the rationalist conception of common knowledge. Ideational arguments are assessed in the previous chapter that focused on détente, and alternative liberal institutionalist and realist hypotheses are considered in the next chapter. This chapter engages in a structured, focused comparison of the history relevant to these three negotiating episodes and does not claim to provide a complete analysis of the process through which the ABM Treaty, which would require hundred of pages.  

I concentrate on critical moments at which the process might have been undermined, and to show the importance of putative intersubjective beliefs to the maintenance of cooperation.

**Setting the Stage**

The domestic debates that preceded the ABM Treaty negotiations are as important to the outcome as they are complex. Upon entering office, Richard Nixon quickly entered into one of the most divisive political debates in American politics: whether to build an ABM system. While in retrospect it may seem strange, in 1969 the ABM debate was more divisive than the Vietnam War in the halls of the US Capitol; when the debate caught on fire during the late spring and throughout the summer, more time was spent debating the ABM than the war.  

The August vote to approve Nixon’s Safeguard ABM

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320 George and Bennett 2005.
system was harrowingly close for the new administration. One of the three amendments that would have blocked Safeguard was defeated by a dramatic 51-50 vote in which Vice President Spiro Agnew broke the tie. And this razor thin majority was only possible because of last minute negotiations between Nixon’s Secretary of Defense, Melvin Laird, and Senator Margaret Chase Smith, in which Smith’s long-term executive assistant and close friend was promised a medal and promotion if Smith voted for the ABM system.

The tenacity of the ABM debate during Nixon’s first term was a dramatic reversal of the debate during the Johnson administration. Under Johnson, Congress and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) ardently pushed a reluctant administration to deploy an ABM system capable of damage limitation for cities in the event of a Soviet strike (a “thick” system). The Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, opposed the deployment because it would be expensive in comparison to focusing on offensive systems such as Multiple Independent Reentry Vehicles (MIRVs), foster instability by undermining Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD), and jeopardize prospects for arms control. In 1966, Congressional pressure came to a head as Congress approved $167 million for an ABM system that McNamara neither requested nor wanted. He telephoned a committee chairman after the vote, “making clear in the bluntest possible language that he had no intention of spending one dime of the appropriated funds.”

323 Van Atta 2008, 193. For an overview of the legislative history, see Johnson 2006, 144-189.
324 Newhouse 1989, 81-82. For a detailed account of his opposition to a “thick” system, see McNamara 1968, 62-65 and 163-166; and 1987, 55-57. On the tension between the JCS and McNamara, see Korb 1976, 111-121.
325 Newhouse 1989, 83. The pressure that the JCS put on Johnson is an intriguing element of the story. In the 1950s, the JCS was divided over new weapons programs, with no branch wanting to concede a major
After extended pressure by Congress and the JCS, Johnson sided with his former allies in the Senate and with the military, in part because of friendly pressure, but also because he worried that an ABM-gap might become a Republican campaign issue in 1968. By the summer of 1968, after the approval of the Sentinel ABM system, “the pro-ABM lobby within the government and Congress enjoyed a strong favorable wind. Nothing really restrictive on ABM’s seemed feasible.” On July 30, 1968, the house approved $233 million for Sentinel, Johnson’s ABM system, designed as a 12-site “thin” nationwide system, with the option for the development of three more sites in the future, including about 1,000 launchers.

Nixon faced a different set of challenges than Johnson and consequently advocated a very different ABM system. To demonstrate these changes, he renamed the system Safeguard. Johnson’s Sentinel system was designed as a thin nationwide system that could shoot down a missile that was accidentally launched or prevent a Chinese nuclear strike. The problem with Johnson’s system was that the Chinese nuclear threat appeared less credible by the time Nixon came to office, and spending on the Vietnam War, combined with cost overruns on other major weapons programs, made the broad Sentinel ABM system unpopular. As a result, Nixon faced a very different new program to a rival. McNamara played united the JCS because the chiefs worked together to counter McNamara’s influence. See Halperin 1972, 77-7; and Korb 1974, 172-173.

Newhouse 1968, 101; and Halperin 1972, 82-83. Michigan Governor George Romney, a likely Republican Presidential candidate, was highlighting the ABM-gap. Halperin 1972, 83; also see Bernkopf Tucker 1994, 108-109.

Newhouse 1989, 120.


Newhouse 1989, 132, 152.
Congress than Johnson, one with many members, especially Senator Edward Kennedy, intent on eliminating the ABM.

The program approved by the Senate was to be deployed in two phases. First, Safeguard would be deployed around Minutemen fields to defend against a Soviet first-strike.\textsuperscript{331} This enabled Nixon to argue that the ABM would be relatively inexpensive and not destabilizing, because securing Minutemen fields would not be a threat to the Soviet Union as it would not ensure the survivability of population centers. The second phase met the needs of hawks and satisfied Kissinger and Nixon’s preference for defense. This phase expanded Safeguard to provide a thin national defense against a Chinese threat or even a thick defense against a future Soviet threat.\textsuperscript{332} The arguments for a phased deployment, which met several challenges from both Republican and Democratic critics, managed to eke out a slim majority in the Senate. Few were surprised, a few months later, when Nixon decided to expand the system towards phase two by requesting more sites and funds.\textsuperscript{333}

While the United States was considering developing an ABM system, the Soviet Union had already produced a partial one. On February 9, 1967, the Soviet Union announced the deployment of an ABM system around Moscow “and boasted of the ease with which incoming American missiles would be knocked down.”\textsuperscript{334}

\textsuperscript{331} Garthoff 1994, 150.
\textsuperscript{332} Newhouse 1989, 51. It also enabled Nixon to argue that because the system was designed, initially, to only secure a second-strike capability it would not end the fledgling SALT process. He convinced Gerard Smith, the US chief negotiator during SALT I and an influential advocate of arms control, to testify to this effect before Congress and this testimony carried enormous weight. John Finney “Nixon Aide Denies Sentinel Imperils Atom Arms Talks.” \textit{New York Times}, 7 March 1969, 1.
\textsuperscript{334} Newhouse 1989, 89.
of a ring of missiles around Moscow, the Galosh system, was not a surprise in the United States. The program had been reported in the media as early as November 1966, and the concerns of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, over not only the Galosh system, but over the Tallinn air-defense system, which was deployed in Estonia, were widely reported in February 1967. The first launchers were installed by 1967 and plans suggested that the final installation would include about 100 launchers. As the Soviet Union built Galosh, public statements signaled their intention to complete the buildup. At a London news conference, Premier Kosygin suggested that these defensive systems were less destabilizing than offensive systems and that he did not favor limitations on them.

Perhaps more influentially for Western analysts, Talensky argued in International Affairs that “it would hardly be in the interests of any peace-loving state to forgo the creation of its own effective systems of defense against nuclear-rocket aggression and make its security dependent only on deterrence, that is, on whether the other side will refrain from attacking.” Thus, up until 1964, or perhaps even as late as 1967, “an effective ballistic missile defense was plainly a must” and “a major task” for the Soviet military.

However, the ABM debate pursued a different trajectory in the Soviet Union than in the United States. While the Senate pushed ABM development in the mid-1960s and

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the Nixon Administration pressed the case into the early 1970s, the Soviet military and other critical decision-makers began to delay and eventually to cancel their ABM program. In late 1968, as the Johnson administration was finally beginning to countenance a significant defensive arms program, the Soviet Union called their program to a halt after only two-thirds of the launchers were completed.\textsuperscript{340} The reason was in part financial, but more importantly technical.

Dmitri Ustinov, the chairman of the Politburo commission tasked with deciding the Soviet approach to SALT, invited “practically every designer that had anything to do with ABM systems” to an important meeting to decide the fate of the Soviet ABM Program, and “virtually all participants in this meeting expressed serious doubts about the possibility of creating an effective ABM system in the near term.”\textsuperscript{341} This meeting, which may have been the final nail in the Soviet ABM coffin, was held while Nixon was planning the expansion of ABMs, moving beyond the first phase of Minutemen defense toward requesting funding for additional sites for area defense.

The ABM debate in the United States and the Soviet Union sets the stage for the ABM Treaty. On the Soviet side, a decade long effort to develop ABM systems was running aground in light of technical and financial problems. On the American side, a new administration was trying to push an unpopular ABM system through a reluctant Senate at the height of the Vietnam War.

\textsuperscript{340} Bluth 1992, 213.
\textsuperscript{341} Savel’yev and Detinov 1996, 22. Others argue that this decision was made earlier. See Podwig 2004. It is only important here that the Soviet Union had abandoned plans for building a large-scale ABM system before the SALT negotiation process started, or at least there was no serious to restart the program.
Imagined Intersubjectivity in Three Periods in the Negotiations

It is against this backdrop that American and Soviet negotiators sought to develop a framework for arms control. The process of reaching the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, the final product of these negotiations, was not straightforward; the ABM negotiations were a long and winding road, lasting from the Johnson years until the end of Nixon’s first term. One might think of the process as water moving through a clogged hose, gaining pressure until it spurts through one clog, only to encounter another one a foot down the hose. I will concentrate on three of these spurts forward. The first, the American NCA-only offer in April 1970, committed an administration that favored the development of ABM defenses to a defensive arms control program. The second, the 1971 May 20th Agreement between Nixon and Kosygin, publicly separated the ABM Treaty from more contentious offensive arms control issues. And, the decision to move ahead with the Moscow Summit of 1972 prevented the Vietnam War from blocking the signing of the treaty, despite the North Vietnamese Easter Offensive, the bombing of Hanoi, and the mining of Haiphong Harbor.

I argue that at each of these three moments, misunderstandings led to specific negotiating moves that were essential to the successful conclusion of the ABM Treaty. American and Soviet decision-makers made the concessions to one another that were essential to reaching an agreement because of a misunderstanding. The relationships between ABM decision-makers was not the product of common knowledge, but rather imagined intersubjectivity, an inaccurate belief by both that they could predict the actions of the other and understand the reasons for the other’s negotiation behavior. While this
section will concentrate on the way in which those beliefs about the other led to a pattern of concessions that made the ABM Treaty possible, the next section will argue that counterfactually, had the actors accurately understood the position of the other, the ABM Treaty would likely not have been signed or would have been significantly watered down.

The key decision-maker in each of these episodes varies. For the United States, the crucial decision-makers in the SALT process were Nixon and Kissinger, although their respective influence varies across the three cases. Domestic actors matter, but in this chapter the ways in which Nixon and Kissinger believed they mattered is more important than their objective importance. Nixon and Kissinger made decisions in light of how they surmised other domestic actors would react; I therefore concentrate on their perceptions of those actors rather than the perceptions of the Senate or the public itself. The identification of decision-makers in the Soviet Union is more difficult, not only because the relevant decision-makers vary by episode, but also because there is still controversy over different actors’ respective roles within the Soviet Union. Fortunately, there is significant evidence that a small group of decision-makers, led by Brezhnev, played crucial roles in each of the three decisions that I discuss.

Chapter two discusses the types of evidence that I rely on to identify the beliefs of each actor. There is a significant body of historical literature related to the beliefs of the American and Soviet negotiators, as well as memoirs by many of the critical decision-makers. In addition, many documents related to the negotiations of the ABM Treaty have recently become available, including the transcripts of the backchannel negotiations.
between Henry Kissinger and Anatoly Dobrynin. Whenever possible, I will rely on all three sources of evidence in discussing each episode.

NCA-Only

The negotiation of the ABM Treaty officially began in Helsinki in the winter of 1969 but did not become substantively interesting until April 1970, when the United States tabled proposals in Vienna. In the first few days of the Vienna round, Henry Kissinger, Nixon’s National Security Advisor, authorized Gerald Smith, the head of the SALT delegation, to make a comprehensive offer to the Soviet Union limiting offensive and defensive weapons. The defensive component required that both states limit ABM systems to the defense of capitals and was designated National Command Authorities Only (NCA-only). Kissinger later referred to this offer as “a first class blunder.” He did not predict that Moscow would accept it. The offer was a blunder because, as I will show, it was based on a misunderstanding of the Soviet position and was intended as an offer the Soviets would surely reject. Once it was accepted, both parties committed themselves firmly, albeit in principle only, to an ABM agreement, the first major bilateral arms control effort of the Cold War.

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342 Kissinger was the chief U.S. SALT decision-maker. On Kissinger’s centralization of foreign policy decision-making, see Hersh 1983, 25-45; Isaacson 2005, 151-156 and 183-211; and Kissinger 1979, 38-48. For his influence in other issue areas, see Isaacson 2005, 242-245; and MacMillan 2007, 182. On SALT, the backchannel provided additional influence. As Smith recounts, “It was a one-man stand, a presidential aide against the resources of the Soviet leadership. . . It was not a pleasing contrast—one American (presumably keeping the President informed) ranged against the top Soviet political and technical authorities.” Smith 1980, 225.

343 Isaacson 2005, 321.

344 Garthoff 1994, 162-163; and Smith 1985, 131.

345 The Limited Test Ban was less important and did not bring about a lasting détente. See Mastny 2008.
Within a week, Soviet negotiators accepted Kissinger’s NCA-only offer. As discussed earlier, Soviet decision-makers had already decided that ABM programs were infeasible and thus they were willing to bargain away their existing ABM programs for other gains. Even though the Soviet leadership was suspicious of the SALT process, there was a consensus that the arms race had to be curbed and relations with the United States had to be improved. For Brezhnev, Ustinov, and Gromyko, the Soviet Foreign Minister, arms control was a risk, but a worthwhile one if it brought mutual gains. Ending a costly defensive arms race in which technological success was unlikely seemed a likely route to mutual gain.

The welcome surprise, from the Soviet perspective, was not that an agreement was possible to limit defensive weapons, but rather that Kissinger’s offer was so generous. Not only was the United States willing to limit defensive weapons, but the NCA-only alternative allowed the Soviet Union to maintain the Galosh system around Moscow while the United States did not have plans to build a similar system to defend Washington. This handed the Soviet Union an asymmetric advantage: the United States would need to build a system to catch up with the existing Soviet system. This appeased Soviet hawks because it meant that the Soviet Union would not have to dismantle an expensive existing weapons system and could continue research and development.

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346 Garthoff 1994, 163.
347 This decision was made by a Politburo Commission that handled the day-to-day affairs of deciding on Soviet SALT positions. Savel’yev and Detinov 1995, 20.
348 Ibid., 34-5.
349 The notable exception is the military: “The ‘odd man out’ at the top of the Soviet political leadership was MSU Grechko, who believed that the talks were nothing but deception by the United States in an attempt to achieve unilateral advantage.” Ibid. On Brezhnev’s marginalization of Grechko on SALT, see Anderson 1993, 201-204.
350 Savel’yev and Detinov 1995, 22; and Garthoff 1994, 163.
short, Kissinger’s offer required only that the Soviet Union abandon a thin nationwide ABM deployment that was not planned, technologically impossible, and likely unaffordable.

The offer to limit defense to NCA-only is a puzzle. In their memoirs, Nixon and Kissinger both argue that the entire ABM effort—pushing Congress to build it and then negotiating over it with the Soviets—was an effort to enhance their bargaining position at SALT. 351 This explanation is nonsense and the evidence against it is decisive. If Kissinger and Nixon sincerely wanted to preserve only a limited ABM program, they would not have offered an NCA-only deal because that would require moving sites, something that the Senate showed no intention of allowing. 352 If the ABM were a bargaining chip that they never intended to build, then Kissinger should have offered to ban ABM systems altogether, not limit them. Yet, neither Nixon nor Kissinger was sincerely interested in banning ABMs: at one point, Kissinger authorized the chief U.S. negotiator, Gerard Smith, to privately probe an ABM-ban, a position he was “sure the Soviets would reject.” 353 When the Soviets showed a willingness to accept, the probe was abandoned. Additionally, when Kissinger notified Dobrynin of Nixon’s push for ABMs in 1969, he argued that ABMs around Minutemen fields were stabilizing, attempting to reduce Soviet fears, not augment them so as to push the Soviets to the table. 354 Furthermore, I will show that there is significant evidence that Nixon and

351 Nixon 1990, 414-8; and Kissinger 1979, 204-10.
352 This problem was discussed at Verification Panel Meetings, e.g., 16 January 1971. NSA Website (DNSA00226).
354 NA. MEMCON. 10 March 1969. SARDY, 134-8; and TELCON, 15 March 1969. NSA Website (KA00312).
Kissinger sincerely believed in the importance of defensive systems and did not want to make an ABM deal. The claim that NCA-only was a bargaining move vis-à-vis the Soviet Union was as a post hoc justification for a mistake. The offer was actually intended as a bargaining chip with the Senate.

Kissinger and Nixon did not develop the ABM to be a bargaining chip with the Soviet Union but pursued it for strategic and political reasons. First, the ABM could defend Minutemen fields from the growing threat of the large Soviet SS-9 and intercept accidental or third-party strikes. These concerns were underscored by Nixon’s selection of Kissinger as National Security Adviser, which was in part due to his emphasis on defense. The ABM was also politically important. As the debate over whether to build the ABM heated up, Nixon came to consider it a decisive test of his political leadership. As Robert Dallek explains, “Nixon saw the battle for congressional approval as more a test of his political strength and prospects for reelection than of the country’s future safety against attack. Senator Edward Kennedy’s opposition to ABM was seen as a first confrontation in a likely contest with Nixon for the presidency in 1972.”

There is little evidence that the system was intended as a bargaining chip at the beginning of SALT.

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356 In his first book, which led to Kissinger’s prestige and which Nixon praised, Kissinger argued that defense was necessary for deterrence. Kissinger 1957; Hersch 1983, 11-3; and Isaacson 2005, 134-5.

Kissinger was only willing to offer the NCA-only position because he was convinced that the Soviets would reject it. “Kissinger and probably the president (although he displayed a remarkable indifference), expected that the Soviet side would take the lead in proposing an ABM level higher than NCA,” explains Raymond Garthoff. “The Soviet position was misjudged because of an awareness that the Soviet Union had begin to deploy ABMs and had earlier given strong rhetorical support for ballistic missile defense (BMD).”\textsuperscript{358} Nixon continued to hold this view in his memoirs: “We knew that even as the debate in Congress over an American ABM was raging, the Soviets had initiated work on more ICBMs and ABMS, as well as major new radar systems in conjunction with their deployment.”\textsuperscript{359} Neither he nor Kissinger paid sufficient attention to later signals showing that the Soviets were reducing their ABM commitments and were willing to trade. Thus, they were convinced the Soviets would reject an NCA-only offer, a serious misjudgment.\textsuperscript{360}

Instead, they reasoned that if the Soviet Union took the lead in rejecting the NCA-only offer, “that move would place the onus on the Soviet Union and could then be used against congressional opponents of Safeguard.”\textsuperscript{361} That is, the anticipated rejection of an

\textsuperscript{358} Garthoff 1994, 163. Furthermore, Kissinger believed that the Soviet military would refuse to negotiate ABMs. See NA. “Memorandum from Helmut Sonnefeldt to Kissinger: Memorandum to the President on Soviet Developments—Comments on our Policy (Tab A).” 22 May 1969. \textit{FRUS: Soviet Union, January 1969-October 1970}, 165.

\textsuperscript{359} Nixon 1990, 416.

\textsuperscript{360} In one conversation, Kissinger questions whether the Soviets would be willing to negotiate because of Safeguard. However, Kissinger does not believe that is because of a genuine interest, but because the Soviets might aim to reopen a divisive debate over Safeguard in the U.S. Senate. He does not mention this argument again in the documents referring to SALT decision making and there is no evidence that it played a role in offering a NCA-only deal. See NA. “Memorandum from Kissinger to Nixon: Recent Soviet Policy Developments: SALT, China and Germany.” 23 December 1969. \textit{FRUS: Soviet Union, January 1969-October 1970}, 327.

\textsuperscript{361} Garthoff 1994. 163. On the importance of the bargaining chip argument in persuading the Senate in the 1969 vote, see Schulzinger 1987, 91; and Bunn 1992, 125.
ABM component in the SALT process by the Soviets would force the Senate to either approve the Nixon administration’s ABM program or to contemplate unilaterally ending a US program in an area of traditional American strength (technological development). As Gerard Smith put the issue to Nixon, “If SALT fails, Congressional support for strategic weapons programs in the future may depend in good part on the nature of United States SALT offers that the Soviets would not accept.”362 This insincere use of the ABM as a bargaining chip was the beginning of a trend in which Nixon, and later Ford, used negotiations as a “reverse bargaining chip,” that is, they claimed that a weapons program was needed as a bargaining chip but clandestinely had no intention of trading it away.363

This “first class blunder” had enormous consequences. At Vienna, the Soviets were passive and did not table any offers. This meant that Kissinger could pick which issues were to be discussed, and the NCA-only offer placed ABMs at the center of the table. This committed the United States, in principle, to a future ABM agreement. While this did not make the ABM Treaty inevitable, it did place the burden on the American side to either make the most of it or find an uncomfortable solution to recanting the offer. In the rest of the negotiations, the American side attempted to make the best of the accidental concession by attempting to win offensive limitations and to move the ABM sites away from Washington.

This misjudgment was the result of imagined intersubjectivity. As explained in chapter two, imagined intersubjectivity exists when two actors cannot predict the

behavior of the other, nor understand the reasons for that behavior, but believe that they can. First, Kissinger believed that the Soviet Union would reject an NCA-only ABM offer because he thought that the Soviet Union’s military culture emphasized defense over arms control.364 Because he agreed that ABM defenses were strategically and politically important, Kissinger thought that the importance of defense as a reason for arms policy was shared. Due to Soviet public statements, and a mistaken assumption of the importance of the Soviet military in arms control policy, he presumed that the Soviets shared his reasons for treating ABM controls as suspect. The Soviets, unaware of Kissinger’s mistake, thought that the American offer to reduce ABMs was sincere. By following the debate within the American public—which the Politburo tasked with SALT decision-making had access to and did follow—Ustinov, Gromyko and Brezhnev each thought that the American attempt to reduce defensive systems was in accord with popular American strategic logic. On this basis, Kissinger made the mistaken NCA-only offer. Kissinger did not predict that the Soviet Union would accept the NCA-only offer, especially in only one week; and the Soviet Union did not predict that once the offer was accepted, the Americans would later make four additional offers to move off the NCA-only position.

Limited Agreement

The NCA-only offer, while committing the superpowers in principle to an arrangement that limited ABMs, did not easily lead to a workable agreement for two reasons. First, the steadfast U.S. position was that any defensive agreement be

364 On the mirror-imaging of strategic cultures, see Booth 1979, Gray 1986 and Snyder 1977.
accompanied by a comprehensive agreement on offensive weapons, in particular Modern-Large Ballistic Missiles (MLBMs) such as the SS-9.\footnote{This was a long-standing U.S. position and a critical security concern. See Garthoff 1994, 161; and Smith 1985, 11.} The critical problem with limiting Soviet missiles was that the Soviet position required that U.S. forward-based-systems (FBS), such as light forward-deployed aircraft capable of carrying a nuclear payload, be included in any offensive arms accord. U.S. negotiators consistently refused to include FBS, stalling not only offensive limitations but also the defensive agreements to which they were attached.\footnote{On the importance of FBS to the Soviet bargaining position, see Smith 1985, 179-198; and AVP RF. MEMCON. \textit{SARDY}, 10 June 1970, 159-65.}

Second, the NCA-only offer was itself a problem. The Senate had approved funding for the development of ABM sites around several Minutemen fields, most importantly at Grand Forks, North Dakota where construction had already begun. Yet in at SALT Kissinger proposed an NCA system with a site near Washington. The result was that three different positions were being discussed with different audiences. The Senate was debating a three-site system to defend ICBMs; at SALT, the teams agreed on a one-site system to defend Washington; and Smith, the lead U.S. negotiator, continually pressed for an ABM-ban.\footnote{Kissinger 1979, 804.} Kissinger and Nixon believed, rightly, that shifting ABM construction toward a new site surrounding Washington would have been politically impossible.\footnote{See DNSA. NSC Meeting on SALT.” 8 March 1971. KT00244. To make the issue more confusing, upon recognizing his error in making the NCA-only offer, Kissinger attempted to rectify it by offering an ABM-ban, which he was also sure the Soviets would reject, as an alternative with equal standing to the NCA-only offer. The presentation of this second alternative was not a sincere offer but was intended to move the U.S. off its NCA-only position and toward the position it maintained in the Senate. As noted earlier, when the Soviets suggested that accepting an ABM-ban was a}
Nixon administration could not expect to live long with NCA-only at SALT and needed a way to push the Soviets off that position.

After the first Vienna round, SALT was stalemated. The delegations were not receiving new instructions for the negotiations, or at least not instructions that stood a chance of breaking the deadlock. Unknown to either the public or the negotiators at SALT, Kissinger was secretly negotiating an agreement with Ambassador Dobrynin which became known as the May 20th Agreement. At noon in Washington and seven in the evening in Moscow, Nixon and Kosygin publicly and simultaneously read from the same agreed text intended to settle their differences over SALT:

The Governments of the United States and the Soviet Union, after reviewing the course of their talks on the limitation of strategic armaments, have agreed to concentrate this year on working out an agreement for the limitation of the deployment of anti-ballistic missile systems (ABMs). They have also agreed that, together with concluding an agreement to limit ABMs, they will agree on certain measures with respect to the limitation of offensive strategic weapons.\(^{370}\)

The May 20th Agreement created the general form that the ABM Treaty and Interim Agreement would take. It separated the ABM from an interim freeze on new silo construction, disentangling the ABM from the more difficult work long-term offensive limitations.\(^{371}\)

The text itself does not dramatize the extent of the breakthrough. First, the Soviets dropped the FBS demand. Because the Interim Agreement was temporary, only a freeze rather than a comprehensive agreement, the Soviets were willing to overlook FBS until possibility, Kissinger told Smith to avoid the agreement. Garthoff 1994, 173; Smith 1985, 256-263; and Newhouse 1989, 229-230. Also see DNSA. Verification Panel Meeting. 16 January 1971. KT00226. \(^{370}\)
PPRN #175. “Remarks Announcing an Agreement on Strategic Arms Limitation Talks.” 20 May 1970. \(^{371}\)
The comprehensive offensive package would later become SALT II and was never ratified. 165
the comprehensive package was reached.\textsuperscript{372} In exchange, the United States conceded that ABM limitations would begin before a comprehensive offensive agreement was reached, minimizing the American ability to use the ABM as a bargaining chip in the future. Second, the Soviet Union agreed to allow the U.S. to move off its NCA-only position and to negotiate other ABM positions, so long as those positions enabled parity. After May 20, Kissinger and Dobrynin believed that the principled issues had been resolved and they could leave the technical details to the SALT delegations.

Perhaps even more important, the May 20\textsuperscript{th} Agreement publicly committed Brezhnev and Nixon to a workable SALT agreement as part of their respective peace agendas. Since the close vote in 1969, support for ABM systems was waning.\textsuperscript{373} The agreement was a success in temporarily disarming critics of Safeguard; it was praised by liberal and conservative media as well as the dovish arms control experts who were Nixon’s chief protagonists in the ABM debate.\textsuperscript{374} As Kissinger told Nixon, the agreement would “break the back of this generation of Democratic leaders,” to which Nixon replied, “That’s right. We’ve got to break—we’ve got to destroy the confidence of the people in

\textsuperscript{372} Kissinger 1979, 820-821; and Smith 1985, 246. The vagueness of the limit on heavy missiles also enabled the Soviet Union to build larger missiles, such as the SS-9, and was considered a concession. Kissinger made a unilateral statement to attempt to settle the issue, but the Soviets never agreed. Garthoff 1994, 191-192.


the American establishment.” After the May 20th Agreement, it would have been enormously difficult for Nixon and Kissinger to not conclude an ABM Treaty, especially because they were on record in support of it and had begun the difficult job of explaining to the public why a system that was once so vital to national security was being traded away. The situation was similar for Brezhnev, who declared in March that he was committed to a policy of détente, publicly associating himself superpower cooperation and, in particular, with arms control. As Melvyn Leffler explains, “Brezhnev put the full imprimatur of the party leadership behind the policy of relaxing tensions with the West and negotiating arms-reduction treaties with Washington and NATO.” By issuing the statement that the United States and the Soviet Union were prepared to negotiate an agreement on arms control, Brezhnev invested the process with a sense of purpose that had hitherto been lacking.

Was this breakthrough the result of more information being shared between Kissinger and Dobrynin? Did the development of common knowledge finally assist the United States and the Soviet Union in designing the general framework for the first significant arms control treaty of the Cold War? The answer, as we will see, is no.

The agreement developed around the ambiguous phrase “together with.” After May 20, the guidance Kissinger gave the U.S. delegation was that “together with” meant...
simultaneous. As Smith interpreted that instruction, it meant spending a few weeks discussing ABMs, and then a few weeks on offensive limitations, and back and forth.\textsuperscript{380} Semenov, the chief Soviet negotiator, held a different view. The Russian translation used the term pri, which is much weaker than “together with.” Semenov concluded that the agreement implied that an ABM deal and the freeze should accompany one another in the final version, but that the ABM would come first in the negotiations. I contend that it was this ambiguity that led each side to publicly back the May 20\textsuperscript{th} Agreement.\textsuperscript{381}

The backchannel discussions of a limited agreement began in the spring of 1970, when Kissinger floated the idea of letting the SALT negotiators attempt to reach a comprehensive agreement while he and Dobrynin secretly worked on a limited agreement.\textsuperscript{382} On January 9, 1971, Kissinger agreed to begin work on an ABM-only agreement, but only if the Soviets agreed to a freeze on new starts on missiles.\textsuperscript{383} This agreement—the Interim Agreement—was a concession by Kissinger. He was dropping the demand that any ABM agreement be accompanied by a comprehensive offensive agreement.

On February 10, Dobrynin came to Kissinger with good news: the Politburo accepted Kissinger’s offer of a separate ABM Treaty and was willing to consider a freeze so long as it would not preclude modernization. Dobrynin indicated that the Soviet Union preferred the NCA-only option, but would consider other site proposals, and also suggested that the Soviets would prefer not to include sea-based systems (SLBMs) as an

\textsuperscript{380} Smith 1985, 250.
\textsuperscript{381} Ibid.; Newhouse 1989, 219.
\textsuperscript{382} NA. MEMCON, 9 April 1970. SARDY, 144-5; and AVP RF. MEMCON. 10 June 1970. SARDY, 159-65.
\textsuperscript{383} AVP RF. MEMCON. 9 January 1971. SARDY, 258-63.
element of the freeze. However, Dobrynin still said that FBS was essential. Because the proposal called for ceilings on the number of launchers that could be developed during the period of the Interim Agreement, to ensure equal security, the United States should not increase tactical nuclear weapons that might threaten the Soviet Union. Despite the continued demands on FBS, Kissinger was enthused by the progress. He told Nixon that these meetings were “most constructive” and that Dobrynin “fell all over himself” to make suggestions concerning drafts of the letters for the May 20th Agreement.

The progress, and the annoyance, began in March. On March 12, 1971, Dobrynin brought a note indicating that the Soviet Union would agree to Kissinger’s framework: a separate ABM Treaty plus a freeze first, followed by a comprehensive offensive weapons agreement. But, the note also suggested that the ABM deal be reached first, followed by discussions on the freeze. Kissinger balked. He believed this was an effort by the Soviets to secure an ABM-only agreement; once the ABM treaty was in place, the Soviets would have no incentive to finish the freeze. As Kissinger told Nixon several days later, “They are asking us to dismantle our ABM while they keep theirs and build like crazy while they do nothing.” Kissinger would not agree to a deal unless the freeze was negotiated simultaneously with the ABM Treaty.

386 NA. TELCON: Kissinger and Nixon. 22 February 1971. SARDY, 301.
This did constitute progress. The Soviets would only reconsider the FBS and NCA-only obstacles to cooperation if, and only if, Kissinger agreed to a freeze rather than a comprehensive offensive weapons agreement. After March, Dobrynin no longer mentioned FBS. Because the freeze would be temporary, FBS could be accounted for in the future comprehensive agreement (SALT II). Furthermore, the Soviet Union was changing its position away from NCA-only to an offer that would provide equal terms for both parties. They agreed that the details of site locations would be worked out at SALT, and after several formulas, finally became two sites each. In return, the Soviets saw the possibility of making gains because they were securing an ABM Treaty on the cheap. The hard work on offensive weapons, in which they were perceived to have reached parity with a projected growing advantage into the future, would be done after the ABM Treaty was signed. The United States was severing the link between comprehensive offensive arms control and comprehensive defensive arms control.

Sequence became the major stumbling block. Before Kissinger would agree to a freeze rather than a comprehensive deal, and before the Soviets would drop FBS and NCA-only, both wanted to make sure that the sequence of the negotiations of the freeze and ABM agreement was clear. The minutiae is important because it shows the source of confusion. On March 26, when Dobrynin made the Soviet offer to allow Kissinger to move off of the NCA-only offer, Kissinger immediately set to work. He thought that Nixon would quickly agree, so long as the freeze was “simultaneously” discussed with the ABM Treaty. Dobrynin, trying to interpret Kissinger’s meaning, replied

\footnote{NA. TELCON: Kissinger and Dobrynin (4:23). 26 March 1971. SARDY, 322; and AVP RF. TELCON: Kissinger and Dobrynin. 26 March 1971. SARDY, 323.}

\footnote{This was later reduced to one site.}
“simultaneously concluded on separate agreement and freezing at the same time,” after which Kissinger said, “exactly.” Dobrynin refined this as, “discussion of the details will be discussed simultaneously with the conclusion of the agreement,” to which Kissinger exclaimed, “that would be fine. See how easy I am to get along with.”\(^3\) They both hung up the phone convinced they had come to a mutually acceptable agreement.

When they met again the following month, a Soviet draft said the freeze “could be discussed before the work on the separate ABM agreement is complete.”\(^4\) The note dropped any reference to the NCA and reiterated Dobrynin’s understanding of the March exchange. The ABM negotiations would come first, but before it was signed and finalized, the freeze negotiations would begin. They discussed the wording at a final meeting and, after registering a few minor objections, Kissinger agreed to the Soviet text.\(^5\) He called Nixon and said “we got everything we asked for.”\(^6\)

Unfortunately, Kissinger was not that easy to get along with after all. The problem was that Dobrynin’s interpretation did not mean “exactly” what Kissinger was trying to convey. The fundamental difference is that Dobrynin’s text implied that the discussions of the freeze would come with the conclusion of the agreement, not its inception. This meant that there would be an ABM-only agreement, on the table and almost complete, before the negotiation of the freeze began. A complete ABM-only agreement would enhance Soviet bargaining leverage over offensive weapons because


\(^4\) The key language for the proposal is attached to NA. MEMCON. 23 April 1971. \textit{SARDY}, 327.

\(^5\) These minor objections were related to the confusion. Kissinger objected that the Soviet draft said the freeze would be “discussed,” which is weaker than “elaborated” or “worked on.” Dobrynin said that the translation would show that this is implied in “discussed.” AVP RF. MEMCON. 13 May 1971. \textit{SARDY}, 356-9.

Kissinger would not be able to threaten the Soviets over ABMs. When Kissinger suggested simultaneity, however, he meant that the two agreements were to be worked on together “side-by-side.” This would allow the use of the ABM as a bargaining chip. Because each party believed that the other was making a concession, they were willing to making concessions in turn. The Soviets were willing to drop their demand that FBS be included and let Kissinger out of the bind imposed by NCA-only. And Kissinger was willing to sign an interim agreement rather than a comprehensive agreement. On May 20, 1971, when Nixon and Kosygin read the public announcements, neither was aware of the fundamental differences in their interpretations of the text.

The ambiguity of “simultaneous” and “together with” were then built into the backchannel diplomacy of Dobrynin and Kissinger. The negotiating instructions sent to the SALT delegations mirrored this confusion. As Smith recalls, the sequence issue was not resolved until late that September, only a few months before the 1972 Summit. In the meantime, Smith and Semenov read and reread the joint announcement and the letters between the heads of state, each time rehearsing the instructions provided by Gromyko and Kissinger that they stand fast to their positions. Smith writes, “Our discussions of the sequence issue became more or less a dialogue of the deaf. . . I had the impression that we were just repeating what Dobrynin and Kissinger had said to each other months ago.” At SALT, however, the disagreement became clear and the issue of sequence

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396 Ibid.
397 Smith 1985, 250-251,
mattered more, because it was the SALT delegations job to actually implement the sequence.398

May 20th, despite the tortuous path leading to it, was a critical date in the process of reaching an ABM agreement. Similar to the NCA-only offer, the May 20th Agreement was the product of imagined intersubjectivity. Kissinger and Nixon thought that the Soviet Union shared their interpretation of the agreement and that the concessions were sufficient to ensure compliance. For Kissinger, the Soviets had dropped their demands over FBS and allowed the United States to move off its NCA-only position because Kissinger had separated the two agreements. Kissinger presumed that his concessions were sufficient; he did not imagine that sequence was also considered a key concession. Kissinger neither understood the meaning of the May 20th Agreement for the Soviet Union nor predicted the resulting deadlock later that year over the text of the agreement.

For Dobrynin and the Soviet leadership, Kissinger had agreed to drop his demands for a comprehensive agreement because the Soviet Union had agreed to a freeze, which was sufficient for Nixon to show a limit on offensive weapons. There is no evidence that the Soviet leadership predicted the dispute over the sequence issue, nor that they understood the reasons for Kissinger’s concessions. The agreement was premised on imagined intersubjectivity because neither actor understood the behavior of the other or the reasons for that behavior. If imagined intersubjectivity had not existed, neither Nixon nor Brezhnev would have publicly committed themselves to a separate ABM Treaty nor, possibly, made the concessions necessary to reach one.

398 The issue was also discussed in exchanges of letters between Brezhnev and Nixon. See NA, Letter from President Nixon to Soviet General Secretary Brezhnev. 19 October 1971. *FRUS October 1971-May 1972*, 18-20.
Moscow Summit

The May 20th Agreement did not resolve any of the technical details surrounding SALT, which took an additional year of negotiations to hammer out. Both delegations worked quickly though once the United States and the Soviet Union decided to sign the agreement at a summit in Moscow, on May 22, 1972. As the Moscow Summit approached, most of the details of the ABM Treaty had been resolved, although the Interim Agreement had unresolved issues related to SLBMs and the definition of “heavy missiles.” These were resolved made Kissinger making a large concession on SLBMs and tacitly agreed to leave the definition of “heavy” vague.399

Yet two weeks before the summit, the enterprise was at risk. In a dramatic turnaround on May 8, 1972, Nixon told his National Security Council, “there will be no summit.”400 The cause of the near complete breakdown of SALT, and a possibly drastic breakdown in U.S.-Soviet relations, was another misunderstanding, but one remote from SALT itself.

Earlier that year, North Vietnam began the Easter Offensive, a massive invasion of the South. Nixon was enraged. The Easter Offensive occurred during troop withdrawals and negotiations with the North.401 Nixon saw both détente and his reelection at risk. He told Kissinger: “If the ARVN collapses? A lot of other things will collapse around here. . . We’re playing a Russian game, a Chinese game, and an election

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399 Further analysis of other elements of the negotiations between 20 May 1971 and the decisions over the summit may provide confirmatory evidence. In particular, a more detailed analysis may show that the U.S. Senate might have agreed to ratify the agreements because it misunderstood the definition of heavy missile and failed to understand the SLBM provisions. Furthermore, if Nixon had known that the SLBM agreement signified a major concession, he may have balked. For a detailed account of these negotiations, see Garthoff 1994; Kissinger 1979; and Smith 1985.
400 DNSA. Memorandum for the President’s Files. 8 May 1972. KT00480.
game” to which Kissinger responded, “That’s why we’ve got to blast the living bejeezus out of North Vietnam.” As Seymour Hersch remarks, this was “war by temper tantrum.”

Blast they did. First, however, they attempted two final rounds of secret diplomacy. First, Kissinger left for Moscow in April 1972 to meet with Brezhnev. His orders from Nixon were to press the Soviets hard over Vietnam, at the risk of leading to a total collapse of U.S.-Soviet relations.

When Kissinger did not strike a hard enough tone with Brezhnev, Nixon exploded to Haig that Brezhnev’s comments on the need for a summit were “bullshit. . .we’ve really to get Henry stiffened up.” Nixon ordered Haig to send Kissinger instructions: “We have got to give up the Summit in order to get a settlement in Vietnam. . . Vietnam is ten times more important than the Summit. . . Tell him no discussions of the Summit before they settle Vietnam and that is an order!”

Cables flew back and forth for days, but Nixon remained convinced that Kissinger was not taking a tough enough line in Moscow.

In the first days of May, Nixon allowed Kissinger one more chance to negotiate a settlement with North Vietnam at the Paris Talks before escalating. Kissinger’s meeting with Le Duc Tho, a member of Vietnam’s Politburo, led to no concrete results. Kissinger reported to Nixon his impression that the North would not relent so long as they thought they were achieving their aims through the use of force. On the evening of May 8,

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402 In Dallek 2007, 372.
403 Hersch 1983, 511.
404 Dallek 2007, 373.
405 in Ibid., 377.
406 DNSA, MEMO: Kissinger to Nixon. 2 May 1972, KT00477; and DNSA. MEMO: Kissinger to Nixon. 11 May 1972, KT00478.
Nixon, in a televised speech, announced a massive bombing campaign of the North, including the possible bombing of Hanoi and northern railways, as well as the aerial mining of Haiphong Harbor. This was a major escalation of the war.

Even before the May 8 announcement, the Summit was at risk. Nixon thought it would damage his chances for reelection if he met with Brezhnev at the height of the offensive. As Haldeman explained to his diary, “how can we have a Summit meeting and be drinking toasts to Brezhnev while Soviet tanks are crumbling Hué.” On April 29, 1972, Nixon ordered Kissinger to cancel the summit, an order that Kissinger chose to ignore until Nixon cooled off. At the same time that Nixon was contemplating cancelling, he was also suggesting that Haig plan for calling up reserves, forming a marine force, and seizing Haiphong and Hanoi. As Nixon told a close friend, “It will of course, probably, most people think it will sink the Russian summit, but if it does, what the hell.”

Nixon was convinced the bombing would make the Summit impossible and that Brezhnev would cancel. He and his staff recalled the disastrous Paris Summit of 1960, where Khrushchev, upset at Gary Powers’ U-2 flight over the Soviet Union, disrupted Summit talks intended to resolve Berlin. This analogy was almost too perfect. The Berlin negotiations were to be signed only days before SALT and a failure to reach an

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agreement there would likely cause a collapse of the SALT process. After the bombing began, Nixon decided to preemptively cancel the Summit to prevent a Soviet disruption similar to 1960.

Once the bombing was prepared, however, he changed his mind. Haldeman polled the public on the summit: it was popular despite the Vietnam War. This created a dilemma. How could Nixon cancel without risking public outrage? Since Nixon was convinced that the Soviets would cancel, due to the analogy to 1960, and because he could not believe they would agree to meet with bombs falling on an allied capital, he decided to let Brezhnev cancel. Secretary John Connally and Kissinger’s assistant Alexander Haig forcefully argued that this would place the onus on the Soviets to disrupt détente and, if they did cancel, would prevent a domestic and international fallout. In a sense, Haig and Connally were telling Nixon to play a game of chicken; he should unswervingly move head-on toward a summit because whichever leader veered first would pay a political cost. After vacillating, Nixon finally agreed and chose not to cancel the summit so as to force the Soviets to cancel.

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412 On analogies in foreign-policy decision-making, see Khong 1992.
414 Haig claims that on May 8 Dobrynin said the Summit would not be canceled. Haig 1992, 287-288. That seems unlikely: there is no record, neither Kissinger, Dobrynin nor Nixon, mention it in their memoirs, and later meetings clearly show that Kissinger had not received a response. Dobrynin remembers that the tone of the meeting led him to worry about the summit. Dobrynin 1995, 246-7. Kissinger did not fully support this decision; recall that he ignored Nixon’s order to cancel the meeting in late April. Further, there is some confusion over what Connally meant by his recommendation, he may have been suggesting that the Soviets would accept the bombing and not cancel the summit, but over the course of the next several days Nixon clearly adopted the Chicken logic.
415 As John Mitchell expressed this logic the morning after the announcement of the bombings: “I thought you put the ball in their court just right and I think the American public will accept that without any problems whatsoever.” White House Telephone. “The President Talked with John N. Mitchell”. Conversation No. 24-45, 9 May 1972, 11:35 am - 11:39 am Location: White House Telephone. Tape 24a.
After the commencement of the bombings, the Nixon administration waited for the inevitable cancellation. It would wait several days for word from Moscow. At first, the Nixon administration and the American public attempted to read clues in the Soviet press, diplomatic exchanges, and public statements about what the Soviets would do. The signals were ambiguous. The Soviet media assailed the bombings in Vietnam but did not include official statements about the summit.\footnote{Robert Kaiser. “Tass Assails Nixon Steps; No Official Soviet Comment.” \textit{Washington Post}, 10 May 1972, A12; Robert Kaiser. “No Word on Visit.” \textit{Washington Post}, 12 May 1972 A1; and Carroll Kirkpatrick. “Soviet Aides, Nixon Hold Affable Talk.” \textit{Washington Post}, 12 May 1972.} The U.S. media agreed that the Soviets would cancel.\footnote{On the Nixon Administration’s reading of the press, see Haig 1992, 287.} In addition, the backchannel was silent for several days on the upcoming meeting. On May 8, when the American bombings were announced, Dobrynin reminded Kissinger that an attack of Soviet ships would be considered an act of war.\footnote{AVP RF. MEMCON. 8 May 1972, \textit{SARDY}, 801-2.} On May 10, they met again, with Dobrynin handing Kissinger a note from the Soviet leadership that two Soviet ships were strafed by American planes and that several sailors had died.\footnote{AVP RF. MEMCON. 10 May 1972. \textit{SARDY}, 806.} However, no mention was made of the Summit.

Only on May 11, 1972, did Kissinger suspect that he and Nixon had erred in believing that the Soviets would cancel. At a meeting with Dobrynin, in which he brought a note from the Soviet leadership that condemned the Vietnam bombings, Kissinger repeatedly asked whether the note intended to communicate something about the summit. Dobrynin consistently said no, the letter was just a letter condemning the United States and did not take a position on the Summit.\footnote{NA. MEMCON. 11 May 1972. \textit{SARDY}, 806-7; and AVP RF. MEMCON. \textit{SARDY}, 808-9.} The following morning, Nixon and Kissinger spoke on the telephone, and Kissinger pointed out that if the Soviets were
going to cancel, the best opportunity was the previous night and that now he thought the
odds of having a Summit were better than a coin toss. Later that afternoon, after
discussing the exchange of gifts in Moscow, Kissinger was sure. “We can count on the
summit” he reported to Nixon.

In contrast to Nixon’s worries about a possible Soviet cancellation, Brezhnev
never seriously considered cancelling the Summit. The reason for the delay in new
instructions for Dobrynin was that the day Nixon announced the bombings was V-E day
in the Soviet Union and the leadership was scattered. At a climatic meeting the following
day, Brezhnev resisted pressure from hardliners to cancel. North Vietnam had
launched the Easter Offensive without Soviet knowledge, had refused Soviet offers to
mediate, and the leadership would not allow North Vietnam a veto over Soviet foreign
policy. Brezhnev was still nervous about the reaction of the Soviet public and other
Central Committee members. He convened a secret Central Committee plenum in the
following days, but he had no reason to fear as Kosygin, Gromyko, Suslov, and
Andropov vocally supported the upcoming meeting.

Nixon agreed to go to the Summit, in part, because he believed that the Soviet
Union would cancel. Brezhnev, having no intention of canceling, did not consider it
likely the United States would cancel. Nixon thought the Soviets shared the principles of
his actions, that the political reality of meeting while bombs were falling was untenable
for both parties. He thus expected Brezhnev to exhibit the same behavior he would:

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425 Zubok 2007, 220-221.
Brezhnev would undertake the action that Nixon, because of public opinion, could not. Brezhnev, however, did not know that Nixon would cancel the Summit, believing that Nixon shared his belief in the domestic and international importance of the summit and thus would not seriously contemplate canceling. The meeting happened because of imagined intersubjectivity, not CK. If Nixon had chosen to cancel, it likely would have enraged hardliners in the Politburo, making future summits difficult and removing Nixon’s chief incentive to meet—the 1972 elections. The history of failed Cold War summits does not leave one optimistic.

The U.S.-Soviet relationship was rooted in a PIB at all three moments of the negotiations. All three cases are examples of imagined intersubjectivity; neither set of elites knew the reasons for the behavior of the other, nor could they accurately predict what the other would do in the future. At each of these three critical junctures, as the parties stumbled one step closer to the ABM Treaty, policymakers in both countries learned about the other. These cases of imagined intersubjectivity were extinguished quickly, as the behavior of the other quickly revealed that decisions were made on the basis of inadequate information or a lack of shared meaning. But this series of PIBs moved the parties closer, step by step or stumble by stumble, until the signing of the ABM Treaty. The role of PIBs in this process shows that tripping can move someone forward in the same way that stepping does, so long as one is willing to trip again and again.
Counterfactuals

In previous section, I traced the process through which the ABM Treaty was reached. Kissinger offered to negotiate ABMs because of a mistaken assumption that the Soviets would reject the offer. The pattern of concession-making that broke the deadlock at the negotiations was due to a critical ambiguity that led each party to publicly commit to the treaty. At the 11th hour, when Nixon considered canceling the summit and the signing of the treaty, a misperception of Brezhnev’s position led him not to cancel. In each case, imagined intersubjectivity was useful in moving the superpowers toward cooperation.

The evidence from process-tracing has shown the role of imagined intersubjectivity in reaching the ABM Treaty. Process-tracing has the advantage of demonstrating the causal mechanisms through which misperceptions play a role in the specific offers, concessions, and decisions in the negotiation process. To provide more evidence that imagined intersubjectivity was a necessary condition, I engage in two forms of counterfactual analysis. First, how would the negotiation of the ABM Treaty have been affected by more information at these three critical moments in the process? Second, if the negotiations had stumbled at any of these three moments, would cooperation on ABMs have occurred later, perhaps in the 1970s?

As noted in chapter two, counterfactual analysis is often contentious. Many methodologists agree that counterfactual analysis often relies on imprecise understandings of the history, cannot account for alternative causalities, and leads to
confirmation bias. These concerns have already been addressed. The counterfactuals advanced in this sections are of two kinds.

First, through an inductive recovery of the beliefs of decision-makers during the period, I define the choice situation as it confronted an actor. Then, I counterfactually posit a different choice situation in which the only elements that vary are specific pieces of information. This counterfactual analysis, which in two of the three cases can conveniently be represented in extensive form game trees, enables more precision than is often possible. They do not ask, for example, what would the United States be like today if the South had won the Civil War, or what would Europe be like if Operation Barbarossa was successful and Hitler had taken Moscow. By limiting the counterfactual analysis to specific decisions, the most salient objections to reasoning from counterfactuals are not relevant.

Second, I ask whether failure at any of these three moments would affect the future prospects of the ABM Treaty. This requires moving beyond counterfactual analysis of the choice situation to address what history may have been like had an NCA-Only offer never been made, had the May 20th Agreement never been reached, and had Nixon chosen not to go to the Moscow Summit. Each of these counterfactual questions does involve slightly more speculation, although the answers are very clear and likely not prone to the contingencies of history. The decision-making record shows the intentions of actors, the concerns that the ABM Treaty was to address, and the reasons for its support.

In asking these questions, I primarily focus on American decision-makers for three reasons. First, the Soviet Union, the Soviet Union usually only responded to
American offers. Only the May 20th Agreement involved Soviet offers to which the United States needed to respond. Second, there is enough of a historical record within the Nixon administration to show the likely results of counterfactual levels of information. There is not an equivalent body of work on the Soviet side, and thus there is a greater chance of measurement error in assessing the likely results of counterfactuals. Third, due to the lack of data, I would have to consider too many possible counterfactuals to make the Soviet side counterfactuals persuasive.

NCA-Only Offer

As discussed earlier, Kissinger’s decision to offer an NCA-only ABM component of a future arms control treaty was the result of a complex calculation intended to play the Senate and the Soviets against one another. Kissinger offered NCA-only ABM defenses, not because he preferred those defenses, but because he believed the Soviets would reject the offer. The Soviet rejection could then be used to show the Senate that a thin national ABM defense was necessary. Kissinger’s understanding of the likely course of the SALT process is described in Figure 4.1:
The pay-offs are largely ordinal, with 1 representing a slight gain, two a larger gain, and three a maximal gain. This game, and those that follow, are solvable through backwards induction, are subgame perfect, and the payoffs are estimated, although, any permutation that maintains the ordinal values works. With a few exceptions, explained later, Kissinger preferred that the system be built over a partial build, and cancelling the program or a Soviet acceptance were the worst outcomes. The Senate’s pay-offs vary as a function of the various offers Kissinger might make. If Kissinger offered a thin system, then the Senate would be more likely to favor cancelling the ABM program. A thin offer is not a

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426 All of these games are easily solvable through backwards induction.
427 A Soviet decision to accept a thin system was also a negative outcome because an offer of a thin system, meaning a nationwide defense of population centers and Minutemen, was being explicitly rejected by the Senate, was unpopular, and the Senate would likely have considered it an insult and cut funds from the ABM. Kissinger had to make an offer that the Soviets would reject to inspire support. Thus, Soviet acceptance of thin receives a -2.
sincere effort to limit ABMs, meaning that Kissinger did not attempt to deal with Senate concerns through negotiations. The crucial question was whether to offer an ABM Ban or an NCA-only offer. Kissinger decided that a NCA-only offer would provide more leverage over the Senate. If he offered a ban and the Soviets rejected it, the Senate could build a partial system in response. If Kissinger offered a partial system, and the Soviets rejected it, then the Senate would need to build a more complete system in response. Therefore, the equilibrium path leads Kissinger to offer to negotiate, and the Senate to move build a partial system, on the basis of which Kissinger offers an NCA-only deal to the Soviets, which he believed would be rejected, placing pressure on the Senate to build a more complete ABM system.

There are two relevant counterfactual informational questions. First, if Kissinger had more information about the Soviet position, would Kissinger have offered to negotiate an ABM agreement? Second, if the Senate had more information, either because it understood the Soviet Union or Kissinger himself, would the Senate have adopted a cooperative policy?428

There were ample opportunities for Kissinger to realize that the Soviets would accept the NCA-only offer. As noted earlier, the Soviet Union had slowed its ABM program, announced that fact, and showed signs of willingness to negotiate with the United States. The Soviet’s first preference was for an NCA-only system, although they

428 In this case, there is no relevant decision that the Soviets made that counterfactually might be changed. The Soviets accepted an offer that was their first preference. No additional information is likely to have altered that choice.
were willing to negotiate an ABM-ban. A fuller understanding would alter Kissinger’s perception of the strategic situation as shown by the bolded branches in Figure 4.2:

Figure 4.6: Counterfactual: Kissinger with Information on Soviet Position

There are two fundamental changes between the bargaining situation as Kissinger imagined it and the counterfactual. First, as represented by the bold lines, the Soviet

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429 The Soviet willingness to negotiate a ban was discovered when Smith privately probed Semenov on the possibility. See Garthoff 1994, 173. My inference that the Soviets preferred NCA-only to an ABM-ban is premised on evidence, suggested earlier, that Soviet hawks favored preserving the Galosh system that fell within the requirements of NCA-only. However, even if I am wrong, and the Soviets preferred Ban over NCA-only, or considered them equal, Kissinger’s choice would remain the same and he would prefer not to negotiate.

430 This counterfactual example shows that Kissinger rejects the two strategies that lead to cooperation: Ban and NCA-only. This game is indeterminate for the Senate between the strategies of build, cancel, and partial; there is not sufficient evidence in the record to determine what U.S. policy would have precisely been. Therefore, there are a series of strategies that yield a pay-off of -2 for the Senate. It is also indeterminate because Kissinger, not knowing what the Senate would do, does not know whether to refuse to negotiate, or allow the Senate to decide between building and cancelling. This is not a problem for the argument that follows: Kissinger clearly rejects the two cooperative strategies. My best guess is that Kissinger would have offered to negotiate and then never made any specific offer to the Soviet Union, delaying the issue.
preference shifts from preferring to reject an ABM ban or NCA-Only to preferring to accept either option. Kissinger’s preference order also slightly shifts. If Kissinger knows that the Soviets are not planning on deploying an ABM system, he is less likely to want to lock the United States into an agreement that prohibits building ABM defenses in the future because this would be a unilateral concession. He would prefer that the Senate either cancel the program or build a partial program temporarily, with the aim of rebuilding the program in the future. As noted earlier, Kissinger believed that some form of ABM system was crucial for U.S. security. Tying American hands with an ABM Treaty that curtailed only U.S. weapons programs, without imposing a similar restraint on the Soviet Union, would not be as appealing as it was when Kissinger inaccurately believed that the Soviets intended to continue to develop ABM systems.

In the counterfactual case, Kissinger recognizes that his three potential negotiating strategies will leave him worse off because no strategy persuades the Senate that the United States needs defensive systems. There is no offer that the Soviets would reject. Thus, Kissinger would not offer to negotiate an ABM agreement with the Soviets. There is no incentive. This would eliminate cooperation because the ABM is no longer in the negotiating mix.

If Kissinger had not made an offer to negotiate with the Soviet Union in 1970, would ABMs become an issue later in SALT? Would cooperation have occurred in 1973 or 1974 instead of 1972?

A delay in the ABM negotiations likely would have killed the issue. First, if the Senate preemptively eliminated the U.S. ABM program, the Soviet Union would have no
incentive to formalize the deal in a treaty. Recall that Soviet hawks were happy to continue research and development of the Galosh system, and there is little reason to believe that doves would have supported unilaterally limiting Soviet programs for no apparent gains. Furthermore, because a major incentive for the Soviets to agree to a freeze was preventing the growth of the American ABM program, the interim agreement may also have floundered. Neither side showed any willingness to negotiate additional issues, such as caps on large missiles, SLBMs, or MIRVs. With no ABM proposal on the table in 1970, it is difficult to see what the substance of SALT would have become, who would have tabled an ABM proposal (the Soviets rarely suggested topics for discussion), and where momentum in the process would reside.

The second relevant counterfactual question relates to the Senate, or at least the critical swing votes on which the fate of the ABM program turned. First, if the Senate had knowledge of the Nixon administration’s attempt to use the ABM as a reverse bargaining chip, the tactic would not have worked and would have been absurd. In fact, if the administration attempted to use the SALT negotiations to increase support among the Senate, and the Senate knew that this was the case, more than likely they would have immediately canceled the ABM irrespective of the Soviet position. Deception fails once its use becomes apparent.

Second, if the Senate had understood that the Soviets did not intend their ABM defenses as a first-strike weapon and that they were slowing curtailing their ABM program, the Senate would most likely have cancelled the ABM program regardless of whether Kissinger intended to bargain it away. In that close 51-50 vote, fears of a
Russian ABM system were a significant influence on some Senators. The coalition would have faltered if it was common knowledge that the Soviets did not intend to develop its ABM system in the immediate future. Thus, the ABM would not have survived the summer of 1969.

In either case, the death of the ABM on the floor of the U.S. Senate in 1969, or even 1970, would have ended a chance to coordinate ABM policies with the Soviet Union. If the Senate had canceled the ABM program, there would have been no Soviet incentive to cooperate, and Soviet policy, such as radar controls, site limitations, and total interceptor levels, would not have been harmonized with U.S. policy. Cooperation would have also been impossible if Kissinger refused to negotiate, leaving the United States with a partial program that may have been cancelled by the Senate, but without agreed limits on what that program might become in the future. Therefore, imagined intersubjectivity was a necessary condition for the NCA-only offer, and the NCA-only offer was the only offer that would have led the United States to negotiate an ABM Treaty.

*May 20th Agreement*

Due to the ambiguous wording of both the negotiations and the written text of the May 20th Agreement, the parties were able to reach agreement because each believed that the other was making a concession. Since each believed the other made a concession, the Soviets dropped their demands that NCA-only and FBS be included in the final agreement, and Kissinger gave up the demand for an immediate and comprehensive
limitation on offensive weapons. The agreement also publicly committed the principals to arms control, making an unsteady process more sure.

The May 20th Agreement presents two sets of counterfactual questions. First, if either Nixon or Kissinger understood that the Soviets were not making the concession of linking the offensive and defensive elements of the treaties together within the negotiation process, would they have signed off on the May 20th Agreement? Would they have made the necessary concessions? Second, if the Soviets had understood that the United States intended to maintain a link between the defensive and offensive elements after the May 20th Agreement, would they have assented to it? Would they have dropped their demand that the United States include forward-based systems?

The response to these two sets of questions is clear in the historical record. Kissinger repeatedly rejected Dobrynin’s offer to conclude a separate ABM agreement, explaining that without a freeze, SS-9s are unregulated. As explained earlier, Kissinger believed that without a freeze an agreement was politically impossible because Nixon needed some concession for abandoning the ABM system that he fought for so dramatically in the Senate in 1969. This steadfast negotiating position was borne out empirically. During the debate at SALT on the ambiguity of May 20th, Kissinger never backed down. After several months, the American position prevailed and the Soviets agreed to conduct the negotiations simultaneously. There is no evidence of a fallback position.

Thus, if there was room for movement, it was on the Soviet side. Would the Soviets have dropped their demands related to FBS and NCA-only had Kissinger made
clear that ABM-first was not an option? In May 1971, the answer is clearly no. After the ambiguities were discovered, it took months for the Soviet position to change. There is no evidence that the Soviets would have considered changing the sequence earlier, and the repeated efforts to craft ABM-first language in the May 20th Agreement is indicative of the fact that it mattered. The negotiators at SALT were stalled because the Soviets refused to concede their interpretation of the agreement.

However, the Soviets eventually met Kissinger’s demand to negotiate the agreement simultaneously. Does that mean the misunderstanding was unimportant, as the Soviets were willing to make concessions on FBS, NCA-only, and sequence in the final bargain? This is unlikely. First, recall that until progress was made on the ABM, there was little impetus toward a summit, but once there was movement in that direction, Brezhnev was interested in linking the progress in arms control talks to his enhanced position in the Soviet Union. Without the May 20th agreement, the summit may not have been forthcoming, and thus there would have been less impetus toward meeting American demands over sequence. Second, Brezhnev may not have publicly linked the ABM Treaty control to his peace agenda. Instead, he could have linked his agenda at the 24th Party Congress to the Incidents at Sea Agreement, Accidental War Agreement, grain sales, or Basic Principles Agreement (BPA). Highlighting the importance of these agreements may have enabled the public spectacle of agreeing on deep security concerns with the United States, satisfying one incentive to negotiate with the United States, without the ABM Treaty. Third, if sequence had been delayed for too long, it may have become linked to other issues. There was little chance for new American concessions
during the Easter Offensive, and the negotiators still had to resolve complex issues such as SLBM limits and the grain deal. Reaching agreement in 1971 was therefore important before the dilemmas of 1972.

If the May 20th Agreement had not occurred, would the ABM Treaty have been reached later? Before the May 20th Agreement, there was no progress at SALT. The Soviet Union was not willing to meet the American demand for a comprehensive offensive weapons agreement, and the Americans were not willing to meet the Soviet demands that FBS and NCA-only be included in the agreement. In the early 1970s, Kissinger was not ready or willing to reduce the American presence in Europe for the sake of SALT, and the Soviets were not willing to abandon the modernization of their missiles. Therefore, some form of the May 20th Agreement was essential. Both sides required evidence that the other was making a first concession in order to engage in reciprocity. There is no evidence that this would have occurred later in the process. Furthermore, as noted in the last section, if an agreement was not forthcoming before the 1972 elections, and especially before the controversy over Watergate began, it is doubtful that Nixon would have had the political capital to reach an agreement with the Soviet Union.431

Therefore, imagined intersubjectivity was a necessary condition for the May 20th agreement. Had either party understood the principles of the other, or realized that future negotiating behavior would not be altered because of the agreement, they would not have

431 Nixon and Kissinger discussed agreements in these terms. They worried frequently over leaks that would leave them with tied hands, forced to agree to provisions they did not favor. See, for example, White House Telephone. “The President talked with Henry A. Kissinger.” Conversation No. 23-90, 26 April 1972, 7:07-7:10 pm. Tape 23b.
made the concessions necessary for the May 20th agreement to occur. This would have fatally undermined progress toward a summit, prevented the ABM from becoming linked to Brezhnev’s peace agenda, and led to the sequence issue being injected into the troublesome calculations that immediately preceded the signing of the ABM Treaty.

Summit

As explained earlier, one can understand Nixon’s decision not to cancel the Moscow Summit of 1972 as a game of chicken. Figure 4.3 describes Nixon’s perspective on the decision:

Figure 4.7: Nixon’s Perspective on the 1972 Summit Decision

Nixon was confronted with two options. First, he could cancel the summit, although he believed that he will be punished in the 1972 election because the upcoming meeting with Brezhnev is popular. The payoff is negative, but only slightly negative because this avoids the larger problem of meeting with Brezhnev during a North Vietnamese offensive. Second, he could agree to continue to move toward a summit, forcing Brezhnev to cancel. If Brezhnev canceled, which Nixon thought was a certainty because
of the U.S. bombing of the capital of a Soviet ally, then Nixon both avoids the political fallout of having to meet with Brezhnev and evades responsibility for the collapse of the summit. This option is neutral. Nixon expects to make no gains, only to avoid losses. Following the advice of Haig and Connelly, Nixon decided not to cancel.

Counterfactual analysis of the decision to hold the 1972 Moscow Summit requires a responding to a simple question with a very complicated answer. If Nixon had known that Brezhnev wanted to continue towards the Summit, would Nixon have cancelled? If Nixon had cancelled, what would have become of the ABM Treaty?

If Nixon had known Brezhnev’s preferences ordering, that in fact Brezhnev preferred to continue rather than to cancel, one of two outcomes is possible. The first is represented in Figure 4.4:

![Figure 4.8: Counterfactual: Nixon Understands Brezhnev's Preferences](image)

In the counterfactual, Nixon knows that Brezhnev prefers to continue rather than to cancel. The bold line shows the variance between Nixon’s definition of the situation and the counterfactual: Brezhnev prefers that both parties continue rather than defection by
either party. As discussed earlier, Brezhnev convened special meetings to discuss whether to continue and he was supported by critical members of the Politburo. He had tied himself to détente, especially to arms control, and while Vietnam put a damper on the summit, it did not make it unfavorable.

If Nixon had known that Brezhnev would not cancel, Nixon would have cancelled the summit. As already noted, Nixon had ordered Kissinger to cancel the summit only two weeks earlier, but Kissinger had ignored the order. Before Haldeman ordered public opinion polling in early May, Nixon told his National Security Council that the summit was off. The evidence presented earlier shows that the meetings that changed Nixon’s mind were those that presented the argument that Brezhnev would cancel. Therefore, if the bargaining situation had remained the same, and the only addition in the counterfactual case is added information, the summit would not have occurred.

If the Summit had not occurred, would the ABM Treaty have been concluded at a later or scrapped? It is very likely that if either party cancelled, the prospects for the ABM Treaty would not be very high. The failures of Cold War Summitry, for example between Eisenhower and Khrushchev in Paris or Kennedy and Khrushchev in Vienna, do not leave one optimistic about the consequences of failing. Beyond historical analogies, there are several specific reasons why a failure to reach an agreement in May 1972 would have led to a scrapping of the ABM deal.

First, as noted in the earlier counterfactual cases, a critical reason for pushing toward the ABM Treaty was the 1972 elections. The missed summit would occur in May, and it is unlikely that a reconvened summit would occur before Nixon hit the

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campaign trail. Thus, one of the major impetuses toward concluding the ABM Treaty would disappear if the summit was delayed.

Second, any significant delay would have reduced the momentum toward the agreement.\(^{433}\) Progress toward the summit dictated progress on the arms control issues.\(^{434}\) While the ABM Treaty was largely worked out by April, 1972, the Interim Agreement still had several unresolved issues over which there were hurried negotiations as the May deadline approached.\(^{435}\) In particular, the May 20\(^{th}\) Agreement had done nothing to resolve continued impasses over SLBMs or the modernization of Soviet missiles. Even when Nixon arrived in Moscow, there were days of frantic negotiations, in particular over the definition of “heavy missile,” to conclude the thorny issues related to offensive weapons. It is, at best, unclear whether progress over offensive weapons would have been made without the risk of a failed summit looming large over the negotiators, and it is very clear that if the Interim Agreement was not reached, the ABM Treaty was doomed.

Furthermore, extended delays for more than a few years may also have killed the ABM Treaty. As discussed in the next chapter, there was a window of opportunity for U.S.-Soviet security cooperation that ended when Carter entered office. SALT II was already contentious and never ratified, and it is difficult to believe that adding the ABM Treaty would have appeased conservatives in the U.S. Senate. A delay into the 1980s would have been much worse, as Reagan was a proponent of building ABM systems.

In sum, if Nixon had understood Brezhnev’s position on the Summit, he would likely have preemptively cancelled. If he had done so, cooperation on ABMs would at

\(^{433}\) Deborah Welch Larson agrees with this assessment. Larson 1997, 184.
\(^{434}\) See e.g. Smith 1985, 401.
\(^{435}\) Ibid., 407-40; and Garthoff 1994, 185-96.
least have been significantly delayed, and more likely not occurred at all. Therefore, imagined intersubjectivity was a necessary condition for the summit meeting and the successful signing of the ABM Treaty. If Nixon had known the principles or could predict the pattern of Brezhnev’s behavior, he would have either cancelled the summit or likely linked the summit to impossible improvements in Vietnam. This would have delayed and probably ended the movement toward the ABM Treaty.

**The Role of Common Knowledge**

The argument advanced so far, that imagined intersubjectivity played a role in the ABM Treaty process, does not deny that intersubjectivity also played a role. It might be necessary that actors understand some things in identical ways, even if imagined intersubjectivity exists in regard to one fundamental belief. In the introduction, I refer to this as situational pluralism, where certain aspects of a situation are defined differently for two or more actors, even if there is overlap in reference to certain elements of the situation. This appears to be the case in the ABM Treaty process. The findings that emerge from studying the ABM negotiations show mixed results for the first proposition advanced in the last chapter:\(^{436}\)

**Proposition One:** Common knowledge is necessary for cooperation. Actors are able to cooperate once they identify relevant actors, determine the nature of the strategic situation including the pay-offs for others, develop a common language through which to communicate, and other items of common knowledge crucial to the specific bargaining situation.

The first hypothesis stemming from proposition one was that:

**Hypothesis 1:** The parties had CK of the relevant players, the pay-offs, the state of the world, and other related issues that were important for understanding the strategic nature of their interaction. This CK enabled

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\(^{436}\) I do not test proposition two in this case study directly. Norms and identities are treated in the previous chapter in a more opportune case.
cooperation by allowing actors to coordinate their moves with the moves of other parties.

There results are mixed. First, strategic common knowledge was in some respects crucial for the success of the ABM Treaty. The United States and the Soviet Union understood who their primary partners were in the SALT process. They negotiated with one another. The Soviet Union also understood the importance of Congress, and close votes in the Senate, to the SALT process, identifying the Senate as a player that could substantially influence negotiations. However, there were also central misunderstandings related to the identification of players. The Soviet Union never grasped the relationship between Vietnam and the SALT process, and there were frequent disagreements over the role of NATO allies on the issue of FBS in Europe. It is unclear, in the end, whether each side understood the role that other states played.

There is less evidence to support the existence of strategic common knowledge about the pay-offs of each players. As demonstrated in the case study, neither the Soviet nor the American negotiators successfully understood the pay-offs of their interlocutors, no matter how certain they were that their guesses were right. I argued that these misunderstandings were necessary conditions for cooperation to occur. Thus, there is clear disconfirming evidence that, in regard to the identification of pay-offs, strategic cooperation is necessary for cooperation.

Hypothesis 1b: The parties shared a common language related to strategic issues and the negotiating process itself was developed that enabled decision-makers to communicate effectively. In addition, the parties understood the meaning of the negotiating offers made by others. This enabled cooperation.

Hypothesis 1b, intended to test the importance of linguistic common knowledge, also receives mixed results. On the one hand, it was crucial that each actor was able to
communicate clearly with the other in certain cases. The Soviet Union needed to understand the meaning of the NCA-only offer in 1970 and that Kissinger was dropping the demand that an agreement be comprehensive in 1971. Similarly, the Nixon administration needed to know that the Soviet Union was no longer pushing FBS in 1971, and that the Soviet Union’s condemnations of U.S. conduct in Vietnam was not tantamount to a summit cancellation. In fact, each side generally communicated quite clearly with the other, and each caught the right meaning in many cases.

Yet the May 20th Agreement shows that there are cases in which linguistic common knowledge can stand as an impediment to cooperation. If the United States and the Soviet Union had understood the meaning that the other imparted to “together with,” “pri,” “simultaneous,” or other language, they would not have made the concessions necessary to reach the ABM Treaty. There are cases where linguistic CK is not necessary to, but stands in the way of, international cooperation.

**Hypothesis 1:** The parties shared an understanding of critical situation specific CK related to the negotiation process.

Recall that situation specific common knowledge are elements of common knowledge critical to an interaction that are not included in strategic or linguistic common knowledge. There is some evidence that there is a role for situation specific common knowledge in the ABM Treaty negotiations. First, a significant amount of technical know-how was common knowledge. Neither party disputed how specific types of missiles, submarines, radars, or other weapons work. Furthermore, both parties understood specific negotiating rules, such as the importance of site alternation, protocol, and other diplomatic procedures that may have stood in the way of the negotiation
process. A liberal institutionalist scholar that studied the ABM Treaty process would likely find other situation specific elements of common knowledge that also played a role.  

**Conclusion**

This chapter provides decisive evidence that, at least in the case of the ABM Treaty, imagined intersubjectivity was a necessary condition for cooperation. Kissinger only offered to negotiate an ABM Treaty because he misunderstood the Soviet position, he and Dobrynin only agreed to a crucial compromise because each misunderstood what the other was offering, and Nixon only agreed to travel to Moscow to sign the agreement because he thought that Brezhnev would refuse the summit. At each moment in the process, each party believed that they knew what the other side would do, and they were often wrong. The ABM Treaty was the product of ignorance and caprice, not information and clear-sighted reasoning.

The result is a clear instance of situational pluralism. The parties, despite the existence of significant levels of common knowledge, never managed to develop a common definition of the bargaining situation. If, after each took an introduction to game theory course, one asked them to draw the extensive form game of the negotiations at each of the three instances studied here, the games would diverge in consequential ways. The ABM Treaty does more than demonstrate that imagined intersubjectivity can secure cooperation, it also illustrates the importance of situational pluralism suggested in the introductory chapter.

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437 Index of power-aperture product created clear guidelines for the power of radars which encouraged compliance. See Talbott 1988, 132.
This study of the ABM Treaty, while not generalizable in any significant sense, does point towards two methodological issues in the study of information. First, all of the conditions for the emergence of CK were present in the case of the ABM Treaty. The negotiations took place over an extensive period of time and occurred in an institutionalized diplomatic environment. A naïve treatment of the case, focusing on the presence of an institutional environment or the back-and-forth discussions, might mistakenly infer that the ABM Treaty’s existence is due to information produced in this environment. Yet, as I have shown, by looking under to hood and tracing the types of information that were relied on at different moments in the process, one sees a different story: negotiations failed to produce full common knowledge and only because of this failure was cooperation possible. This might lead us to suspect that other studies, which rely on information as a variable without directly observing whether information exists, might yield results similar to those discovered here: the information we infer from the presence of institutions does not exist.

Second, the study of the ABM Treaty provides evidence for the theoretical claim made in the introduction. Kissinger, Nixon, and Brezhnev each supposed that the world was not pluralistic; they incorrectly inferred that they understood the position of others. There is a risk that IR scholars, in their denial of pluralism, are committing the same mistakes as our Cold Warriors. We risk assuming homogeneity because of a refusal to countenance that we might simply not understand the genuine positions of others.
Chapter Five: The Decline of Détente and Alternative Explanations

In certain cases, theories of information in international politics should be turned on their head. Most IR scholars suspect that cooperation hinges on increased information or a shared international culture. In chapters three and four, however, I showed that some of our most intractable problems have been solved when actors with two very different understandings of a situation reach an agreement because they are unaware of their differences. Specifically, cooperation during détente, especially the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, was the product of imagined intersubjectivity. The United States and the Soviet Union believed they understood the principles that guided the actions of the other; therefore, they each believed they could predict the future behavior of the other. They were wrong on both counts. Only because they were wrong was cooperation possible.

This chapter addresses two concerns not discussed so far. In the first part of the chapter, I address the causes of the decline of détente in the mid-1970s through the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. This brief discussion serves two purposes. First, I show that cooperation collapsed because of a change in policymakers’ beliefs. After the 1972 Moscow Summit, an increasingly powerful group of détente critics gained influence over foreign policy. Especially in the United States, these critics espoused ideas that were hostile to the regulation of the superpower conflict and they showed less willingness to make needed concessions. They denigrated détente as a trick, a ruse by an enemy to obtain dominance. Once these critics achieved positions of influence, confrontation
ensued. Therefore, the first part of the chapter establishes variation on the independent and dependent variables: new actors with different beliefs lead to varying levels of cooperation. More importantly, this discussion enables a theory test between a theory of putative intersubjective beliefs, realism, and liberal institutionalism. My argument is that variables related to power remain constant over the period and liberal institutionalist variables point toward cooperation and not conflict. Therefore, neither set of theories is sufficient to explain the decline of détente.

The second aim of this chapter is more modest. In discussing realist and liberal institutionalist theories of cooperation, I will not contend that a theory of putative intersubjective beliefs is always better. Rather, PIBs provide a useful architecture for explaining why specific cases of cooperation occur when realist or liberal institutionalist theories predict conflict. This means that hypotheses derived from the theoretical framework established in chapter two enhance extant theories of international politics.

**The Decline of Détente**

In chapter three, I argued that détente was premised on imagined intersubjectivity. Neither superpower was aware of the fundamental differences in their understandings of the relationship. For Nixon and Kissinger, détente was a means of containing the Soviet Union in an era of parity. By linking issues to one another through a combination of threats and incentives, they sought to manage the Soviet rise to power and to provide them with stakes in the international order so as to prevent the emergence of a revolutionary power. For Brezhnev and other Soviet elites, détente was a means of managing the American decline to parity. Détente was meant to stabilize relations at the
superpower level so that local crises, especially in the Third World, did not risk escalation. These two views led to two very divergent patterns of conduct. The Soviet Union thought that détente ensured political parity and that the United States recognized the Soviet right to flex its muscles in the Third World. For the United States, the entire point of détente was to prevent this from occurring. Détente meant managing a military equal such that it would not become a political equal. Neither state’s leader understood the extent of their differences; thus, they cooperated.

In the analysis of broad changes during détente, I engaged in process tracing to show the causal mechanisms through which PIBs led to cooperation, but unlike in the analysis of the ABM Treaty, I did not engage in counterfactual analysis to show that the nature of decision-makers’ beliefs mattered. While many IR scholars believe that causal process tracing provides sufficient empirical evidence for a theory, there is no consensus on this important methodological point.\(^{438}\)

Therefore, this chapter traces détente’s decline over time in order to satisfy a more rigorous criteria for making causal claims. The analysis of détente decomposes the decline of détente into three cases to show the causal influence of PIBs at three moments. First, I examine opposition groups’ beliefs concerning the Soviet Union during the period investigated in chapters three and four. I conclude that if a different set of agents, with a different set of beliefs, was empowered to make U.S. foreign policy decision, cooperation likely would have failed. Second, I analyze the subsequent decline of détente in the United States. When actors with different beliefs began to garner public support and institutional positions, cooperation was reduced. Third, when these critics gained

\(^{438}\) See chapter two.
influence over U.S. foreign policy, in the Carter and Reagan years, cooperation ended. Further, as Soviets became aware of discrepancies between their beliefs about the United States and actual U.S. foreign policy, they refused to cooperate.

These three claim shows that variation on the independent variable—decision-makers’ beliefs—leads to variation on the dependent variable—cooperation. This analysis shows that changes in the ideational landscape of the 1970s had effects on cooperation independent of other institutional and material factors. This section also serves a second function. Later, I use the decline of détente to assess the importance of PIBs versus realist and liberal institutionalist theories of cooperation.

This discussion of changing beliefs is intentionally brief. A full review of the decline of détente is far beyond the purview of this dissertation. Rather than exhaustively reviewing the specific events through which the decline of détente occurred, I will concentrate on decision-makers’ changing beliefs as events in the 1970s unfolded.439

Opposition Groups in 1972

When Nixon and Brezhnev met in 1972, détente was at its highpoint. There was a broad agenda for cooperation, from arms control to trade to science to crisis management. The argument of chapter three is that the superpowers’ beliefs about one another made cooperation possible. This implies that if different agents with different beliefs held power, cooperation would not have occurred. This is evidenced by a second group—conservatives in the U.S. Senate—who were also paying keen attention to the fledging

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439 e.g., Garthoff 1994.
efforts at superpower cooperation. Had these groups, who held different beliefs about the Soviet Union, been in power, cooperation would have ended.

Shortly after the successful Moscow Summit of 1972, a growing concern began to mount within the Nixon administration about conservatives in the U.S. Senate. In particular, Senator Henry Jackson, a conservative Democrat from Washington, and his influential adviser Richard Perle became outspoken critics of détente. While Nixon was in Moscow, Jackson began to argue that the SALT agreements would enable the Soviet Union to gain strategic superiority, claiming that the accords contained “a series of loopholes as big as a 25-megaton bomb.”

When Nixon returned, Jackson continued to argue against ratification of the SALT agreements, claiming that Nixon had reached “secret” agreements in Moscow.

Jackson’s opposition to SALT likely came from two sources. First, Jackson was skeptical of détente, believing it a ruse used by the Soviet Union to expand its power. He thought the Soviets sought dominance under the cover of arms control and would not honor its SALT obligations. Further, Jackson believed that Kissinger’s policy of selling détente to the public risked undermining popular support for containing the Soviet Union, propped up a failing Soviet economy, and was amoral because it ignored human rights. Second, Jackson had political motives. A socially liberal democrat planning on running

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for president, Jackson had an incentive to attack Nixon from the right on foreign policy, defusing the issue.\textsuperscript{443}

While Jackson and his allies opposed détente, in 1972 they could only marginally hamper efforts at cooperation. Nixon, worried about SALT’s ratification, took steps to placate Jackson. First, Nixon agreed to dismiss most of the SALT negotiating team, including Gerard Smith, the chief negotiator.\textsuperscript{444} Since Jackson argued that the SALT team was too soft on the Soviet Union, this was intended as a way to win Jackson’s support for the SALT process. Second, Nixon agreed to the Jackson Amendment, which provided that the United States should never negotiate an arms control treaty that would leave it worse off in any category of weapons.\textsuperscript{445} This amendment would become an enormous hurdle in future arms control negotiations. Because the Jackson amendment implies U.S. dominance system by system, arms control treaties could not take into account the overall balance.\textsuperscript{446} These measures did not stop SALT, but they heralded problems on the horizon.

The existence of anti-détente parties provides evidence for the role of beliefs in cooperation. The balance of power, institutional pressures, and broad ideas exerted pressure on conservative groups and the Nixon administration. The difference between them is that they held different ideas about the Soviet Union, showing that ideas play an independent role. Critics, led by Jackson, were influential enough to affect U.S. foreign

\textsuperscript{443} Gelb and Lake 1974.  
\textsuperscript{444} Johnson 2006, 186; and Kaufman 2000, 258.  
\textsuperscript{446} Johnson 2006, 184; Kaufman 2000, 155-7; and Talbott 1979, 24.
policy, but not influential enough to collapse détente. Had they been so, cooperation may have never begun.

*The Rise of Opposition Groups to Power*

As opposition groups who held different beliefs about the superpower relationship came to power, cooperation was reduced. From 1973 to 1976, conservative critics of détente rallied the American public against Soviet human rights violations, alleged violations of SALT, and Third World influence. At the same time, cooperation was drastically reduced. Instead of the broad agenda for superpower cooperation launched in 1972, cooperation was reduced to just arms control.

Trade was the first issue where cooperation was undercut by conservative pressure groups. Shortly after the Moscow summit, the superpowers agreed to a trade deal that called for the extension of most favored nation status (MFN) to the Soviet Union. This deal was important because trade with the United States was a critical incentive for Soviet participation in arms control.447 Even before Nixon introduced the trade bill to the Senate in early 1973, it came under attack. The Soviet Union had recently placed an “education tax” on Jewish emigrants.448 Jackson used the Soviet restriction to form a coalition of liberal and conservative opponents to Nixon, rallying them behind the Jackson-Vanik Amendment to curtail trade with the Soviet Union until the restriction was relaxed.449 The issue of trade enabled Jackson to form an alliance with organized labor, pro-Israeli groups, liberal human rights advocates, and conservatives to retard détente.

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448 For the Soviet perspective, see Morozov 1999.
This coalition received a boost in September by Andrei Sakharov, a Soviet dissident, who favored the trade restriction.\textsuperscript{450} That October, conservatives and Israeli supporters became increasingly hostile to trade because of the widespread belief that détente had not prevented the Soviet Union from encouraging Egypt to attack Israel.\textsuperscript{451}

The attack by anti-détente interests managed to scrap the prospects for cooperation over trade. In January 1975, the Soviet Union withdrew from the trade deal, arguing that it could not accept political conditions on trade.\textsuperscript{452} This was the first sign that broad cooperation was not possible and détente, from then on, would be limited.

Trade was not the only issue area where cooperation became difficult. The superpower conflict in the Third World also became increasingly difficult to manage, most noticeably in Angola. After the collapse of the Portuguese government in Angola in 1974, three factions began to compete for control of the country. In 1975, Cuba began sending troops to assist the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) against a South African intervention. When the United States, concerned about growing Cuban involvement in Africa and about the fate of its allies in Angola, convinced Barbados to retract landing rights from Cuban airplanes headed to Angola, Cuba requested Soviet assistance to transport arms and soldiers.\textsuperscript{453}

During the Angola crisis, the stakes for each superpower were low. In early 1976, Brezhnev and Kissinger joked while pointing at a map that “showed” the Soviet invasion

\textsuperscript{450} Similarly, in 1975, Solzhenitsyn asked the United States to “interfere more and more. Interfere as much as you can.” In Cahn 1998, 33.
\textsuperscript{453} Gleijeses 1996/7.
of the United States would begin in southwest Africa. Unlike the Middle East, there were few long-standing commitments and no greater foreign policy significance. For the Politburo, supporting the MPLA was not worth jeopardizing détente. However, because the stakes were so low and the level of Soviet support comparable to U.S. support, the Brezhnev leadership did not believe the conflict could undermine détente. When South Africa intervened in 1975, Brezhnev agreed to increase Soviet aid to Angola. As noted in chapter three, part of the Soviet conception of détente was that military parity meant the Soviet Union could be an active player in supporting national liberation movements; resisting a South African intervention was germane to that understanding.

In the United States, anti-détente groups rallied against the Soviet intervention, undermining cooperation. Early in the conflict, Kissinger paid little attention to Angola, providing minimal amounts of covert assistance to anti-Soviet groups in the region. However, at about the same time that the Soviet Union increased its commitments to aiding Cuban troops, the Senate passed the Clark and Tunney amendments that prevented Kissinger from continuing to provide covert assistance to U.S. clients. Kissinger remarked, “Angola represents the first time that the Soviets have moved militarily at long distance to impose a regime of their choice. It is [also] the first time that the United States has failed to respond to Soviet military moves outside the immediate Soviet orbit.”

With Congress cutting funding for covert operations and with trade pressure limited by

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455 Leffler 2007, 254-5; and Westad 1996/7a, 27.
456 Leffler 2007, 255.
458 in Garthoff 1994, 580.
the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, Kissinger’s half-heartedly tried to use SALT as leverage to reduce Soviet influence in Angola, but he did not push. He worried that SALT, the centerpiece of Nixon’s Soviet policy, would fail if linked to Angola.\textsuperscript{459} He therefore favored cooperation (SALT) over conflict in Africa.

Anti-détente groups valued cooperation much less, forcing Ford to adopt a publicly confrontational posture. Ford had to engage in a public offensive against the Soviet Union and their “Cuban mercenaries” in order to fend off attacks from the right. This alienated the Soviet leadership, who did not understand the difference between American and Soviet aid to Angola, and led to a public brouhaha over which side was violating the spirit of détente.\textsuperscript{460} Ford’s attempt to head off attacks from the right failed. His admission that Soviet behavior violated the spirit of détente provided political support for anti-détente candidates in an election year.\textsuperscript{461} This posture presaged later tensions in Cuba and Africa.

Despite difficulty cooperating over trade and Angola, the Ford administration continued to cooperate on arms control. In November 1974, only a few months after Nixon left office, Ford traveled to Vladivostok to meet with Brezhnev. The final product of the meeting was the sketch of an agreement to serve as the basis for SALT II. It contained equal aggregate amounts of U.S. and Soviet weaponry, consistent with the

\textsuperscript{459} Ibid., 1994, 578-9.
\textsuperscript{461} Garthoff 1994, 592.
Jackson Amendment to SALT I, and improved on the 1972 Interim Agreement by limiting Multiple Independently Targetable Reentry Vehicles (MIRVs).

While Ford favored cooperation, détente’s critics did not. At Vladivostok, Ford was acutely aware that conservatives at home would criticize any agreement he made. In every conversation Ford had with Brezhnev, he explained the difficulties for cooperation caused by the attacks from the right.\textsuperscript{462} As soon as the pact was announced, Paul Nitze resigned from the Ford administration. Nitze, a proponent of SALT I, became SALT II’s most outspoken critic. He published a series of high-profile articles criticizing the arms control deal that were so influential, one arms control observer noted, “If the [SALT II] treaty is killed in the Senate, Nitze will be entitled to much of the blame and the credit sure to be passed around.”\textsuperscript{463}

Further, many in the Senate, especially Jackson, argued that Vladivostok risked sparking an arms race.\textsuperscript{464} Because Vladivostok provided only a numeric cap on missiles, conservative critics argued that this provided a “throw-weight” advantage to the Soviet Union and that the United States would need to engage in a military modernization program to counter that advantage. Finally, in late 1975, Jackson, Nixon’s former Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird, and Ford’s Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger

\textsuperscript{462} Leffler 2007, 245-6; MEMCON between Ford and Brezhnev. 23 November 1974. DNSA (KT01418); MEMCON between Ford and Brezhnev. 23 November 1974. DNSA (KT01419); and MEMCON between Ford and Brezhnev. 24 November 1974. DNSA (KT01420).


began to publicly accuse the Soviet Union of violating the provisions of SALT I. These charges were not new, but Laird popularized the claims in *Reader’s Digest*.

If decision-makers had held different beliefs, cooperation would not have occurred. Fortunately for the SALT process, critics did not make immediate in-roads into the Ford administration’s Soviet policy. By the end of Ford’s term, however, leading critics of détente began to gain increased institutional power and a larger public profile.

A new group of defense intellectuals began to contend that the estimates of Soviet strength that Nixon’s foreign policy was premised on drastically understated Soviet power. Albert Wohlsetter, an influential academic, led the charge by arguing that the Soviet Union intended to achieve superiority. Within the Ford White House, the President’s Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (PFIAB) which included members who had always been skeptical of détente, picked up these concerns. PFIAB pressured the Ford administration to begin the controversial Team B exercises at the CIA. Team B, headed by Richard Pipes, included critics of détente such as Nitze. In their final report, they argued that previous estimates of Soviet power underestimated their capabilities. Using slightly different estimates of Soviet capabilities, they portrayed a growing Soviet military threat that was intent on developing a war-winning capability.

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466 Garthoff 1994, 504. On Ford’s relationship with Schlesinger, see Ford 1979, 320-4. Even Schlesinger’s resignation was cast as a criticism of Vladivostok. He publicly argued that the reason for his dismissal was that he did not support agreeing for the sake of agreement. See Drew Middleton. “Schlesinger’s View of Kissinger Described.” *New York Times*. 8 November 1975, 2. Kissinger These public disagreements were thought to be a key reason for Ford’s unpopularity. Cahn 1998, 122; and Ford 1979, 320.
467 This paragraph is much indebted to Cahn 1998.

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The final Team B report publicly substantiated the conservative case against arms control. The report was leaked to the press in October 1976 and created a sensation as George Bush, then Director of Central Intelligence, promoted Team B’s findings. Members of Team B formed the Committee on the Present Danger. As Anne Hessing Cahn explains, “The panel members were well placed to keep the report’s conclusions before the public for the next four years. Through op-ed pieces, radio and television interviews, and the large outreach program of the Committee on the Present Danger, the mantra of the United States falling behind the Soviet Union in military might was repeated over and over again.”

Different groups with different ideas affected the level of cooperation during the period. The Nixon and Ford administrations, too weak to counter conservative pressure over human rights, were forced to adopt a confrontational public posture over Angola, but managed to continue to cooperate on arms control. Cooperation was reduced but it did not end. What began in the early 1970s as an ambitious agenda to enhance trade, cultural exchanges, and scientific, technical and agricultural cooperation, had been reduced to just arms control. Moreover, in the United States, a coalition of conservative and liberal critics of the Ford administration had begun to make inroads on that issue as well. If arms control had remained the last issue where tension might start, détente might have survived, although it does not seem likely. While the Brezhnev leadership remained

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committed to détente, SALT II, in the form of the Vladivostok accords, were the last “thin reed” upon which relations could progress.\footnote{Garthoff 1994, 525.}

**Opposition Parties in Power**

When Carter was elected in 1976, anti-détente forces occupied substantial positions of influence in the White House for the first time. Cooperation collapsed as a result. During Carter’s term, the Soviets realized that the United States no longer valued détente, which contributed to problems cooperating over arms control and in Afghanistan. Even before Reagan’s election, cooperation was replaced by competition because elites in both superpowers held very different beliefs from those held by elites in 1972.

his human rights policy, Carter appointed Zbigniew Brzezinski as National Security Advisor. Brzezinski was a Polish émigré, author of *The Permanent Purge*, and an outspoken critic of Soviet human rights policies, who sought to use U.S. foreign policy to restore freedom to Eastern Europe and to protect dissidents in the Soviet Union.\(^\text{476}\) Carter’s appointments and policies placed critics of détente into the highest positions of power and, for the first time since 1972, administration policy dictated confrontation.\(^\text{477}\)

Carter’s election strongly affected Soviet beliefs about the future conduct of superpower relations. The Soviet leadership was circumspect about Carter before he entered office, identifying him with anti-détente forces.\(^\text{478}\) They thought Carter’s human rights campaign was an attempt to embarrass them, encourage dissident movements in Russia and Eastern Europe, and violate the principle of non-interference in internal affairs enshrined in the Basic Principles.\(^\text{479}\) Brezhnev would later write to Carter that he would not “allow interference in our internal affairs, whatever pseudo-humanitarian slogans are used to present it.”\(^\text{480}\)

If Carter’s human rights platform risked souring relations, his election year position on arms control was worse. Carter campaigned, in part, against the Vladivostok accords, arguing that the agreement enabled the superpowers to increase their nuclear arsenals. He promised to pursue a new agreement that would require “deep reductions.”\(^\text{479}\) For Brezhnev, this shift in arms control policy was disturbing. He had invested heavily in

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\(^\text{476}\) Garthoff 1994, 649.  
\(^\text{477}\) Nichols 2002.  
\(^\text{480}\) In Brzezinski 1983, 155.
the accord and fought for its approval.\textsuperscript{481} In the words of one insider, he “spilled political blood” to gain agreement on Vladivostok at the risk of alienating Politburo conservatives.\textsuperscript{482}

Carter understood the risks of campaigning against Vladivostok and attempted to show the Soviets that this was an election tactic. During the campaign, Carter asked Governor Averill Harriman to assure the Soviet leadership that Carter was committed to completing the Vladivostok accord. Harriman was successful. Brezhnev believed that Carter agreed that the accord was sacrosanct and would be pursued before negotiation of deep cuts.\textsuperscript{483}

Carter’s promise not to pursue deep cuts was short-lived. Early in his term, Senate conservatives blocked Theodore Sorenson’s nomination to the CIA and won a symbolic victory by casting 40 votes against Paul Warnke, Carter’s dovish arms control negotiator. The latter was considered a victory because fewer than 40 votes were needed to block ratification of SALT II.\textsuperscript{484} Conservatives and the Joint Chiefs also prodded Carter to pursue deep cuts instead of Vladivostok’s limited cuts, secretly hoping that this might create an unrealistic proposal the Soviets would reject, thereby ending arms control.\textsuperscript{485} Ignoring his promise to Brezhnev, Carter returned to the deep cuts line promised in the campaign; contrary to the conservative position, he naively thought Soviet acceptance was possible. He sent his Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, to Moscow with instructions to first try to find agreement on deep reductions, relying on Vladivostok as a fallback

\textsuperscript{481} Dobrynin 1995, 394.  
\textsuperscript{482} Garthoff 1994, 889.  
\textsuperscript{483} Talbott 1979, 39. Harriman suggested he might pursue deep cuts only after Vladivostok was complete.  
\textsuperscript{484} Garthoff 1994, 627.  
\textsuperscript{485} Brzezinski 1983, 157; and Vance 1983, 51.
position.\textsuperscript{486} As a negotiating tactic, he ordered Vance to make an unbalanced offer, favoring the American position, hoping negotiations would make it fair.

Carter’s strategy proved a disaster. The Soviets were outraged, not only that Carter was reneging on his explicit commitment to Vladivostok, but also that he was presenting a new and unfair proposal. The Soviets immediately ended the negotiations, preventing Vance from presenting Vladivostok as a fallback position.\textsuperscript{487} To make matters (much) worse, the Carter administration decided to make all diplomacy public. Vance publicly explained that Carter had offered deep reductions and the Soviets had refused. Brezhnev was appalled and went public with the full details of the one-sided American offer. The episode led them to suspect that Carter was more interested in publicity than diplomacy.\textsuperscript{488}

The delays caused by the hope for deep cuts had consequences not apparent at the time. Raymond Garthoff explains, “By the time the negotiation of SALT II was back on track, the roadbed undergirding that track was being weakened and would soon be disrupted by new American-Soviet confrontations.”\textsuperscript{489} The delays for SALT II caused by Carter’s errors meant the ratification debate would take place after U.S.-Soviet relations were rocked by events in China and Africa. Whereas quick success on SALT II may have disarmed critics, proved Carter’s sincerity to the Soviets, and maintained momentum in cooperation, failure meant SALT did not provide the needed impetus to détente.


\textsuperscript{487} Carter 1982, 225.

\textsuperscript{488} Garthoff 1994; and Talbott 1979.

\textsuperscript{489} Garthoff 1994, 898-9.
Arms control was not the only area where confrontation replaced cooperation. In 1977, a war between Somalia and Ethiopia threatened to pull in the superpowers. The conflict sparked a debate in the White House. Key figures, such as Vance, found the Ogaden War unimportant and undeserving of a military response. In contrast, Brzezinski believed the Horn was a pressing national security concern; the Horn is near important Middle Eastern states and inaction risked encouraging Algerian, Libyan and Cuban adventurism. While Carter administration doves blocked U.S. intervention, hawks prevented superpower cooperation. The Brezhnev Politburo offered to jointly mediate the conflict, as the superpowers had done in the Middle East in 1973. Rather than cooperate, Brzezinski convinced Carter to do nothing.

Competition in Africa, problems with SALT, and the Soviet’s strong rejection of Carter’s human rights rhetoric led Carter to take increasingly strong public stands against Soviet conduct. Throughout the summer of 1978, Carter began to pepper his comments on U.S.-Soviet relations with terminology favored by détente’s critics. He no longer used the term “détente,” instead describing the Soviet buildup as “aggressive” and “beyond a level necessary for defense” and started discussing new U.S. military programs. Criticism of Carter’s “appeasement” of Soviet aggression in the Horn was so severe that

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491 Brzezinski 1983, 178-190.
the Carter team strongly and publicly reacted to all future provocations.\(^{494}\) This pattern of overreaction led Brzezinski to say, “SALT lies buried in the sands of the Ogaden.”\(^{495}\)

Even more damaging to the prospects for SALT ratification was the “Cuban Brigade.” That summer, Soviet combat forces, in Cuba for more than a decade, were “discovered.”\(^{496}\) The existence of the brigade was leaked to the press by Senator Frank Church, a liberal supporter of arms control, and led to a significant public outcry.\(^{497}\) Vance and Brzezinski publicly argued that the Cuban brigade was unacceptable Soviet adventurism and threatened SALT II; Carter wrote to Brezhnev, pressuring him to withdraw the troops.\(^{498}\) Carter and Brzezinski issued a Presidential Directive stating that the U.S. goal was ending Soviet support for Cuba and requiring that the State Department take every opportunity to link superpower relations to Soviet-Cuban ties.\(^{499}\)

The Cuban Brigade posed a significant threat to arms control. Dan Caldwell argues that even without the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the ratification of SALT II was dead because of the publicity of the Cuba brigade.\(^{500}\) Even supporters of SALT II threatened to refuse to ratify SALT if the Soviets did not remove the brigade.\(^{501}\) Brezhnev refused to remove the troops, writing to Carter that there is a training center in Cuba, it

\(^{494}\) On the conservative criticism, see Jackson 2007, 715-6.
\(^{495}\) Brzezinski 1983, 189. Brzezinski argued that a stronger reaction to Ethiopia would have preserved détente by winning over hardliners. Talbott 1979, 291.
\(^{498}\) Brzezinski 1983, 344-53; and Vance 1983, 358-64.
\(^{500}\) Caldwell 1991.
does not violate the agreements made after the missile crisis, and “It appears to us that the only result of exaggerating this artificially contrived campaign is to render noticeable damage to relations between our countries and to the cause of strengthening peace.”

The same trend is evidenced in Soviet decision-making. Between 1973 and 1979, the Soviet Union limited its conduct in the Third World because of concerns about U.S. conservatives. In high-stakes situations, Brezhnev offered to cooperate in managing crises. As discussed in chapter three, the Politburo actively considered détente during the October War, and as noted earlier in this chapter, they offered to allow the United States to participate in mediation of the crisis in the Horn. In low-stakes situations, like Angola, Brezhnev tried to prevent conflicts from escalating.

The Soviet Union continued to press for cooperation, believing, even as late as 1979, that the United States valued détente and was serious about cooperating on arms control. In March 1979, the Politburo met to consider intervening in Afghanistan and considered its implications for détente. Gromyko remarked:

Sending out troops would mean our occupation of Afghanistan. This would place us in a very difficult position in the international arena. We would ruin everything that we have constructed with such great difficulty, détente above all. The SALT II talks would be ruined. And this is the overriding issue for us now. There would be no meeting between Leonid Ilyich and Carter. . . . This is why, despite the difficult situation, we cannot send troops.

Détente, especially the upcoming Summit, exercised a restraining influence on the Soviet decision to intervene.

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503 There are significant limitations to the evidence concerning Soviet decision-making during this period. Therefore, this judgment is necessarily circumspect.
504 in Cordovez and Harrison 1995, 37.
However, once the Soviets realized the United States was no longer willing to cooperate, there was a shift toward confrontation. In 1979, the Senate Armed Services Committee rejected SALT II and NATO decided to deploy intermediate-range missiles in Europe. From the Soviet perspective, détente was dead. Not only was trade declining and arms control no longer promising, but a series of “phony” issues, such as the Cuban brigade and growing anti-Soviet sentiment, showed that relations would likely not improve. There was no longer a geopolitical reason not to intervene in Afghanistan.\footnote{Westad 1996/7b.} Georgiy Korienko, the Soviet First Deputy Prime Minister, writes, “All of the arguments previously made about the negative impact in the West suddenly became irrelevant. People felt that relations were already spoiled, so there was nothing left to lose.”\footnote{in Cardovez and Harrison 1995, 47.}

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan that winter, coming so close to a U.S. election, destroyed any remaining chance for SALT II ratification. In January, Carter requested that the Senate not debate SALT II, began a series of sanctions against the Soviet Union, explaining that “détente was dead.”\footnote{Caldwell 1997, 111.} American public opinion, which had become increasingly opposed to détente since Nixon left office, began to strongly favor a return to confrontation.\footnote{Russett and Deluca 1981; and Skidmore 1996, 101-102.} The invasion of Afghanistan, which drew condemnation from the U.S. public, was the last act in a drama that had seen public opinion in grow increasingly conservative.\footnote{Mayer 1992, 61-2.} When Reagan entered office, Anne Hessing Cahn notes that Team B, the group of conservative defense intellectuals that sounded alarms at Soviet
military programs, “became Team A,” occupying most positions of influence in the new administration.\footnote{Cahn 1998, 189.}

The turn toward confrontation during the Carter administration provides additional evidence that beliefs have effects on cooperation. First, intra-administrative differences over détente affected prospects for cooperation in Africa and SALT II. Doves in the Carter administration, especially Vance, favored cooperation with the Soviet Union, while hawks actively tried to undermine détente. These beliefs mattered for the prospects of cooperation independent of material factors. The intra-administration differences are particularly telling because both hawks and doves tied their political futures to Carter. Therefore, their beliefs, not their political fortunes, drove them to different decisions. Second, the beliefs of Soviet decision-makers during Carter’s term also changed, affecting their willingness include détente as a factor in decision-making. In early 1979, when prospects for security cooperation still existed, the Politburo refrained from making substantial commitments in Afghanistan. In late 1979, after the turn toward confrontation in the United States became clear, cooperation ended.

\textit{Analysis of the Decline}

The analysis of the decline of détente provides evidence that the beliefs of decision-makers during the Nixon administration enabled cooperation. First, had different elites with different beliefs occupied the chief posts, cooperation likely would never have begun. Second, during the final years of the Nixon and Ford presidencies, whenever hawkish actors obtained positions of power in an issue area, cooperation foundered.
When hawkish actors gained positions of power in the Carter administration, cooperation ended, revealing to the Soviets that they had no more stakes in détente. The variation in the beliefs of decision-makers and the consequences for cooperation are summarized in Table 5.1:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cooperation</th>
<th>Influence of Anti-Détente Forces</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1972-1973</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973-1976</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977-1976</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
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Table 5.1: Relationship Between Cooperation and Influence of Anti-Détente Groups

As the influence of groups with different beliefs came to power, the prospects for cooperation diminished.

The decline of détente provides indirect evidence for the causal argument—that PIBs lead to cooperation. Changes in beliefs preceded and causally implicated the change in the level of cooperation. The decline of détente therefore affords a natural experiment to examine the role of changing beliefs because so many other factors remained constant. This also demonstrates the importance of U.S. and Soviet perceptions of one another. As I argue in the next section, where variables related to power and institutions remain constant or point toward cooperation, cooperation actually diminished.

**Alternative Explanations**
In the first half of this chapter, I showed that variations in the beliefs of decision-makers affected the prospects for superpower cooperation throughout the 1970s. In this section, I consider two sets of alternative explanations of détente, the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty and the decline of détente. First, I test explanations related to balance of power theory and power transition theory; second, I consider liberal institutionalist theories related to trade and institutions. I argue that both explanations capture some important elements of the changing superpower relationship. They are, however, insufficient to explain it. Next, I examine specific ways in which the theory of putative intersubjective beliefs (PIBs) enhances these paradigms by explaining why cooperation is possible in certain cases where these theories predict conflict.

Realism

While some realists might disregard détente as a “false promise,” others discuss the importance of cooperation in managing the changing balance of power.511 As Stephen Brooks and William Wohlforth, two influential realist writers, argue, “the benefits of international institutions are grounded in realism.”512 I consider two realist explanations of cooperation: balance of power and power transition theory. Balance of power theories often predict cooperation when powers approach parity and power transition theories predict cooperation as powers move away from parity. First, I derive hypotheses from these two realist schools in the context of détente. Then, I assess whether they are

511 Mearsheimer 1994/5.
sufficient to explain the rise and fall of cooperation or whether a theory of PIBs is needed.

Balance of power theorists often predict improved relations between superpowers when they reach parity. For example, E.H. Carr argues that parity was the foundation for the Locarno Treaty. In 1922, Germany could not convince France to agree to a security deal because France was more powerful than Germany. Two years later, cooperation was possible because the French began to fear the prospects of future German power. For Randall Schweller and William Wohlforth, “the moral of Carr’s story is straightforward: the ideational and interest convergence required for the Locarno Treaty was simply a product of Germany’s achievement of relative power parity with France.” This explanation is intuitively compelling because explains not only the emergence of Locarno but also its decline. Shortly thereafter, Germany became stronger than France; the Locarno Treaty lost force because Germany had no interest in cooperation with the French who they no longer feared.

A realist might argue that détente was similar to Locarno. As shown in chapter three, a fundamental element of détente was the recognition of military bipolarity in both the United States and the Soviet Union during the early 1970s. This clarified the bipolar nature of the international system and included recognition of its stability. Limited cooperation became possible because concerns about relative gains were less acute in a period in which neither side thought dominance possible. Hypothesis 5.1, the balance of power hypothesis, summarizes the application of balance of power theory to détente.

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513 Carr 1939, 105-106.
514 Schweller and Wohlforth 2000, 77.
515 See Waltz 1979.
H5.1: The shifting balance of power is sufficient for explaining détente. As the superpowers approached parity, cooperation became possible, especially in areas that did not implicate their relative security.

By stating 5.1 as a sufficient condition for détente, I am establishing a plausible theory test. My argument is that the shifting balance of power is not sufficient to explain détente.

Power-transition theory also furnishes useful hypotheses for explaining the collapse of détente. For power-transition theorists, in general, parity leads to conflict, not cooperation as suggested by Carr, Schweller, and Wohlfforth.516 For power transition theorists, war is likely during such a shift as the rising state attempts to increase its influence in the international system. This threatens the security of states that relatively decline, leading to conflict.

Power transition theory might be a powerful tool to explain the growth of superpower competition in the Third World during the 1970s. First, power transition theory is consistent with the discussion of the decline of détente. As the Soviet Union reached parity and was seen to be moving ahead, the United States increasingly adopted confrontational policies. This was manifested, one could argue, in the surge in support for anti-Soviet policies in the Senate and the public. Second, as it rose, the Soviet Union sought to increase its influence.517 This led the Soviets, as described in chapter three, to support National Liberation Movements, to desire to be treated as an equal, and to demand fair deals with the United States. Consistent with power transition theory, the pursuit of increased influence alienated American supporters of détente, caused a

517 Gilpin 1981.
domestic backlash, and led to instability. Thus, power-transition theorists might advocate

Hypothesis 5.2:

H5.2: The perceived power transition between the United States and the Soviet Union is sufficient for explaining the decline of détente. As the superpowers approached parity, cooperation became impossible because of mutual security fears.

Similar to H5.1, the power transition hypothesis is suggested as a sufficient condition because if it were only a necessary condition it would not compete with the theory established in chapter 2.

There is some evidence for both hypotheses. In many ways, the shifting balance of power in Europe during the 1920s resembles how policymakers in Washington and Moscow understood the shifting superpower balance of power in the 1970s. Inspecting the measure of national power in the Correlates of War (COW), a leading measure of relative state power, shows that the United States was more powerful than the Soviet Union before the 1970s, they reached parity in exactly 1972 when the ABM Treaty was signed and détente reached its height, and the Soviet Union continued to rise. Figure 5.1 shows the estimated rise of Soviet power over time:
Like Locarno, balance of power theory can explain why agreements were not reached before 1972 (the United States did not fear the Soviet Union enough), why they were reached in 1972 (mutual fear), and why détente deteriorated (the growth of Soviet power meant the Soviets did not fear the United States). Similarly, power transition theory can explain the decline of détente. As the United States and the Soviet Union reached parity, a period of tense relations began. American conservatives become increasingly concerned about growing Soviet power as discussed earlier in this chapter.

This data is generated from the CINC score in the Correlates of War project’s National Military Capabilities database (v 3.0). The y axis refers to the percentage of power each state had of the sum power in the international system (Singer, Bremer, and Stuckey 1972). Further, balance of power theory might also explain why agreement was reached in only some areas. Most agreements concerned technology, trade, the environment, and other issue areas that do not directly implicate security. See Lipson 1984. Even ABMs might not implicate relative gains if the superpowers thought that the balance of power is secured through offensive weapons. Matthews 1996. As such, balance of power theory may be able to explain the variation between cooperation over defensive weapons, trade, the environment, and technology and limited cooperation on offense.
Despite this evidence, however, there are a number of reasons why realist arguments do not undermine the central empirical claims of chapters three and four. First, neither the power transition hypothesis nor the balance of power hypothesis is specific enough to claim that the shift in the balance of power sufficiently explains the ABM Treaty, the Basic Principles Agreement, or cooperation during the October War. Structural variables tend to predict general outcomes but not the specific agreements states conclude.

Second, the power transition hypothesis cannot be a sufficient condition for détente. While power transition theory is able to explain renewed animosity during the late 1970s, it is unable to explain the growth of cooperation that occurred during Nixon’s first term. Whereas the power transition hypothesis indicates that parity leads to conflict, during détente, the advent of parity led to one of the most significant periods of cooperation during the Cold War. Therefore, parity does not necessarily lead to conflict, an argument conceded by many power transition theorists who agree that there is no perfect relationship between power transitions and war.

Third, there was no shift in the balance of power during the 1970s. Despite the evidence cited by conservative policymakers, the Soviet Union never actually obtained dominance. As William Wohlforth explains, “The picture requiring the most creative genius to paint would be ‘Dynamic Soviet Union Challenges America in Decline.’ Yet that was how power trends were perceived in the 1970s.”

Why was the evidence of a power transition so misleading? First, the data presented in Figure 5.1 is estimated in dollars. This creates the well-known index number

520 Wohlforth 1993, 185.
problem, which inflates the size of Soviet military expenditures. If one removes the inflated military expenditures and relies on other elements of the COW index—total population, energy, iron and steel production, urban population, and military personnel—the United States and the Soviet Union did not achieve parity in the 1970s. In fact, the Soviet Union never achieves parity in terms of their war-fighting potential, a statistic that few today are likely to deny. Even these scores may inflate Soviet power. These indicators exclude crucial sources of American strength such as overall economic power and technology. As Oneal explains, the apparent Soviet strengths in the COW index are, in reality, weaknesses. For example, increase Soviet iron and steel production, often calculated as an element of Soviet strength, may point toward inefficiencies in converting steel into finished products or the strength of the U.S. focus on plastics. Removing iron and steel production from the capabilities index, American relative power over the Soviet Union looms larger.

Further, neither the conventional nor the nuclear balance ever favored the Soviet Union. Despite antagonistic debates over relative strategic power during the 1970s, recent materials from the Soviet archives show that the Soviet Union neither intended to nor obtained strategic dominance. Pavel Podwig recent definitively analysis of the Soviet nuclear arms program finds that the Soviet effort to improve accuracy and harden silos was significantly less effective than détente’s critics claimed. He also shows, through an

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522 For a summary, see Brooks and Wohlfarth 2000/1. On the failures of the Soviet economy, see Allen 2001; Gatrell 2006; and Rowan 1984. On the inability to compete technologically, see Cooperstine 2006; and Luke 1985.
524 For example, see the differences between Gervasi 1986; and Lee and Staer 1986.
analysis of internal documents, that the Soviet military modernization program was not intended to achieve a first-strike potential. Rather, the primary goal of the modernization program was to survive a nuclear strike or launch a retaliatory strike. Neither superpower could “win” a nuclear exchange; there was strategic parity.

The conventional balance is much more obscure. The most frequent approach, which counts equipment and troops or relies on force exchange models, is problematic because it ignores doctrines, objectives, and the relative capability of different types of technology. Other attempts to determine the conventional balance relied on analyzing the likely success of U.S. and Soviet conventional forces in a single theatre, such as the likely result of a war across the German border or the ability of each to project power in the Persian Gulf. Since the end of the Cold War, these studies have not been revised such that new information from Soviet archival sources can amend the conclusions reached in the period. On balance, however, this literature points to several sources of American or NATO conventional strength that would limit the Soviet ability to make gains during a conventional conflict.

Therefore, while the emergence of nuclear parity with the United States may have been new in the 1970s, it is clear that the Soviet Union never achieved nuclear or conventional supremacy and did not have the capability to out produce the United States in the event of a war. Therefore, variation in international cooperation between 1972 and

526 On conventional power in realism, see Mearsheimer 2001, 83-137.
528 For Germany, see Hamilton 1985; Mearsheimer 1982; and Posen 1984/85. For the Persian Gulf, see Dunn 1981; Epstein 1981; Record 1983; and Wohlsetter 1980.
1979 cannot be explained by actual power because actual power remained roughly constant.

If realists claim that the shifting balance of power was crucial to détente, they would likely argue that this relates to actors’ perceptions of the balance of power, rather than the actual capabilities. Many contemporary realists argue that the perception of threat is more important for decision-making than actual capabilities because decisions are based on perceptions.\(^{529}\) As shown earlier in this chapter, during the mid-to-late 1970s, American decision-makers grew increasingly apprehensive about Soviet power. William Wohlfarth persuasively argues that this heightened perception of the Soviet threat was the source of American foreign policy during the 1970s.\(^ {530}\)

A theory of putative intersubjective beliefs enhances realist accounts premised on threat perception in two ways. First, it explains deviant cases for balance of power theories of cooperation. Underlying balance of power theory is the importance of relative gains: a state will not accept a deal that leaves them worse off compared to others.\(^ {531}\) However, if actors hold putative intersubjective beliefs, each may believe that an agreement implies a relative gain for their position. For example, the Basic Principles Agreement (discussed in chapter three) or the May 1971 breakthrough on the ABM Treaty (discussed in chapter four) are instances where the United States and the Soviet Union thought they had compelled the other to accept an agreement on favorable terms. In both cases, cooperation ensued because of this ambiguity. Thus, an analysis of policy-

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\(^{529}\) e.g., Walt 1987.  
\(^{530}\) Wohlfarth 1993.  
\(^{531}\) Grieco 1990.
makers’ perceptions of an agreement may lead us to expect cooperation when underlying other objective indicators of cooperation may be lacking.

A theory of PIBs also enhances power-transition theory by explaining cooperation between strong and weak powers. Downs and Rocke argue that there are difficulties ensuring cooperation when one state is significantly stronger than another and the disparity in strength is common knowledge.\(^{532}\) The strong state, having more negotiating leverage, pushes the weak state to accept an agreement, but the weak state might resist the unenviable deal because the terms privilege the strong state. Downs and Rocke find that relaxing the assumption of common knowledge enables cooperation. If the strong state overestimates the strength of the weaker state, it might offer a deal more favorable than the weak state expects. The weak state, presented with a good deal, might view that offer as a concession and respond with an equivalent concession leading to an evolution toward cooperation.\(^{533}\)

Accidental concessions by the powerful to the weak bear strong resemblances to détente. According to Robert Gilpin, a prominent realist author, a rising power is a threat to the stability of the system because it wants more prestige (influence) than status quo powers are willing to grant.\(^{534}\) In the early days of détente, the Soviet Union, which was perceived to be rising, wanted more prestige; because the United States overestimated Soviet capabilities, it made concessions in certain issue areas to grant the Soviets influence. The Soviet Union accepted the increased influence, viewing it as a concession. The power transition, as perceived by American statesmen, was peaceful because Soviet

\(^{532}\) Downs and Rocke 1990.
\(^{534}\) Gilpin 1981.
acceptance of détente implied it was content with an amount of prestige below the level
American policymakers thought the Soviets should demand. Thus, the power transition
led to détente because of the argument of chapter three: inaccurate understandings of
relative power led one side to make an offer that the other considered a concession, and
acceptance of the supposed concession was viewed by the first as a concession.

Realism is a powerful explanatory tool. John Mearsheimer, an influential realist
authors, explains that it is “like a powerful flashlight in a dark room: even though it
cannot illuminate every nook and cranny, most of the time it is an excellent tool for
navigating through the darkness.”535 The specific agreements discussed in chapters three
and four—the ABM Treaty, the Basic Principles Agreement, and cooperation during the
October War—are tremendously important nooks and crannies that cannot be explained
by broad and general theories. PIbs, in contrast, draw attention to the specific context of
negotiations; this potentially augments realism by enabling explanations of the specifics
of cooperation.

Liberal Institutionalism

Liberals, unlike realists, have concentrated on explaining specific agreements
reached during détente. Liberalism, defined broadly in international relations, points
toward the importance of institutions, democracy, and trade for international
cooperation.536 Several scholars argue that two features of liberalism, institutions and
trade, explain the achievement of cooperation during the Nixon administration. This
section considers these liberal institutionalist explanations. First, I consider the

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536 Oneal Russett and Berbaum 2003; and Russett and Oneal 2001.
institutionalist arguments from the rational design literature that point toward the importance of institutions for extending the shadow of the future, enabling reciprocity, and enhancing prospects for issue-linkage. Second, I consider the claim that Soviet expectations of trade explain cooperation.

**Regimes**

Liberal institutionalists often posit that cooperation in international politics is complicated by a lack of information, absence of a centralized enforcement agent, and high transaction costs. Therefore, there is a demand for international regimes to provide information, reduce transaction costs, and provide consequences for defection from international agreements. International regimes resolve these problems by enabling actors to develop reputations through continual processes of cooperation, allowing side-payments to promote cooperation, and permitting information sharing.

Liberal institutionalists might concede that common knowledge was lacking in certain critical areas during détente but claim that institutional variables were still important for explaining cooperation. A persuasive case could be made that détente involved a pattern of cooperation, with a long shadow of the future, that created issue linkages that facilitated bargaining, and led states to consider the costs to their reputation of failing to cooperate.

Security cooperation was part of a fledgling security regime. As noted in chapter three, the ABM Treaty was preceded by the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT),

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537 See Koremenos, Lipson and Snidal 2003.
538 Keohane 1984, 87.
539 For a summary of these arguments, see Hasenclever, Mayer and Rittberger 1997, 23-82.
which was composed of seven rounds of diplomacy, in which each state invested political capital. The process became heavily institutionalized. Delegations met over a period of years, shared information, developed negotiating rules, and tried to make deals that each could live with. In addition, the superpowers thought of détente as a package and attempted to link improved relations to arms control, trade, cooperation in space, science and technology, the environment, and conduct in the Third World. Indeed, as suggested in chapter three, development of linkages was an integral part of Kissinger’s strategy for managing the rise of Soviet power. The result was a cycle of reciprocity that one might believe culminated in détente. This argument is summarized in Hypothesis 5.3:

Hypothesis 5.3: Détente and the ABM developed because of a security regime. The security regime provided information, established reputations, enabled issue-linkages, and ensured reciprocity. The development of the regime was sufficient for the improvement in relations and the ABM Treaty.

Despite the intuitive appeal of liberal institutionalism in the case of détente, the causal arrows run in the wrong direction. In order for any institutionalist explanation to sufficiently explain détente, the conditions that explain cooperation should also be absent when cooperation fails. During the 1970s, however, the liberal institutionalist conditions for cooperation did not exist shortly before cooperation begins and did exist when cooperation collapses.

Before cooperation began, institutionalist variables were only weakly present. Before 1972, the United States and the Soviet Union had only a thinly institutionalized relationship, did not realize the extent of possible issue linkages, and reputations were unclear. Only after the ABM Treaty, Interim Agreement, and Basic Principles Agreement

541 On reciprocity in the Cold War, see Goldstein and Freeman 1990; Keohane 1986; and Patchen and Bogumil 1997.
were signed, for example, were many standing commissions created in other issue areas to resolve trade, environmental, and technological problems. Those that did exist earlier, such as the arms talk, were not central to explaining cooperation because key players, such as Kissinger and Dobrynin, did not attend the talks and key proposals were not offered there.\textsuperscript{542} Similarly, concerns about reputation cannot explain cooperation. Brezhnev and Nixon established reputations for reliability as a result of cooperation. Reputation did not cause cooperation. At first glance, institutional factors have a weak force before détente. Institutionalist variables may have influenced cooperation, but they are insufficient to explain it.

Second, institutionalist conditions for cooperation were strongly present before détente’s decline. By the end of the Nixon administration, as noted in chapter three, the United States and the Soviet Union had institutionalized a pattern of cooperation and developed reputations as cooperative rivals. They signed more than 150 agreements, met at a series of summits, and credibly committed to one another by attempting to shift domestic opinion in both states toward favoring continued cooperation. By the time Nixon left office, there were sunk costs in détente, reputations were on the line, and the superpower relationship was more institutionalized than at any other point during the Cold War. At the moment when institutionalist theories would expect the regime to have its strongest effect, cooperation declined. Therefore, institutionalist variables are neither able to explain the emergence of cooperation in 1972 nor its failure later in the decade.

There is one additional liberal institutionalist theory that I deal with separately, in part because of its sophistication, but also because of its specificity to the case. Steve

\textsuperscript{542} See chapter four.
Weber explains the origins of the ABM Treaty through liberal institutional factors. He argues that arms control was a Prisoner’s Dilemma: each party preferred mutual cooperation and arms control over mutual defection and no arms control. However, each would be better off if their opponent did not build arms (cooperate) while they continued to do so (defect). To escape the Prisoner’s Dilemma, Nixon pursued a strategy of enhanced contingent restraint, threatening the Soviet Union with an American ABM system if the Soviets did not cooperate on ABMs. In the meantime, the Nixon administration enhanced the credibility of this threat by taking steps to demonstrate its resolve, such as the expansion of American ABMs. This enabled the Nixon administration to extend the shadow of the future by encouraging the Soviet Union to evaluate possible future negative pay-offs that would emerge from U.S. retaliation if the Soviets reneged on their arms control commitments in the present. Thus, reciprocity enabled cooperation by increasing the costs of Soviet defection.543

There are two problems with Weber’s argument. First, empirically, I have argued that Nixon did not prefer cooperation to mutual defection.544 In chapter four, I showed that Kissinger and Nixon wanted the Soviet Union to reject the offer to negotiate ABM limitations so that they could win support in the Senate for building ABMs. Nixon pursued a policy of restraint to win domestic support, not Soviet support. In other words, Weber is right to argue that the Soviets thought of arms control as a prisoner’s dilemma, because they did prefer mutual cooperation to mutual defection. Nixon and Kissinger, however, thought of arms control as a game of chicken. Whoever refuses an ABM deal

544 In fact, Soviet acceptance of NCA-only might have seemed to Kissinger like defection since he assumed that the Soviets understood that the offer was to be rejected.
first pays a political cost, at home and abroad, while whoever defects second pays no political cost and still gets to build an ABM system.

Second, even if Weber were empirically correct and Nixon designed a strategy to force the Soviets to accept a treaty, this explanation does not undermine the argument of chapter four. Several additional misunderstandings arose during the process that contributed to cooperation (e.g., misperceptions in reaching the May 20th Agreement and over Vietnam). Enhanced restraint only gets the Soviets to negotiate ABMs, it does not solve the internal White House political problems concerning the substance or timing of the treaty.

On balance, a theory of PIBs does not compete with institutionalist theories and, in certain cases, it may enhance them. The most studied element of liberal institutionalist theory in the context of the Cold War is reciprocity. Many argue that U.S.-Soviet relations followed a tit-for-tat dynamic where concessions made by one led to concessions made by the other. In the case of the ABM Treaty negotiations, however, several offers were made that were not intended as concessions but they were interpreted as such. As explained in chapter four, Kissinger did not intend his offer to negotiate ABMs as a concession, but the Soviets thought it was. Before the May 20th Agreement in 1971, both Kissinger and Dobrynin thought the other was making concessions over the sequence of negotiations, leading both to make concessions in return. In these cases, a process of reciprocity began because neither side believed it was making the first concession. This suggests that one pathway to begin a cycle of reciprocity is a PIB, in which each party believes the other has demonstrated a willingness to begin cooperation.

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Trade

A second liberal approach to explaining détente relates to the commercial peace. Many scholars argue that trading partners rarely fight. Dale Copeland extends this to explain cooperation during détente. During the 1970s, the superpowers of low levels of trade but expectations for future trade were high. Trade, especially for American grain, provided economic incentives for reaching agreements in other issue areas. Trade was, therefore, the sweetener that made cooperation possible in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The evidence for Copeland’s claim is especially strong because it can also explain the decline of détente. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the undermining of trade deals in 1973 was an important step to undermining cooperation later in the decade. Hypothesis 5.4 summarizes Copeland’s view:

Hypothesis 5.4: Cooperation during détente was caused by high Soviet expectations for trade with the United States. These expectations were sufficient to explain cooperation, and when expectations declined, cooperation ended.

Copeland’s argument, however, is not an alternative explanation for cooperation from a theory of PIBs. First, Hypothesis 5.4 is too general to explain specific elements of cooperation, especially the Basic Principles Agreement, the ABM Treaty, and cooperation during the October War. Second, there is significant empirical evidence that expectations of trade did not drive improved relations. As shown earlier in this chapter, conservatives in the United States, not the Soviet Union, drove the decline of détente. These conservatives focused on human rights, ideology, and security, not trade. The reduction in trade expectations for the Soviet leadership is epiphenomenal to changes in

546 For an early statement, see Angell 1933. Recent representative statements include Mansfield 1994; Mansfield and Pollins (eds) 2003; and Rosecrance 1986.
547 Copeland 1996; also see Bearce 2003.
548 Copeland 1999.
U.S. policymakers’ beliefs; trade expectations were a consequence of the decline of support for détente in the United States, not a driver of it.

Trade expectations therefore are insufficient to explain the emergence of cooperation and a theory of PIBs complements the argument by providing a missing link in Copeland’s causal story. If the Nixon administration continued to think of the Soviet Union as a mortal enemy that one could not make fair deals with, they would not have considered making trade deals. Expectations of future trade were driven by the emergence of an era of cooperation; an era premised on imagined intersubjectivity. Only because of these misperceptions was cooperation and therefore trade possible. Therefore, PIBs might complement Copeland’s analysis by explaining the origins of expectations for trade.549

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to address several methodological concerns not treated earlier. Earlier chapters traced the process of cooperation during détente, showing that at the macro and micro level, détente was premised on imagined intersubjectivity. Process tracing, while useful in demonstrating causal logic, is often unable to control for competing explanations. This chapter has address this concern in two ways. First, the analysis of the decline of détente shows that variation on the independent variable—actors beliefs about one another—led to variation on the dependent variable—the level of cooperation. By examining in-case variation over time, I am able to control for alternative explanations, such as power and institutions, with more confidence than using

549 This is in contrast to Copeland’s argument about the balance of power. See Copeland 2003.
process tracing alone. When variables related to power remained static and institutional variables pointed towards cooperation, détente collapsed. Table 5.2 summarizes these results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Level of Cooperation</th>
<th>Military Parity</th>
<th>Level of Institutionalization</th>
<th>Trade</th>
<th>Administration Beliefs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1972-1973</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Pro-détente</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973-1975</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976-1979</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Anti-Détente</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2: Summary of the Decline of Détente

Table 5.2 shows that the cooperation varied during the period. This variation did not correspond to changes in levels of institutionalization, strategic parity (actual power), or trade. Changes in beliefs correlate with the level of cooperation, implying that belief change is an independent explanation of cooperation. This evidence, when combined with the process tracing in chapters three and four, provides additional evidence that PIBs played a role in cooperation.

Second, I examined the ways in which a theory of PIBs augments realist and liberal theories. In both cases, a theory of PIBs explains deviant cases. For realism, PIBs can explain cases in which actors cooperate because they unknowingly disagree about the relative balance of power. If a strong state overstates the power of a weak state, and a weak state overstates the power of the strong state, each will believe that deals are generous. Similarly, PIBs can explain why a process of cooperation might start between
two states. I argued that when actors mistake hard bargaining as concessions, cycles of reciprocity can start that enable cooperation.

While realist and liberal institutionalist variables are two critical theories in explaining the origins of détente, future research might test several other contextually important factors. First, many argue that Nixon’s turn toward China was crucial for the success of the SALT process. The evidence in favor of this interpretation is far from decisive. The Soviet Union showed a willingness to engage with the United States over arms control before the opening to China. Further, a Soviet interest in cooperation, caused by triangular diplomacy, does not mean cooperation will be successful. The United States might still bargain to hard, forcing Brezhnev to retrench, not engage.

Further, future work is needed to determine whether the triangular relationship between Nixon, Mao, and Brezhnev was understood similarly in each capital. I suspect that the United States and China never quite understood one another, especially with respect to Taiwan and Vietnam, and that these misunderstandings contributed to the improvement of relations. I also suspect that the United States and the Soviet Union held different impressions of the goal of Nixon’s China policy. Future empirical work might extend the theory of PIBs to explain triangular diplomacy.
Chapter Six: Conclusion

The 1961 United Nations Conference on Diplomatic Intercourse and Immunities was tasked with deciding the protocols for diplomats and immunities for diplomats abroad. For many legal commentators, these protocols are the foundational law governing diplomatic relations and one of the most widely used and effective multilateral instruments in the international system. In asking for the conference, the representative of Yugoslavia argued that violations of customary diplomatic immunities had become common and “the time had come to find a general legal solution for the problem.”

After the conference, many commentators found the international community in complete agreement: “The Vienna Conference was successful, in that it was able to reach agreement on the totality of its subject matter.”

One of the most important issues at the conference was the definition of ‘members of the household.’ Delegates agreed that members of the household should receive diplomatic immunity, but who is a member of a household? The United States proposed that a household include spouses, minor children, children who are full-time students, and other members of the immediate family living in the residence. The Soviet legal tradition is less expansive, and the Soviet representative sought to exclude full-time students. Customs in Mexico demanded that dependants not living in the residence also...

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550 On the legal importance of the Convention, see Denza 1998; and Lewis 1985. On multilateralism and the Convention, see Brown 1988, 54.
551 In Liang 1953.
be mentioned. Vietnamese tradition required that only persons dependent on the person in residence be listed. India’s representative suggested that the definition be left open and be negotiated on a bilateral basis: Indian law includes a legal obligation to support aged parents.  

In the end, the conference decided not to make a decision and no definition is offered in the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations or the Vienna Convention on Representations of States in their Relations with International Organizations of a Universal Character (1975). Because these issues rarely led to disputes, why make the conference fail by insisting that ‘members of the household’ become clear? Failure to obtain common knowledge or an intersubjective consensus concerning the meaning of family was unimportant; the effort to obtain agreement made a simple issue difficult. In the case of the Vienna Conference, cultural differences became apparent and the negotiators decided to ignore them and leave the rule ambiguous. The effort to make the rule clear stood in the way of cooperation.

During the U.S.-Soviet détente, the rules were also ambiguous. Would détente authorize Soviet military intervention in the Third World? Would the United States continue to seek political dominance over the Soviet Union? Would the parties continue to rely on nuclear threats to obtain short-term gains? The leadership in both countries thought a deal had been reached that had fundamentally changed the nature of the superpower relationship. Unlike the Vienna Conference, the parties were unaware of their complex differences. This was a laudatory oversight; in contrast to the Vienna Conference, if U.S.-Soviet differences over high politics had become apparent, they could not be ignored and would have damaged chances for cooperation in the Middle

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553 O’Keefe 1976; and Thakore 1981.
East, on the arms race, on the ground rules for peaceful competition, and in other issue areas. Because of imagined intersubjectivity, cooperation blossomed.

**A Theory of Cooperation**

A consensus among most students of International Relations (IR) is that misperception leads to conflict while mutual understanding makes cooperation and peace more likely. Undoubtedly, in many cases this consensus is right. Misperceptions of the offense-defense balance contributed to World War I, misperceptions of Germany’s intentions in part led to the failure to deter Germany in the Second World War, and most recently, the belief that there were Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) contributed to the Iraq War. Is misperception always a cause of conflict and never a cause of cooperation?

*Putative Intersubjective Beliefs and Cooperation*

In chapter two, I argued that even though misperceptions can cause war, that does not mean that misperceptions do not also contribute to cooperation. In certain cases, actors may choose cooperation over conflict if they believe there are shared beliefs that point toward a cooperative outcome. These shared beliefs, which I refer to as public beliefs, are beliefs that begin with the pronoun “we,” such as “we believe that Hitler is a threat.” For example, during the Second World War, many in the American public and some in the Roosevelt administration believed there was a shared public belief with the Soviet Union that, once liberated, Poland and other states conquered by Hitler would be free to determine their own destiny. Similarly, Ho Chi Minh believed the United States

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554 This literature is reviewed in the introduction.
and the Vietnamese nationalists shared certain normative commitments that stemmed from their shared colonial experiences. This enabled cooperation during the Second World War. Political leaders, publics, and activist groups believe that public beliefs are transnational, linking different political leaders together into a community of belief-holders.

Public beliefs that are well founded are intersubjective. Actors may, in certain cases, understand the principles that guide a belief related to action and the practical effect that public beliefs will have on behavior. Globally, for example, many agree that global warming is a threat and know that this belief is shared by others. In other cases, public beliefs are based on misperceptions. Two or more actors may believe a belief is a shared but be wrong. Ho Chi Minh, for example, was wrong to posit a shared understanding with the United States, just as the American public was wrong to believe that a shared principle was held in common with Stalin regarding Eastern Europe. In these cases, which I refer to as putative intersubjective beliefs (PIBs), the “we” that holds a belief is more fiction than real, as there is no consensus on meaning. However, this fiction may have practical consequences, especially for international cooperation.

During the Nixon administration, the superpower relationship was characterized by imagined intersubjectivity. Imagined intersubjectivity is a specific form of PIB where actors hold an inaccurate belief about what another will do and why she will do it. Imagined intersubjectivity may lead to cooperation in two cases where intersubjectivity or common knowledge could stand as a roadblock.

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555 In chapter two, I also trace two other types of PIBs—Functional Incompletely Theorized Agreements and Functional Overlapping Principles—but do not pursue them empirically.
First, imagined intersubjectivity may lead to cooperation if actors care greatly about the principles of a belief, more so than the practical consequences of cooperation. In these cases, imagined intersubjectivity may enable actors to overlook their principled differences, by making actors unaware that such differences exist, and enable practical cooperation. This is especially likely in cases where actors are emotionally attached to moral beliefs, such as the right of self-determination in the case of Vietnam. Consider the example of Barack and John working as teenagers at a phone bank in support of a local candidate in a non-partisan judicial election. Barack believes the candidate and her supporters share his commitment to distributive justice. John, who sits at the next desk, also believes that the candidate and her supporters share his values, except John believes the candidate is interested in promoting individual autonomy against government intervention. If their principled differences were discovered, they might fight, keeping them off the phones, and, even worse, distracting the other volunteers. Ignorance of principled disagreements might promote cooperation on practical matters.

Second, imagined intersubjectivity may lead to cooperation when actors are unaware of potential long-term divergences in the behavior of others and, if they were aware, they would choose not to cooperate. For example, imagine a sanctions regime where the Security Council agrees to impose ‘serious consequences’ on a state if it does not yield to inspections. In this hypothetical, one Security Council member believes that serious consequences is a trigger for military intervention, and another believes that serious consequences is a trigger for stiffer economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation.

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556 This regime is hypothetical because the members of the Security Council were aware of the ambiguities of the U.N. Security Council Resolution. See Byers 2004; and Thompson 2009, 141-143.
The members believe they are in agreement and are unaware they are giving two different meanings to ‘serious consequences.’ The Security Council members may cooperate, perhaps even effectively, if serious consequences are a sufficient inducement for the target’s compliance. If they learned, however, that their agreement on the resolution was premised on imagined intersubjectivity, they might not agree on the resolution and thus not cooperate. Imagined intersubjectivity, therefore, enables cooperation in the short-term if more information or deeper mutual understanding would derail short-term cooperation because of long-term differences in expected behavior.

*Putative Intersubjective Beliefs and Détente*

Was cooperation during détente enhanced by intersubjectivity or common knowledge? In chapters three and four, I argue that détente is a likely case to find the mechanisms highlighted by liberal institutionalist and constructivist authors to explain cooperation. During this short period, the superpowers reached agreement on more than 150 issues, Nixon and Brezhnev met at several summits, their deputies travelled abroad on several more occasions to settle outstanding issues, diplomats met in standing committees to discuss important problems, and an atmosphere of trust and cooperation developed. For many, the Cold War had ended and détente was likely permanent.

In chapter three, I argued that détente was characterized by imagined intersubjectivity. The leadership in both superpowers thought there was a shared understanding, but their respective views of what this shared understanding meant were different. Both agreed that the Soviet Union had reached strategic parity with the United States by the end of the 1960s. Kissinger intended to rely on linkages and threats—“
containment by web”—to improve the U.S. position over the Soviets and prevent the Soviet Union from translating strategic equality into political equality. For the Soviet leadership, especially Brezhnev, the rise of Soviet military power compelled the United States to do more: to accept political equality. Each believed the other accepted their principled understanding of the nature of détente and this had consequences for their practical behavior. U.S. policy used linkages and threats to reduce Soviet influence and to compete for political supremacy; the United States expected the Soviets to engage in similar patterns of behavior. Soviet policy sought enhanced influence in the Third World, the creation of a sphere of influence and the isolation of issues from one another at the bargaining table; Politburo members expected the United States to tacitly agree to a sphere of influence and resist linkages. These differences in principles and expectations for behavior make détente a paradigmatic example of imagined intersubjectivity.

These differences led to cooperation at the bargaining table. First, the Basic Principles Agreement (BPA) codified these differences into international law. One article demands political equality and the next lays the ground rules for political competition; neither side paid sufficient attention to the details of the language added by the other. If they had, the negotiation of the ground rules likely would have quickly ended or resulted in a shallower agreement. Second, crisis management during the October War proceeded because of imagined intersubjectivity. During negotiation of the ceasefire, the United States and the Soviet Union reached a critical “Understanding” that would ensure that each believed the agreement was in their long-term interests. For the United States, this Understanding implied U.S. dominance in the region and limit Soviet influence to only a
seat at a future peace conference. For the Soviet Union, the “Understanding” implied a continuing Soviet role in Egypt and equality with the United States in negotiating the war’s settlement.

The same dynamic occurred during the ABM negotiations, where three cases of imagined intersubjectivity occurred. First, Kissinger believed that Soviet strategic culture highlighted the importance of defense. As a result, he assumed they would reject any offer to limit the deployment of ABMs. Kissinger, who favored at least partial ABM deployment, believed a Soviet refusal provided an opportunity: he could safely make an offer, have the Soviets reject it, and then take the Soviet rejection to the Senate as evidence for why the United States needed an ABM system. When the Soviets accepted his offer, Kissinger was flummoxed, referring to it as a “first-class blunder.”

Second, Kissinger and Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin engaged in a very ambiguous round of concession-making, culminating in the May 20th Agreement, that was premised on imagined intersubjectivity. Both parties thought the other made a critical first concession over the sequence of negotiations. Neither was right, but both reciprocated this phantom concession with counter-concessions, leading each party to bend on important issues. These ambiguities, which were premised on misreading the behavior of the other and misunderstanding the principles that guided the behavior of the other, led to the form and substance of the treaty.

Third, even after the treaty was prepared and ready for signature, the enterprise was threatened. In early 1972, a North Vietnamese offensive led Nixon to contemplate cancelling the summit and the signing of the ABM Treaty; Nixon even ordered Kissinger
to begin the cancellation process. Nixon did not believe it was politically possible for either leader to meet while Soviet tanks were overrunning U.S. troops or U.S. bombs were falling on a Soviet ally. Nixon changed his mind because he discovered the summit was popular. He decided on a new strategy. If he could force Brezhnev to cancel, he would not have to meet the Soviets during the offensive and could not pay the political price of cancelling. This was a case of imagined intersubjectivity: Brezhnev did not share Nixon’s definition of the situation and wanted to attend a summit. Nixon’s plan was spoiled because Brezhnev did not cancel. In all of these cases, the American and Soviet leadership projected their beliefs onto one another, leading to an unlikely episode of cooperation.

Imagined intersubjectivity was necessary for the broad improvement of U.S.-Soviet relations, crisis management of the October War, the Basic Principles Agreement, and the ABM Treaty. Without imagined intersubjectivity, cooperation likely would not have occurred or would have been fatefuly delayed.\footnote{This does not deny that common knowledge and intersubjective beliefs were also important to the improvement of relations. Chapters three and four show that, in many respects, these were important. My claim is only that certain pieces of knowledge could not be shared if cooperation was to prove successful.}

**Future Research of Putative Intersubjective Beliefs and Cooperation**

Several promising lines for future research stem from a theory of putative intersubjective beliefs (PIBs). First, a comparative analysis of Cold War decision-making may yield more robust results. In particular, comparing Nixon’s foreign policy to German Chancellor Willie Brandt’s *Ostpolitik* and to Ronald Reagan’s attempts to negotiate arms control with Mikhail Gorbachev may prove enlightening. Did arms control agreements...
reached by Reagan and Gorbachev stem from a shared definition of the situation, and were those agreements durable because they did so? Was détente between the Soviets and Americans less successful than Brandt’s Ostpolitik because the latter was able to develop a deeper relationship premised on more mutual understanding, or did Brandt intentionally or unintentionally duck important issues? Further testing within the context of the Cold War may provide for increased variation and control for additional explanations not considered in chapter five.

Second, in chapter two, three types of PIBs were outlined. This study of détente has only tested imagined intersubjectivity. A more extensive discussion of Functionally Incompletely Theorized Agreements (FITAs) and Functional Overlapping Principles (FOPs) is necessary to show alternative routes toward cooperation. Additionally, scope conditions need to be developed that postulate the likely conditions under which intersubjectivity, FITAs, FOPs, and imagined intersubjectivity are likely to occur. It may be especially fruitful to analyze cases of cooperation that have proven durable to determine whether FITAs and FOPs are present, and therefore, potentially more stable than imagined intersubjectivity.

Third, further investigation is needed to determine whether cooperation lasts once PIBs are disrupted. If policymakers figure out that their public beliefs are wrong, does that imply that cooperation will soon fail? In certain cases, it is likely that once it is discovered that cooperation was based on a misconception, cooperation will end. There are, however, two ways cooperation might last. First, once actors begin a process of cooperation, they may make commitments that are difficult to renege on. Kissinger and
Nixon’s approach to the ABM is an example. Once they offered to negotiate ABMs, they feared a public backlash if they changed direction. Therefore, exogenous factors may lead actors to maintain agreements that were initially reached through PIBs. Second, in other cases, the discovery of underlying differences may not derail cooperation because, while PIBs promote cooperation, they may not be wholly necessary for it because cooperation is overdetermined. Future investigation is required to determine whether cooperation that forms as the result of PIBs is long lasting.

*Implications for Theories of Cooperation*

A theory of putative intersubjective beliefs (PIBs) has three larger consequences—methodological, rationalist, and political—for theories of cooperation.

Methodologically, PIBs draw attention to the importance of comparative analyses of beliefs. IR scholars often postulate that beliefs, identities, or norms are shared. Yet, many researchers only investigate the beliefs of one individual or one state, without making a comparative assessment of beliefs across populations.\(^{558}\) Indeed, recent methodological texts on social constructivism in IR do not mention the importance of comparative analysis, despite their claim to lay the foundation for the study of intersubjectivity.\(^ {559}\) To claim that a belief is intersubjective, researchers should first posit the population hypothesized to share the belief (the group members). Second, researchers should use a comparative strategy to compare the beliefs of group members. Decision-making during détente, for example, was undertaken by a relatively small group of

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\(^ {558}\) In certain cases, this is appropriate if the aim is to show the importance of a changed belief on a specific outcome.

\(^ {559}\) See, for example, Klotz and Lynch 2007.
decision-makers, enabling a complete comparative analysis. Studying larger groups, such as publics or the state system as a whole, requires different selection strategies to ensure that the population is suitably represented. The discovery of important differences, in the context of détente, points toward the need to establish more rigorous standards for claims pertaining to intersubjectivity.

Further, a theory of PIBs may have important consequences for the rational design literature. Recent work shows that international regimes form to serve important functions, such providing information, creating enforcement mechanisms, and establishing trust. The argument of chapter two, however, is that in some cases, PIBs, not more information, may lead to better and deeper cooperation. This points toward a functional theory of regime formation. If regimes form functionally, as an unintended consequence of interactions, then regimes may form that promote the diffusion of only those forms of knowledge that do not disrupt the underlying constellation of beliefs that lead to agreement. For example, the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks enabled the diffusion of technical knowledge but not the principled orientation of U.S. and Soviet foreign policy. Had SALT led to such a diffusion, cooperation likely would have ended.

A theory of PIBs makes possible an added evolutionary hypothesis concerning the role of information in the functional emergence of international regimes. First, regimes may form as the result of decision-making based on PIBs; political leaders may decide to cooperate in the development of international institutions because they do not understand the intentions of others, such as in the case of SALT. Second, if regimes premised on PIBs are to prove successful, the information transmission mechanisms that they promote

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cannot incorporate elements of the PIBs. That is, if the information diffused by the regime undermines the PIB on which the regime was founded, then the regime likely will fail. Therefore, some long-lasting regimes may be successful because they functionally evolved from PIBs; they last because they do not undermine that evolutionary basis. For these regimes, issue linkages, spillover, and the expansion of the regime may prove a threat to cooperation. As more issues enter into the mix, and new members of the regime are added to the discussions, the functional basis may be discovered.

PIBs further provide a second route to the evolution of cooperation often unnoticed in discussions of regime design. One perennial problem in explaining how actors reach cooperative outcomes is discerning why a state will make the first concession if it does not expect the other to reciprocate. However, if one actor engages in a behavior that another wrongly interprets as a concession (e.g., Kissinger’s offer to delink offense from defense interpreted as a concession), the second actor, believing that a concession has been made, might make a counter concession (e.g., dropping demands on missiles in Europe). The first actor, believing the second actor’s concession was the first, responds in kind. PIBs might jumpstart a cycle of reciprocity that will evolve toward cooperation.  

Politically, we are in a new “era of negotiations,” perhaps not dissimilar from the era that confronted Nixon and Kissinger as they chose to negotiate with long-standing enemies and reluctant allies. What can we learn from them? Nixon and Kissinger, because of either ego or fate, never understood the Soviet Union’s position and thus were

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561 See Axelrod 1984; and Keohane 1986. Also see Downs and Rocke 1990 for a similar but more limited argument.
able to cooperate with them. We, who perhaps cannot rely on chance mistakes, must learn that cooperation is more important than mutual understanding: the two do not necessarily go hand-in-hand. If a pressing global problem is on the agenda, understanding the future aspirations or long-term plans of others may be less important than cooperating on the issue at hand, and understanding may be in tension with cooperation. If global warming, war, and global poverty are eliminated because we do not understand one another, so be it.

**International Social Theory**

Beyond a theory of cooperation, there is a second significant consequence of a theory of putative intersubjective beliefs (PIBs). The theory presented in chapter two provides an alternative account of cooperation from those that rely on analogies to sociological literature, which concentrates on local politics. In so doing, it undermines the argument from abduction and creates promising avenues for future research.

**Putative Intersubjective Beliefs, Situational Pluralism, and Abduction**

Many of the most significant approaches to social theory discuss the importance of intersubjectivity for the production of social order. As explained in the introduction, for many social thinkers, beginning with the early sociologists, order is created when a group shares definitions of situations. For example, when Harry knows what Joseph will do if Harry undertakes some action, then Harry can establish long-term plans that harmonize his conduct with Joseph’s. If Harry is unable to predict Joseph’s plans, then order breaks down. Either Harry becomes uncertain of Joseph’s reactions, leading to chaos, or Harry must employ force to break Joseph and to render his behavior
predictable. For many theorists, actors become predictable with the development of fully shared definitions of situations; one knows the full range of considerations that others are presented with, their decision-making calculus, their values, and so on.

In the first chapter, I refer to this as situational homogeneity. Situational homogeneity exists when two or more actors understand the relevant features of an interaction in the same way. When two long-term teammates execute a double play, they understand the values relevant to the decision (two outs are better than one), they can predict the way the ball will be thrown (to the outside), and thus they can coordinate their behaviors. Given identical skill sets, their positions could be inversed with the same chance of success. This idea is captured by colloquialisms such as “they all played with one mind.” When two or more actors understand the reality of a situation as it affects each other, the actions of each become predictable, enabling the coordination of action.

If much social theory at the domestic level points toward the importance of situational homogeneity, a theory of PIBs points toward theories of social integration that highlight situational pluralism. Situational pluralism implies that a group of actors has different understandings of a situation and is unaware of their differences. Unlike a baseball team, there are significant differences in their understandings of how and why others will react. This does not imply that intersubjectivity does not exist: certain values, norms, identities, and pieces of common knowledge may be broadly shared by members of a group. However, there are key differences between their understandings of reality, and situational homogeneity is never complete.

562 By uncertain here I mean structural uncertainty. See Steinbruner 1974, 18.
A theory of PIBs is a first step toward a fuller theory of international social integration—the integration of actors’ expectations of one another—that does not require situational homogeneity. There are *prima facie* reasons to prefer such a theory in the context of international politics: there are fewer shared socialization mechanisms that ensure situational homogeneity at the international level than at the domestic level, differences in local context should lead actors to understand their interactions in different ways, and situational homogeneity is better placed to make sense of local differences (e.g. strategic cultures) discovered by IR scholars. These arguments were reviewed in the introduction.

The case studies presented in chapters three and four provide evidence for the existence of situational pluralism in the international system. Despite the confidence of both superpowers’ leaderships, the differences between Nixon, Kissinger, Brezhnev, and others were never bridged, and they never fully understood the reasons for nor could they predict the behavior of the other. This is not because there was no mutual understandings—many facts and norms were shared—but crucial elements of the situation remained different. This remainder, which was imagined intersubjectivity, played a role in cooperation in three ways.

First, in the case of détente, it enabled the parties to overlook a set of principled differences by allowing, simultaneously, the Soviets to think that the United States had accepted political equality, and the United States to think that the Soviet Union had conceded to a zero-sum diplomatic game. Political elites were unable to understand others’ motivations, from their perspective, and on balance this may have been beneficial
for cooperation. If these differences became manifest, cooperation likely would have been more shallow or ended.

Second, these principled differences led to differences in anticipated behavior: the Soviets expected fewer linkages and threats, ploys they believed were attempts to undermine equality, and they expected the United States to accept some expansion in the Third World. Had the Soviets understood the aim of linkages and threats—had they been able to understand détente through Kissinger’s shoes—they likely would have been less likely to cooperate. Only by misunderstanding Kissinger’s definition of the situation, for example, by crediting the nuclear alert in 1973 to domestic politics, could they look the other way and choose cooperation over conflict. Similarly, had Kissinger understood the Soviet position—that they deserved a sphere of influence and the Basic Principles Agreement (BPA) authorized that sphere—Kissinger would likely have not made the agreement nor agreed on ground rules for superpower intervention in the Third World.

Third, neither set of elites understood the other’s position in the ABM Treaty negotiations. Kissinger’s decision to negotiate ABMs was, in part, the result of his failure to understand the Soviet bargaining position. The May 20th Agreement was, in part, caused by a failure to understand crucial conversations in which each party believed the other was, in part, making concessions. And, the decision to attend the summit and sign the agreement was, in part, caused by Nixon’s failure to understand Brezhnev’s domestic position and his eagerness to attend the summit. In these three cases, neither set of political elites successfully understood the other’s definition of the situation of the other
but they believed they did. Because of imagined intersubjectivity, cooperation was achieved.

An important consequence of a theory of PIBs is the undermining of the argument for shared ideas through abduction. In chapter one, I argued that for many social theorists, such as Durkheim, Parsons, and Mead, and for some IR scholars, such as Alexander Wendt, shared ideas must exist because one cannot explain international order without reference to them. The form of the argument is that relations between actors are patterned, this patterning can be the result of shared ideas, therefore, shared ideas explain order. The logical form of the argument is abductive: If A (shared ideas) then X (order), X (order), therefore A (shared ideas). If there is no other plausible route to X (order), then it must be explainable by A (shared ideas), and thus it is an inference to the best (and only) explanation. A theory of PIBs implies a second route toward order. In certain cases, situational pluralism and PIBs also are able to explain the stability of beliefs and the decision to cooperate. Therefore, either A (shared ideas) or B (PIBs) can explain X (order), and abduction fails because there are two viable explanations for social order.

Undermining the argument from abduction, undermines the intuition that the international order is established in similar ways to the founding of domestic orders. It points toward different sets of assumptions about international social life that may be unreasonable in studying local politics. Starting from the assumption of pluralism, not homogeneity, requires understanding the dynamics of cooperation and conflict without recourse to domestic analogs. In brief, it points away from a “social theory of international politics” that draws on the assumptions a sociology that emphasizes joint
socialization, face-to-face interaction, dense societies, shared cultures and languages, and rich intersubjective backdrops for social reality, and toward an “international social theory” that starts from assumptions more likely to hold true at the international level. It cautions against “rummaging in the ‘graveyard’ of sociological studies,” and urges the creation of novel arguments rooted in the scope and complexity of pluralism. And, it portends a fertile ground for the development of novel theories by pointing to a limit point at which extant sociological theory becomes less useful in assessing outcomes in IR.

Future Directions for International Social Theory

Undermining the argument from abduction, however, only moves us part of the way toward an alternative social explanation for patterned relations between states. On balance, I believe there are grounds for preferring explanations based on situational pluralism and putative intersubjective beliefs to explanations rooted in situational homogeneity and intersubjectivity, but this dissertation is only a first step toward elaborating a full theory of situational pluralism. At least three lines of inquiry follow from a theory of PIBs: social integration, dynamics of PIBs, and the agent-structure debate.

The first line of research is the problem of social integration. By social integration, I mean that actors are able to develop dependable expectations for the behavior of others in order to accomplish individual and joint tasks. The problem of integration is explaining how a group of individuals (or collectivities) are able to develop

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563 Katzenstein 1996, 1.
these dependable expectations of behavior and become competent actors. Integration is one subset of problems related to social order more generally—social order may be thought of as a violent free social system, an integrated social system, or a functionally differentiated system.

How is social integration in the international system possible? There are three possibilities. First, the homogeneity hypothesis argues that individual actors often have identical definitions of situations; others are predictable in light of a shared understandings. As explained in the introduction, the claim that situational homogeneity exists and is essential for order is a foundational idea for many social theorists. This hypothesis, I suspect, is unlikely to be true of many encounters in IR; the international context is different from the local context because agents meet with different socialization experiences, differences in world time, and cultural and linguistic heterogeneity. There are barriers to empathy in the international system that may be muted in local systems with a higher density of interactions and more commonalities.

Second, the historical institutionalist or realist hypothesis is that situational pluralism may exist, such that individuals do not share dependable expectations for others’ behaviors, but they realize that this structural uncertainty exists and engage in force and fraud to make others behave predictably. This is familiar from the classical realist emphasis on power, where power is a necessary condition for the exercise of influence or the obtainment of gains, and the historical institutionalist emphasis on the power of certain

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564 This hypothesis is extensively reviewed in chapter one.
565 This is Hobbes’ account of the state of war. See Hobbes 1996, XIII, 3-4.
actors in the creation of institutions.\textsuperscript{566} On either account, power forces others to behave as they might not otherwise, leading to predictability, and enforcing order.\textsuperscript{567}

The pluralistic integration hypothesis, however, suggests a different approach. There may be a mechanism through which actors with different definitions of situations are able to reliably depend on others in order to achieve individual and joint goals. If so, it would capture the intuition of advocates of the first hypothesis, as it would suggest that individuals experience the world as ordered and patterned without, necessarily, a reliance on force. It might also be consistent with the realist claim that difference exists and actors have difficulty understanding others. How can actors develop dependable expectations for others without empathy? Part of the answer, to be pursued in future research, is that actors may have different understandings of situations, but these understandings converge for a period of time on a shared pattern of behavior, which I term a behavioral equilibrium.\textsuperscript{568} For example, if two actors are making a decision on whether to go to war, one may believe their joint situation is a Prisoners’ Dilemma and that both understand it as such, and the other believes it is a Bully Game. Both actors will choose to defect and begin the war without having understood the other’s perspective. Their behavior reaches an equilibrium, which confirms the expectations of both, without accurate beliefs. Differences need not be bridged to appear patterned from the perspective of individuals, 

\textsuperscript{566} For the realist account, see Morgenthau 1960. On historical institutionalism, see Hall and Taylor 1998, 16-20. 
\textsuperscript{567} See Dahl 1957. 
\textsuperscript{568} A behavioral equilibrium is similar but not equivalent to subjective equilibrium. See Kalai and Lehrer: 1993. In discussion of subjective equilibria, the payoffs and the structure of a game are known to both actors. For example, in a self-confirming equilibrium (SCE), these features are critical. See Fudenberg and Levine: 1993; and Fudenberg and Kreps: 2005; see also Figueiredo, Rakove and Weingast: 2006. In contrast, behavioral equilibria do not require these elements of common knowledge.
rather, PIBs may take the place of mutual understanding, ensuring predictability and the appearance of order.\textsuperscript{569}

The second line of research relates to the dynamics of PIBs. Where do PIBs come from and how long do they last? The latter question is especially important. Are PIBs fleeting phenomena that are quickly disconfirmed in light of new evidence that disproves the beliefs of others? There are three alternative hypotheses that paint broad strokes concerning these two important issues: the pragmatic, psychological, and difference hypotheses.

First, the pragmatic hypothesis is that over time actors develop more accurate understandings of one another. The pragmatic hypothesis postulates that actors may begin with inaccurate beliefs about others, but when those beliefs prove to be inaccurate, they begin to doubt those earlier beliefs. When doubt occurs, actors begin a process of inquiry that leads them to develop more accurate understandings of joint situations. Eventually, actors beliefs converges and situational homogeneity developed because the only stable set of beliefs is that which is accurate because only those beliefs do not leave occasion to doubt. In sum, PIBs, or mistaken impressions in general, develop early in a learning process and are undermined as actors move toward a fuller and better understanding of joint situations.\textsuperscript{570} It also may incorporate rational choice theories of learning to flesh out the process through which learning occurs after doubt begins.\textsuperscript{571} Second, the psychological hypothesis indicates that PIBs may arise and become long-lasting because

\textsuperscript{569} One interesting line of analysis would be to determine whether different institutional configurations contribute to the development and maintenance of PIBs. For example, what is the relationship between density and PIBs, soft versus hard international law and situational homogeneity, and so on.
\textsuperscript{570} Peirce 1998. Also see Meade 1936.
\textsuperscript{571} See Fudenberg and Levine 1998.
of psychological biases. There is significant empirical evidence that actors ignore information that should lead them to revise their views, preventing the process of learning from beginning. These biases imply that PIBs may begin and remain resilient because of attribution errors.

There is a third hypothesis, which I refer to as the difference hypothesis. Actors’ derive their beliefs about others from their impressions of what others thought and believed in the past. Without direct access to the minds of others, the process of learning is inevitably one step behind. If beliefs are constantly changing as leaders learn—if future leaders are not the same as past leaders because of new ideas—then our impressions of leaders, based on the past, will never resemble actual leaders in the present and future. We are always playing a hopeless game of catch up. In this sense, we are always fighting the last war, relying on beliefs generated in the past to make sense of today. This approach may connect interesting features of the pragmatic and psychological hypotheses. It enables interactions to create the conditions for doubt, while highlighting psychological biases that may lead to overconfidence in new beliefs.

Third, a theory of PIBs may have significant consequences for the agent-structure debate. The agent-structure debate in IR theory is too complicated to adequately summarize here. In general, the debate turns on whether structures produce and constrain agents, agents produce structures, or agents and structures are co-constitutive (produce and are reproduced by one another). This literature tends to treat structure as, at

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572 For an overview, see Levy 2003; and Stein 1988.
573 On the agent-structure debate, see Bieler and Morton 2001; Carlsnaes 1992; Dessler 1989; Doty 1997; Wendt 1987; and Wight 1999.
least ontologically, separate from actors’ idiosyncratic impressions of the structure.\textsuperscript{574} If, however, actors’ impressions of the structure are pluralistic, that is, if the rules and resources that actor rely upon are not jointly understood, then are reasons to be suspicious of the claim that social structures condition the behavior of actors in uniform ways. Kenneth Waltz, for example, highlights this argument when he claims that the distribution of material capabilities cannot explain the foreign policy of states because states may not appreciate the importance of the balance of power.\textsuperscript{575} In the same way, structures of social meaning may not explain the foreign policy of states if state agents do not participate in a shared social structure. A theory of PIBs may therefore push the agent-structure debate away from the notion that there are a group of agents laboring under a single shared social structure, toward the notion that individuals, each with a different impression of the situation in which they interact, have idiosyncratic impressions of what structure is and requires. Empirically, this means that individuals will appear more creative than structural theories predict, and sociological, this means that theorizing must turn toward the mechanisms through which actors make sense of the strange actions of others (the problem of social integration).

These three lines of analysis, if pursued, may be the beginnings of an International Social Theory. By beginning with the assumption that the international system is composed of relations between actors that are different than in the domestic context, one may discover that the glue that binds global society is different than it is in

\textsuperscript{574} See, especially, Wendt 1999.
\textsuperscript{575} Waltz 1979.
locally. At the least, it provides for a useful set of new hypotheses and theories ripe for investigation.

**Captain Cook and the Cold War**

In concluding, I would like to return to where the dissertation began. When Captain Cook arrived in Hawaii, a series of accidents led him to be mistaken for *Lono*, the Hawaiian god of peace and fertility. During Cook’s stay, the Hawaiian ritual beliefs went unchallenged, preventing a cosmological crisis, and outbreaks of violence (e.g., Cook’s stay on Kauai). Cook’s men were resupplied and their ships outfitted. Cooperation blossomed because of putative intersubjective beliefs. When Cook left the island in accordance with the Hawaiian myth, his departure was celebrated. Unfortunately for Cook, a ship’s mast broke and he was forced to return to the island. Marshall Sahlins tells the story of Cook’s end, “Unlike his arrival, his return was generally unintelligible and unwanted, especially by the king and chiefs. And things fell apart.”

Cook’s return created a cosmological crisis in Hawaii, as it constituted a challenge to the sovereignty of the Hawaiian King. In the end, Cook was killed and offered as sacrifice. Cooperation based on PIBs does not always end well for all of the parties involved.

One might suspect that the story of Cook’s death means that PIBs cannot provide a reliable route to cooperation. Beyond Captain Cook, the other examples of cooperation cited in this dissertation eventually failed. U.S. cooperation with Vietnam was followed by war, U.S. cooperation with Stalin was followed by the Cold War, détente was

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followed by a return to enmity, and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty no longer exists.\footnote{George W. Bush withdrew from the treaty.} The discovery of PIBs, while they might not always create cosmological crises, may occasion resentment and overreaction if actors are not prepared to interact with a real, rather than an imagined, other.

On the other hand, few cases of cooperation are long-lasting. Cooperation between the European powers, throughout world history, is inevitably followed by war. Yet, even if cooperation lasts a short time, it may be useful. Cook died but his men were well-fed; the Cold War began, but Hitler was defeated; the ABM Treaty no longer exists, but for at least a decade there was no defensive arms race. Delaying war, creating years of peace, and encouraging cooperation, even if short-lived, is not bad. It may be the best one can hope for.
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