Having traced the development of superpower détente from the point of view of the American actors, I turn now to discuss these events with the focus on Moscow. In the process I attempt to throw additional light on Soviet motives and objectives and to clarify how these differed from U.S. motives and objectives. I also endeavor to show how it happened that Leonid Brezhnev came to rely on improved relations with the United States to establish his own preeminence within the Moscow leadership and to solve the dilemmas the Soviet Union faced both at home and abroad with regard to commitments and resources.

The men who displaced Nikita Khrushchev in November 1964 had in common a commitment to predictability, caution, and orthodoxy in Soviet and international affairs. What this meant specifically and immediately in terms of foreign policy was the abandonment, or substantial downplaying, of Khrushchev’s “flirtations” with the United States and (potentially) West Germany and a renewal of efforts to put the Communist world back together, that is, to reconcile the U.S.S.R. with China and to fortify its ties with East Germany—and with Eastern Europe in general. The assumption or belief was that Khrushchev and his rash policies were the foremost problems in Eastern bloc relations. With more “normal” leaders and attitudes in the Kremlin, it would become obvious how crucial it was for the Communist nations to stand together behind the Soviet Union in its dealings with the capitalist powers.

Thus the first few months after the change in leadership witnessed a number of important shifts, despite the fact that the new regime’s foreign policy remained relatively subdued. The conference of Communist parties scheduled by Khrushchev for December (and presumably called to isolate the Chinese) was transformed into a “consultation” and put off until
spring, while overtures were made to Beijing for an end to open polemics. Khrushchev's planned visit to Bonn was quickly dropped. In lieu of it, in early 1965, Soviet and East German authorities carried out a series of harassments of Western land and air traffic to and from Berlin, ostensibly in response to use of the city by West German parliamentary bodies. Simultaneously the Soviets hardened their line with regard to American encouragement of German "revanchism" and particularly with reference to Lyndon Johnson's increasing intervention in Vietnam. They combined this with a number of gestures indicating support for de Gaulle's independent attitudes and for closer Soviet-French relations.1

Even more critical decisions were being made in military and domestic affairs. The collective leadership wasted little time in assuring the armed forces that, unlike Khrushchev, it was sympathetic to the growth of almost all services, especially those involved in projecting Soviet military power at some physical distance. In succeeding years, military allocations rose steadily as notions of minimum deterrence were abandoned, strategic missile forces were radically enlarged, an ABM system was installed around Moscow, and naval and conventional units were expanded.2 Meanwhile, the March 1965 plenum, following Brezhnev's lead, approved a five-year plan for agriculture that promised an investment of 71 billion rubles (more than the total spent in the previous twenty years), together with greater incentives to peasants and the reduction of state quotas on collective farms.3 In the autumn of 1965 Premier Alexei Kosygin announced what contemporaries called the Kosygin reforms—measures designed to transform the economy by giving more authority to centralized ministries in Moscow while providing for greater initiative and freedom at the factory management level.4

Significantly, all of this occurred in the midst of an increasingly conservative, quasi-Stalinist mood within the leadership, which lent support to the military buildup and surfaced in a campaign during the autumn of 1965 to crush dissent. This conservatism, identified in the Politburo especially with Mikhail Suslov, Alexander Shelepin, and Pyotr Shelest, would ultimately play a role in stifling the Kosygin reforms, as well.5

Following the conclusion of the Twenty-third Party Congress in the spring of 1966 (a Congress remembered primarily for its return to Stalinist nomenclature and its surprising increases in the projected allocations for consumer goods), the Brezhnev-Kosygin regime was finally ready to move aggressively on behalf of its foreign policy aims. This became apparent in its efforts to improve relations with all the nations of Western Europe except West Germany; in its attempt to weaken European-American ties by criticizing Washington's intervention in Vietnam; and in its use of the Bucharest conference (July 1966) to push the Warsaw Pact states toward
organizational reform and to offer both East and West proposals for the settlement of issues. The Soviet Union was prepared to reap the reward for having become a "normal" and "stable" state at a time when both the United States, with its Asian war, and China, with its Cultural Revolution, had descended to the depths of barbarism.\(^6\)

The new Soviet policy line was perhaps the most completely spelled out in the Kremlin's rejection of the West German "peace note" of March 1966 and in the declaration on "peace and security in Europe" of the Bucharest conference. The rebuff to Bonn occurred on the occasion of the Erhard government's decision to pursue a "policy of reconciliation" with its Eastern European neighbors by offering to renounce the use of force in settling international disputes. Since the offer did not acknowledge the existence of the German Democratic Republic, it was obviously unpalatable to East Berlin, and the Soviet Union quickly denounced it as merely a continuation of West Germany's "aggressive and revenge-seeking policy."

Later, in its longer response of May, Moscow went on to stipulate as a condition for improving Soviet–West German relations both the calling of a European conference on questions of security and the prior settlement of virtually all outstanding political problems. This position was formally reiterated at the gathering of Warsaw Pact countries in Bucharest in July, a meeting at which the Soviet Union was clearly trying to bind itself more closely to its Eastern European allies and to shepherd them toward a new post-NATO European order based on the permanent division of Germany.\(^7\) In the meantime, encouraged by de Gaulle's decision to withdraw French forces from NATO, the Soviets continued their efforts to develop stronger bilateral ties with Paris, building a relationship that achieved conspicuous success on the occasion of the French president's state visit to the U.S.S.R. in June 1966.\(^8\) At the same time, Moscow turned a cold shoulder toward the repeated overtures of President Johnson (the best known being that of October 1966) aimed at stimulating the "building of bridges" between the United States and the U.S.S.R.\(^9\)

In 1967 the Soviet diplomatic offensive against NATO reached new intensity. Governmental leaders, appealing for an end to alliances and more technical cooperation, engaged in an unprecedented series of visits to the capitals of Western Europe during the winter, Premier Kosygin traveling to Paris, Ankara, and London and President Nikolai Podgorny visiting Vienna and Rome.\(^10\) Simultaneously, Moscow responded harshly to the latest conciliatory gesture from Bonn, the expressed willingness of the Grand Coalition (Kiesinger-Brandt) government in December 1966 to abandon the Hallstein Doctrine and to establish diplomatic relations with the nations of Eastern Europe.

The fact that Romania broke ranks in January and formally recog-
nized the West German regime was especially infuriating to the Kremlin, which reacted by denouncing "militarism, revanchism, and neo-Nazism" in the Bundesrepublik and by organizing and renewing bilateral defense treaties between the countries of the Warsaw Pact. Behind the scenes, however, there was a second and perhaps ultimately more significant response on the part of Moscow: during the summer and fall of 1967, it quietly initiated conversations with Bonn, designed, apparently, to see to what extent the West Germans were altering their traditional positions on such issues as Berlin, nuclear proliferation, and recognition of East Germany. Then, in December 1967, after a number of discussions regarding a renunciation-of-force agreement, Soviet representatives made it clear that such an understanding would require maximum concessions by Bonn, including the loosening of the federal republic's ties with Berlin.11 The Soviet attitude seemed to be that West Germany could serve as either a bogeyman or a lackey but as nothing in between. Still, the two sides had begun to talk, and in this lay the seeds of future change.

The Soviet effort to use the Vietnam conflict to bring about an American retreat from Europe did not prevent the Kremlin leadership from negotiating with the United States when it thought this was essential. Thus an agreement not to place weapons of mass destruction in outer space was worked out by the superpowers in the latter part of 1966 and signed in January 1967.12 Similarly, an understanding was achieved with regard to a nuclear nonproliferation treaty in December 1966, although an additional year was required before this was submitted to other potential signatories.13 Most notably, on the occasion of Kosygin's visit to the United Nations in June 1967 after the disastrous Six-Day (Arab-Israeli) War, the premier was not averse to meeting with President Johnson at Glassboro, New Jersey, in an attempt to bolster the fortunes of his demoralized Arab allies. This of course provided an opportunity for Johnson and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara to urge upon their guests the wisdom of acceding to their January proposal for talks on eliminating strategic weapons. But Kosygin and his advisers were not ready for this, probably in large measure because the Soviet program to build an ICBM force as large as, or larger than, that of the Americans was still in its early stages.14

As it happened, the Six-Day War was only the first of three successive international crises impacting on the U.S.S.R. during 1967, 1968, and 1969—crises that had the effect of reinforcing, among other things, pressure for the expansion and enhancement of the Soviet military establishment. Following the Israeli triumph, for example, the Soviet Union's prestige in the Middle East was so shaken that Moscow saw no alternative but to involve itself in rebuilding and assisting shattered Arab armies. It also sought to win influence in the area by leaving in the eastern Mediterranean
the augmented naval force it had sent there during the Six-Day War. In
subsequent months the Kremlin chose to expand its naval activity as far as
the western Mediterranean and Indian Ocean and, in addition, to inter­
vene militarily in the civil war in Yemen.\(^{15}\)

Another effect of the new tension was to strengthen the hand of those
conservatives in the Politburo who had been campaigning for a return to
orthodox values and limitations on domestic dissent. Governmental poli­
cy regarding freedom of speech had been somewhat erratic during 1965–
67, going from relaxed to harsh to somewhat relaxed again.\(^{16}\) Beginning
in mid-1967, however, as neo-Stalinists like Suslov and Shelest took the
offensive, there was a systematic turn toward a more restrictive line. Dur­
ing the following January, the dissident poet Alexander Ginsburg was tried
and convicted, and in March 1968 Brezhnev himself issued a call for "iron
discipline" within the ranks.\(^{17}\) By that time, the leadership's anxiety about
nonconformity at home had begun to merge with concern about the spill­
over of reform ideas generated by developments in Czechoslovakia. The
result was a tightening of ideological controls and "a noticeable deteriora­
tion of the psychological and political climate within the country."\(^{18}\) This
in turn contributed to the context in which Soviet leaders would subse­
quently make their decisions to intervene with force in Czechoslovakia
and to pursue an increasingly hostile policy toward Mao's China.

Throughout these first years of the new regime, Leonid Brezhnev, as
party leader, continued to walk a tightrope as he struggled to develop his
own agenda and to increase his authority within the oligarchy. A man of
conservative tendencies but ameliorative personality, Brezhnev had clearly
not thought much about issues of "big" policy before he became first
secretary. Burdened at first by the orthodoxies of his trusted and long-time
aides (men like Sergei Trapeznikov), he only gradually came to enlarge the
circle of his advisers to include more moderate individuals like Andrei
Alexandrov and G. E. Tsukanov and representatives of the scientific-
intellectual elite like Nikolai Inozemtsev and Georgi Arbatov. Arbatov, in
his memoirs, recalls that at this stage Brezhnev

showed a lively interest in many things and eagerly listened to his inter­
locutors. . . . Interestingly enough, he was usually more receptive to ideas
in the areas he did not consider himself an expert on, like foreign policy to
a certain extent, culture, [or] even ideology and Marxist-Communist theo­
ry. On the other hand, he was convinced he was an expert on agriculture,
practical economics in general, and military affairs. He also considered
himself a shrewd judge of people, cadres, and party work.\(^{19}\)

As this learning process progressed, Brezhnev moved to strengthen his
position within the party structure and in relation to governmental lead-
ers. The first step necessarily was to capture the strategic heights of the party secretariat, but even before this was accomplished in 1966 Brezhnev and other members of the Presidium acted to reduce the power of Alexander Shelepin, the youngest, most clearly ambitious, and most intimidating individual within the ruling group. Shelepin’s demotion occurred in several stages, the first at the end of 1965 and the most obvious in mid-1967, when his friend Vladimir Semichastny was replaced by Yuri Andropov as head of the KGB and when Shelepin himself was removed from the secretariat.20 Meanwhile, Brezhnev succeeded in weakening another potential rival in December 1965, when Podgorny was “promoted” to the presidency of the Supreme Soviet and dropped from the secretariat.21 This left only Premier Kosygin as a potential threat to Brezhnev’s leading role, although Kosygin’s intellectual style and bland personality seemed to preclude that he could ever aspire to be the “number-one” man. Still, the general secretary always treaded warily in dealing with the Politburo for fear that, if he appeared too dominant, Suslov or others might attempt to mobilize the collectivity against him.22

A subtle indicator of the shifting balance of power between Brezhnev and Kosygin was their continuing struggle regarding allocation of resources, administrative reform, and popular participation in the government. Thus, although there was no Brezhnev-Kosygin debate about the decisions of 1965 that gave defense and agriculture resource priority, there was a recurring difference between them about the extent to which light industry should be cut back to the advantage of rural investment. Indeed, having established the ratios in favor of agriculture at the beginning of the Eighth Five-Year Plan in 1966, Brezhnev was forced to accept a downward revision in the farming allocation during the next year and succeeded in reversing this reduction only in 1968.23 In the interim, Brezhnev and Kosygin clashed repeatedly over the wisdom of administrative changes implicit in the 1965 (Kosygin) economic reforms. Kosygin’s speeches of 1965–68 were full of references to decentralist methods and managerial autonomy; Brezhnev’s by contrast stressed administrative centralization and party intervention. Both emphasized the importance of the “scientific technical revolution,” but only Kosygin argued that the Soviet Union should obtain and utilize foreign technology. As the conservative tide grew stronger, Brezhnev became increasingly the defender of the privileged role of party officials, in contrast to Kosygin, who continued to dwell upon the importance of governmental responsiveness to societal demands.24

The Czechoslovak crisis in the summer of 1968 was in many ways a transition point in Brezhnev’s relationship with Kosygin as well as in his career in general. Since Khrushchev’s time, foreign affairs had generally been left in the hands of the premier (Kosygin) and his foreign minister
(Andrei Gromyko), but with the Czech problem and later the Chinese crisis, this began to change, in large part because, as socialist countries, they naturally fell within the concerns of the party leader (Brezhnev). At any rate, after Brezhnev’s rather traumatic brush with responsibility in foreign matters during 1968 and 1969, he was not willing, or felt he could not afford, to allow relations with the major Western powers to remain outside his purview. He must also have been aware that both West Germany and the United States were becoming much less predictable in matters of foreign policy and in the process were creating both serious dangers and unprecedented opportunities for the Soviet Union.

Brezhnev’s difficulties with Czechoslovakia began in December 1967, when he traveled to Prague in an apparent attempt to “save” the fifteen-year-old regime of Antonín Novotný; it ended by clearing the way for a new party secretary, who rapidly developed destabilizing tendencies.25 Alexander Dubček was not an unknown quantity to Brezhnev, but there can be little doubt that the Dubček government’s liberalizing reforms of the following winter and spring caught the Soviet leader by surprise and left him vulnerable in his relationships with his own colleagues. By summer, the issue had become personal enough to Brezhnev for him to confide to an adviser that if “revisionist” tendencies were to gain an upper hand in Prague, he would be forced to resign as general secretary, for “it would look as if I lost Czechoslovakia.”26

Dubček himself attempted to slow the process of change, but neither cautious language nor affirmations of loyalty to the Warsaw Pact could reduce either the liberalizing momentum or Soviet concern. As the Prague Spring blossomed, Moscow fretted—the Soviet military was having nightmares about a possible fissure among its “northern” allies, while party elders worried that Czechoslovakia was opening the gates to subversive ideas. In March, Brezhnev spoke out strongly for orthodoxy, but subsequently he and the Politburo vacillated over how best to exercise leverage. The first political and economic arm-twisting by the Soviets came in April, following the issuance of the Czech regime’s reformist “action program.” In June came threats of Soviet military intervention, though Politburo conservatives were themselves badly divided about such action (Shelest demanding it, and Suslov having serious reservations), while Brezhnev was indecisive. Finally, in July Moscow mounted an intensifying war of nerves against the Dubček government, culminating in the conference of the two countries’ Politburo at Cierna, Czechoslovakia, and its deceptively hopeful truce on August 1.27

When the Soviet leadership, frustrated by lack of success, chose to invade Czechoslovakia on August 20–21, 1968, the consequences were far-reaching. On the one hand, of course, despite their inability to find
enough “orthodox” Communists in Prague to replace the Dubček regime immediately, the Soviets achieved a greater measure of outward conformity and political discipline in both Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union as a result of the intervention.\(^28\) On the other hand, however, as Brezhnev and others had feared, the effect on the outside world would cast the Soviet Union in the role of ogre, resuscitate NATO, and put new strength into American–Western European ties. The invasion also had a chilling impact on Soviet-American relations, compelling the Johnson administration to postpone SALT—which Moscow only the previous week had finally agreed to undertake with Washington.\(^29\)

In the long run, perhaps the most significant consequence of the Kremlin’s resort to force was that it alienated and disturbed the Soviet Union’s own allies. The Brezhnev Doctrine, claiming for the U.S.S.R. the right to intervene in the affairs of any socialist nation to preserve orthodoxy, understandably left the rulers of such Communist countries as Yugoslavia and China fearful for their independence. In fact, the invasion and doctrine so unnerved the world Communist movement, and particularly the Communist parties of Western Europe, that the Soviet Union found it expedient to put off until the following summer the international party conclave scheduled for November.\(^30\) In using violence to bolster the old order, Russia had created a situation in which, more than ever before, it needed new friends and new support systems.

Worse was yet to come, from Moscow’s point of view. The Soviet-Chinese relation, which had been deteriorating for more than a decade, now entered upon a genuine crisis. Concerned by the excesses of the Cultural Revolution (1965–68) and by Beijing’s hostility to its every move, the Soviet leadership began in early 1966 to shift military forces to its Far East provinces and to equip them with considerable weaponry. Though the process developed slowly at first, between 1967 and 1969 the Soviets more than doubled the number of divisions on the Chinese border, creating an army of more than 300,000 combat troops.\(^31\)

Beijing largely ignored this buildup for many months, but events in Czechoslovakia during the summer of 1968 prompted a complete change of course. Beginning in September 1968 with a formal protest regarding alleged Soviet intrusions into China’s air space, the Chinese government unleashed a denunciation of Moscow’s “social imperialism” and “ collusion” with capitalist powers. It supplemented this by attempting to solidify its relations with Albania and Romania, to patch up its ties with France, Yugoslavia, and North Vietnam, and amazingly enough, to reconvene the Warsaw ambassadorial talks with the United States. Then on March 2, 1969, just two weeks after a meeting with the Americans had been canceled as a result of leftist opposition in Beijing, Chinese forces am-
bushed a Soviet unit at Chenpao Island in the Ussuri River on the Soviet-Manchurian border. Mao Zedong was determined to demonstrate that he would not be intimidated by what the Soviets had done in Prague.\textsuperscript{32}

Faced with the danger that the Chinese might begin to send military patrols into some 9,000 square miles of disputed borderlands, Brezhnev and Kosygin embarked on a two-pronged effort, first, to compel Beijing, by use of superior power, to respect the existing boundaries of the Soviet Union and, second, to lead Beijing, through a gradual increase in military and diplomatic pressure, to begin negotiations for a general settlement. As a result, the summer of 1969 witnessed a variety of Soviet moves, including offers to undertake consultations, a continued reinforcement of the Red Army on the Asian frontier, and a series of barely disguised public threats of conventional or nuclear attack. Ominous editorials, articles by important generals, speeches by party leaders, discussions of a possible "surgical strike" against Chinese nuclear facilities—all contributed to a growing tension.\textsuperscript{33}

In the end, China capitulated, taking advantage of Premier Kosygin's September visit to Beijing (after his return from Ho Chi Minh's funeral) to initiate discussions that led to an October agreement on undertaking negotiations. Nevertheless, cessation of aggressive patrolling and a reduction in abusive language did not mean that the situation was returning to one of cooperation. The ensuing talks remained stalemated, and in the interim the Chinese hastened to perfect their modest nuclear deterrent, to strengthen their influence in neighboring states, and to revive their connections with Washington.\textsuperscript{34} This time Beijing was frightened enough of a Soviet attack that discussions with the Americans in Warsaw could actually occur. In Moscow, meanwhile, it became clear that the need for an expanded military presence in the Far East would not soon be reduced. For the third time in three years the military had demonstrated its centrality in Soviet foreign policy.

There were new players and new factors that made themselves known, however, in the course of 1969, among them, American and West German. Richard Nixon assumed the U.S. presidency in January of that year, and Soviet leaders began a long process of feeling out the new administration. Believing as they did that the "correlation of forces" between the superpowers was shifting to their advantage, the men in the Kremlin were understandably divided—the more fearful wanting to exploit the United States' relative weakness by promoting the erosion of American influence, the more hopeful hoping to use the opportunity to achieve a genuine collaboration with the United States (and thus solve some of their own immediate problems). Soviet observers were also curious and puzzled as to who was winning the inevitable battle for power within American society.
and politics—the "reasonable" forces or the "adventurous" ones. There were a number of encouraging indications—Nixon's reference to an "era of negotiations" in his inaugural speech, for example, and his willingness to accept "sufficiency" in nuclear arms. On the other hand, the new president's decision to support a revised ABM system was disappointing, as was the administration's delay in agreeing to begin SALT.\textsuperscript{35}

Nevertheless, the Soviet government initiated and clung for several months to a conciliatory line in its relations with Nixon. In February Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin emphasized to Washington Moscow's willingness to negotiate on a number of issues immediately and simultaneously, singling out in particular arms control and the Middle East.\textsuperscript{36} In June, addressing the world conference of Communist Parties, Brezhnev reaffirmed an intention to pursue peaceful coexistence with all capitalist states.\textsuperscript{37} A month later, Foreign Minister Gromyko spoke out for closer Soviet-American relations, responding specifically to Nixon's call for negotiations.\textsuperscript{38}

Only in the latter part of 1969 did the Soviet leadership face the fact that the fit was not good in terms of the cooperation each side desired. Nixon and Kissinger, above all else, wanted help in escaping Vietnam and in resolving the Berlin dilemma; they did not want to press ahead with arms control negotiations or commercial talks unless there had been progress on those fronts or until they had established better relations with China. The Soviets, on the other hand, were interested primarily in arms control, although they were also ready to bargain with the Americans over such matters as the Middle East, a European security conference, and trade. Soviet unhappiness with American priorities, and especially with Nixon's decision to visit Romania in August, became evident when Moscow waited as long to respond to the American offer to begin SALT (four months) as Washington had delayed in making the proposal (until June).\textsuperscript{39} In October and again in December Dobrynin complained with some vehemence to Nixon and Kissinger about "the slow progress of US-Soviet relations in general."\textsuperscript{40} From Kissinger's point of view, the Russians were "stonewalling." From Moscow's perspective, the Americans were linking the entire Soviet-American relationship to Vietnam.\textsuperscript{41}

SALT provided the Soviets with grounds for both encouragement and discouragement. The businesslike approach of the American delegation to the initial (November) SALT meeting was impressive enough that the Politburo sought and secured an endorsement of the negotiations from the Central Committee plenum in December 1969. Yet during the spring, and despite clear progress in the April sessions, the Soviets became increasingly nervous about American strategic policy. Charges of bad faith became common after the March disclosure that the United States would begin to
equip Minuteman missiles with MIRV. Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird, in particular, was viewed as attempting to revive the “myth” of a Soviet threat in order to justify new weapons programs. 

In the meantime, the Soviet leadership, responding to electoral changes in West Germany, was inaugurating a massive and potentially crucial reassessment of the U.S.S.R.’s relations with that country. There had been indications as early as the previous March of a reduction in Soviet hostility toward Bonn, possibly motivated by a desire to lower tension in the West after the outbreak of fighting on the Chinese border.  

(The March 1969 Budapest Declaration by the Warsaw Pact was so much less extreme than previous pronouncements on West Germany that some observers see Budapest as the birthplace of Brezhnev’s Westpolitik.) These hints became more obvious in the summer, when the Kiesinger government proposed the resumption of “non-use of force” negotiations and Moscow quickly agreed to this without demanding recognition of East Germany. In September, Gromyko, meeting with Foreign Minister Willy Brandt in New York, made it clear that the Soviet Union was interested in improving relations with the Bundesrepublik, if only Bonn’s policy “developed a more realistic shape.”

Actually, Gromyko was one of the more skeptical members of the Soviet elite with regard to the wisdom of drawing closer to the West Germans. Cautious and status conscious, the Soviet foreign minister’s natural inclination was to strive for better ties with the more powerful opponent (the United States) and to retain West Germany as a demon with which to frighten and discipline the Eastern Europeans. As Egon Bahr later noted, “in dealing with Gromyko, one always had to remember that in his list of priorities, first came the US, second the US, and third the US.”

Even after Brandt’s electoral victory in September 1969 and his announcement of a new and more active Ostpolitik, Gromyko still dragged his feet. Georgi Arbatov remembers that, when Bahr first came to Moscow in January (as Brandt’s representative), “I was asked to entertain him while we got Gromyko on board.”

It was Brezhnev and his more moderate advisers like Yuri Andropov who were the first to realize that détente could be built with West Germany as well as with France or the United States. This is not to say that the Kremlin was without hope that a détente with Western Europe would weaken American influence there, but it is to suggest that the Soviets were not primarily interested in practicing what Henry Kissinger calls “selective détente” (playing one détente relationship off against another). Note for example, that Moscow’s response to Brandt’s November endorsement of a European security conference and a nonproliferation treaty (two major Soviet aims) was to announce that it had dropped its opposition to Ameri-
can participation in the security conference.\textsuperscript{51} Note also, with reference to Brezhnev’s role and motivations, that, at the very moment of his notable attack on Kosygin’s economic policies at the December 1969 plenum, his confidante, Alexandrov, was establishing a secret “back channel” to Egon Bahr to assist in ameliorating Soviet–West German relations.\textsuperscript{52} It is no accident that on February 1, 1970, West Germany and the U.S.S.R. signed the largest East-West business deal ever concluded up to that time.\textsuperscript{53} Thirteen days later Bahr achieved his first hints of a breakthrough in the negotiations with the Russians on a renunciation-of-force treaty.\textsuperscript{54}

The bargaining was hard but the general direction was now clear. That Brezhnev was committed to a new West German relationship can be inferred not only from his call in April for “a new approach” to modernize and strengthen the Russian economy but also from the constant efforts by the Soviet negotiators to broaden the draft treaty to include a “formalized state of peace.”\textsuperscript{55} Neither the Politburo’s April rebuff of Brezhnev’s plans to replace Kosygin as premier nor Bonn’s insistence that the new treaty remain “narrow” could derail the negotiations.\textsuperscript{56} The essential drafting was completed by May 22, and after the West Germans obtained further narrowing in July (as well as made clear that a Berlin agreement among the Allies would have to accompany the treaty), the renunciation-of-force agreement was signed on August 12, 1970.\textsuperscript{57} At the special invitation of the Russians, Willy Brandt flew from Bonn to Moscow for the ceremony and for an extended conversation with Brezhnev, who, he recalls, had clearly now “reached the stage at which [he] had resolved—and been empowered—to take personal charge of important aspects of Soviet policy toward the West.” Moreover, adds Brandt, “the first thing to emerge from our discussions was his interest in economic matters.”\textsuperscript{58}

There was good reason for such an interest on Brezhnev’s part. A loss of momentum in the Soviet economy, first evident in 1968, had become painfully obvious to the leadership during 1969. The U.S.S.R.’s industrial growth rate had fallen off to 7 percent that year, the lowest rate since 1928. Labor productivity had dropped to the lowest point since the Khrushchev period, and agricultural output was 3 percent less than the 1968 figure. One result of these trends was a governmental decision to scale down virtually all economic goals for 1970, presumably because they now seemed far beyond reach.\textsuperscript{59} Another effect was to generate an intense struggle within the Soviet oligarchy over the economic priorities of the Ninth (1971–75) Five-Year Plan, the outlines of which had been expected as early as 1968 but were not actually published until 1971.\textsuperscript{60} A third, and extraordinarily significant, consequence was that Brezhnev opted to use the troubled state of the economy as an excuse to thrust himself forward as a critic of Kosygin and of the reforms with which the latter was identified.
Brezhnev's offensive against the decentralizers at the December plenum was couched in terms of old-fashioned orthodoxy and party (not governmental) responsibility, but it included something new as well. His remarks, though not published, were shortly reflected in a press campaign on behalf of greater labor discipline, tougher measures against absenteeism, and more party activism in industrial enterprises. Yet, in seizing the initiative against Kosygin, Brezhnev was not averse to shifting his ground somewhat, building a comprehensive program that, in addition to previous emphases on agriculture and heavy industry, incorporated certain approaches that Kosygin had championed. Thus, as quickly became evident, Brezhnev looked with new favor on material incentives as a means, along with exhortation and coercion, of increasing industrial productivity. He also placed new stress on the need to accelerate Soviet technological progress. It was in this connection, for example, that in March 1970 Pravda published the letter to party and government leaders from Andrei Sakharov and other scientists bemoaning the fact that Russia had fallen so far behind the West in computer technology.

As noted above, Brezhnev's efforts to assume a paramount governmental role soon produced a countervailing response by the collective leadership (the so-called minicrisis of April–July 1970), but the struggle in the Kremlin did not seem to alter Brezhnev's course significantly. In fact, when Kosygin, after a compromise achieved at two July plenums, was called upon to continue as head of government, the premier seems to have fallen in behind Brezhnev politically and to have reinforced the new line. The next month, during Willy Brandt's visit, both Kosygin and Brezhnev were explicit with the chancellor about Soviet interest in "developing...economic links with the Federal Republic, both by treaty and by cooperation between individual concerns." Brezhnev, in effect, had forged a new governmental consensus around an agreement to play down and supplement economic reforms with other, more traditional measures. Clearly now the dominant leader, he was weaving a programmatic synthesis designed to solve the immediate crisis and to mollify conservatives at home by using Western Europe to enlarge Soviet resources without challenging the existing system.

Progress in Soviet-American relations did not come as easily as rapprochement with the West Germans. The most obvious reason, of course, was the Soviet Union's unwillingness or inability to assist the United States by putting pressure on Moscow's North Vietnamese allies to compromise with South Vietnam to end the Asian war. Indeed, after Nixon sent American troops into Cambodia in May 1970, Moscow felt compelled to protest in Washington against what it understandably interpreted as an unnecessary widening of the Vietnam conflict.
Meanwhile, a further impediment to Soviet-American cooperation developed as a result of the Politburo's March 1970 decision to dispatch 300 surface-to-air missiles and several thousand combat personnel to Egypt to protect Nasser and his country from Israeli air raids. The Nixon administration insisted on seeing these forces as a presence that "threatened Israel and would be useful later in collusion with Nasser against any moderate Arab government." Nasser only compounded American concern when, after an Egyptian-Israeli ceasefire in August, he moved his air defenses forward into the Suez area in direct violation of the armistice agreement.

During the summer and fall of 1970, suspicion and resentment continued to plague the Moscow-Washington relationship. Nixon, buffeted by criticism following the Cambodian invasion and eager to discomfort his enemies before the midterm elections, pressed hard for a Soviet-American summit in 1970—only to conclude by September that the Kremlin wanted too high a price for it, "paid in advance." Nixon and Kissinger, however, grossly misread the international situation—not once but several times—leaving the Soviets irritated and severely confused. The national security adviser, for example, apparently advised the president in July that one of the Soviet prices for a summit was "collusion against China," completely misconstruing evidence that Moscow’s offer to sign an ABM treaty plus an "accidental war" agreement was an attempt to overcome U.S. reluctance to accept an ABM treaty by itself. Similarly, in September Kissinger badly misinterpreted both the Jordanian-Syrian conflict and the Cienfuegos naval base incident, treating them as Soviet-American confrontations when in fact they were regional and relatively unimportant incidents.

For Kissinger, eager to demonstrate his hard-line credentials to the president, this was an "autumn of crises" involving probes and challenges aimed at the United States. For Moscow, this was a season of perplexity, a period of wondering whether the American leadership would agree to an ABM treaty at all, or a workable Berlin settlement, or a European security conference. Soviet puzzlement was such that Dobrynin told Kissinger in mid-October 1970, on the occasion of the Soviet foreign minister's visit to Nixon in the White House, that "Gromyko had come [to Washington] to find out whether we [i.e., the president and Kissinger] had made a decision to adopt a hard line." That very month, while Nixon played up to conservative American voters by offering the North Vietnamese an unacceptable cease-fire and by having his secretary of defense complain openly of the Russian "arms buildup," the Soviets (1) backed down on the Cienfuegos matter, (2) signaled their interest in arms control by openly dismantling eighteen of their most recent ICBM silo starts, and
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(3) displayed a new seriousness in the four-power talks regarding Berlin. 73 It is not hard to see why they found the Americans frustrating.

Nevertheless, the year 1971 ushered in a more positive stage in rela-
tions, as Washington and Moscow responded to new pressures and new
opportunities. For Nixon and Kissinger, the overture from China in De-
cember (1970) and reports of food riots in Poland before Christmas cre-
ated a feeling of relative strength they had not previously experienced. 74
They were now eager for progress on Berlin and SALT, especially given
Willy Brandt’s recently expressed impatience, Congress’s call for an arms
treaty limited to defensive weaponry, and the fact that the reconvened
Congress would soon renew its attack on the ABM. 75 On the Soviet side,
the Polish crisis produced an even greater effect, alerting the men in the
Kremlin to the danger of ignoring the morale of the Russian working class,
prompting them to further revise the pending five-year plan and strength-
ening their determination to protect the German treaty by achieving a
breakthrough on Berlin. 76

As a consequence, when Kissinger approached Dobrynin with the idea
of activating their “back channel” in January to deal with major issues,
Moscow proved extremely agreeable. Dobrynin was authorized to pro-
ceed and as early as January 23 was able to tell Kissinger, with regard to the
Soviet position on SALT, that there was “a good possibility . . . of com-
bining a defensive treaty with an offensive freeze.” 77 Within a week he was
back to make an unprecedented offer concerning Berlin, namely that
“each of the Four [occupying] Powers . . . [should] have the right to call
violations [of access arrangements] to the attention of the others.” 78 (The
Kremlin, obviously, was wrestling with the problem of how to reconcile its
need to meet the access demands of the Western powers with its wish to
achieve sovereignty for East Germany.) On February 10 Dobrynin explic-
ally confirmed his agreement with Kissinger to “link offensive and defen-
sive limitations” in SALT. 79 Then, for several weeks, he hedged on this as
things ground to a halt in Moscow in preparation for the party congress in
March and April.

As it turned out, the Twenty-fourth Party Congress was the forum
where Brezhnev chose to offer—and proclaim—the fully integrated ver-
sion of his revised domestic and foreign policies. As such, the meeting
became an important milestone on the general secretary’s road to a summit
meeting with Richard Nixon. It also became a significant way point on
Brezhnev’s personal path to the leading position in the Soviet oligarchy.

Speaking at length in the opening week of the congress, Brezhnev
presented himself as the leader who best knew how to fit all the policy
pieces together. Explaining and justifying the newly released five-year
plan, he noted that for the first time in Soviet history the consumer goods
sector would grow more rapidly than heavy industry. The industrial sector, he promised, would not be forgotten (and, in fact, would be used in part to produce for the consumer), nor would agriculture (which would continue to be assigned capital at unprecedented rates), nor would the military. Nonetheless, despite such commitments, Brezhnev left little doubt that it was his intention to usher in a new consumer era. Not only would there be more products to buy, there would also be higher wages and more social benefits.

How would all this be accomplished in a period when the labor force was increasing only slightly? The answer, according to Brezhnev, was a more rapid growth in labor productivity, an acceleration to be achieved through rationalization of planning and through new forms of organization, specifically the "production association" (a combination of enterprises in related activities). Brezhnev was giving the Kosygin reforms his personal, more conservative slant; new productivity would derive not from market economics but from a "scientific technical revolution" dependent in large measure on the importation of foreign capital, goods, and expertise. In Brezhnev's words, "the improvement of the system of foreign relations is an important reserve for increasing the economic efficiency of the national economy." 80

Logically, then, despite "the [Nixon] administration [having lately] taken a more rigid stance on a number of international issues," Brezhnev emphasized that he gave the highest priority to the strengthening of Soviet-American relations and to the achievement of peaceful coexistence with the entire capitalist world. The Soviet Union would continue to oppose Western imperialism wherever it encountered it, but it would do so in the context of a six-point "peace program" that called for (1) a political settlement in Southeast Asia and the Middle East, (2) the convening of a security conference in Europe, (3) agreements on control of nuclear arms, (4) reductions in spending on conventional weapons, (5) the completion of decolonization in the Third World, and (6) the "deepening of relations of mutually advantageous cooperation in every sphere." In Brezhnev's view, growing Soviet strength, international détente, and an advancing world socialism were all mutually reinforcing. 81

An indication of Brezhnev's improving political position was his success in enlarging the number of his allies and supporters on the new Central Committee and Politburo. Of the 241 full members of the Central Committee, Brezhnev's "clients" now numbered at least thirty, a twofold increase, and many more could be viewed as friends. Moreover, of the four men added to the Politburo at this time, two (Vladimir Shcherbitsky and D. A. Kunayev) were Brezhnev loyalists, while a third (Fyador Kulakov) was a dependable associate. 82 On the other hand, that Brezhnev's control
was still incomplete could be seen from his inability to rid the Politburo of either Gennady Voronov or Pyotr Shelest, his severest conservative critics (this would require another two years). The limitations of his power were also evident in the fact that Brezhnev's foreign policy recommendations were not always endorsed by other speakers at the congress. Indeed, his "peace program" would not be formally adopted by the party leadership until the November plenum.

Revealing as well, both of Brezhnev's beliefs and of his political situation, was his willingness to compensate for his Westpolitik by intensifying the struggle against dissident groups within the U.S.S.R. Proposing to extend party control to research institutes, educational establishments, and cultural and medical organizations, the Soviet leader made it clear that diversity and pluralism could not be allowed to flourish. "We are living in conditions of an unabating ideological war," he declared as he called on "workers on the propaganda and mass agitation front to administer a timely, resolute, and effective rebuff to... ideological attacks." Détente in international relations did not mean relaxation of internal discipline. On the contrary, it required increased vigilance.

In the weeks following the party congress, Brezhnev, fortified by new political strength and clarity of purpose, embarked on an impressive array of diplomatic initiatives. At Tbilisi, Georgia, on May 14, just before the U.S. Senate was due to vote on the Mansfield resolution to reduce American forces in Europe, he reiterated for the second time in two months his readiness to accept NATO's proposal for talks with the Warsaw Pact on mutual and balanced force reductions (MBFR). (In so doing, he consciously contributed to the defeat of the resolution, probably out of his concern at the consequences of a sudden and massive American withdrawal.) Admittedly, he linked an agreement on talks to Western acceptance of his own repeated appeals for an international conference on European security and cooperation, but in the process he took a big step toward ensuring that both negotiations would ultimately take place.

Meanwhile, Brezhnev also pressed hard to achieve progress with SALT. Indeed, Dobrynin, upon his return to Washington from the party congress in April, was instructed to accede to the basic American demand (with which, after all, the Soviets had been flirting for several months), namely, that an interim freeze on strategic offensive weapons could be negotiated simultaneously with an ABM agreement. Though there was still to be considerable wrangling over the Soviet attempt to obtain American endorsement of an ABM regime limited to national capitals (the American proposal of the previous year, which Kissinger now regretted making), by May 15 Dobrynin had dropped this issue and cleared the way for the May 20 announcement of an intergovernmental understanding on
future objectives. What is more, though the final agreement made clear that, under any negotiated arrangement, modernization and replacement of offensive weapons would be allowed to continue (the loophole Kissinger had not fought to close), following the May 20 accord the Soviet government reinstituted its earlier self-imposed freeze on the construction of additional ICBM silos. This positive Soviet “action” was hard for the White House to ignore.

Other “positive” developments occurred rapidly with regard to Soviet policy on Berlin. Despite Brezhnev’s plea at the Twenty-fourth Congress for a speedy agreement concerning that city, four-power negotiations languished throughout the spring of 1971, primarily as a result of footdragging by Walter Ulbricht, the seventy-seven-year-old East German party leader, who held out for formal Western recognition of East Germany as a sine qua non. Then, on May 3, under obvious Soviet pressure, Ulbricht was forced to step down as first secretary, and the logjam was quickly broken. On May 18 his successor, Erich Honecker, was in Moscow to voice “general approval” of the Brezhnev peace program. In mid-June Brezhnev himself spoke at the Eighth East German Party Congress and emphasized that the Soviet Union was prepared to make the effort necessary to bring the quadripartite talks “to a successful conclusion.”

By early July progress in the Berlin “back channel” (the secret avenue of negotiations organized by Rush, Bahr, and Valentin Falin, the Soviet ambassador to Germany, which met for the first time on May 10, one week after Ulbricht’s fall) was so rapid that Kissinger directed Rush to delay the conclusion of the Berlin agreement until after July 15, when the national security adviser’s visit to China would be announced. According to Kissinger, “the last contentious issue” was settled in the back channel on July 24. When the formal agreement was signed on September 3, it was clear that, aside from gaining certain concessions, the Soviet Union had yielded much: at least some West German presence in West Berlin was permitted; the city’s consular and economic ties with West Germany were recognized; and although the Western allies were forced to accept de facto East German control of East Berlin, the Soviet Union now guaranteed Western (including West German) access to the city.

Brezhnev’s central role in all this was underlined by his personal invitation to Chancellor Brandt, conveyed in early September, to visit him in the Crimea. Hosting Brandt there at midmonth, without protocol or delegations, Brezhnev demonstrated clearly to the West German both that he, Brezhnev, was now the “dominant member of the Soviet leadership” and that he was immensely interested in the status of relations between Bonn and Moscow. Would the treaty of 1970 be ratified? And when? What was holding it up? When Brandt explained that “technical supplements”
would have to be negotiated first, Brezhnev showed his impatience (and practiced some reverse linkage) by insisting that the Berlin protocol could not come into effect before the German treaty did. As was the case during their talks the year before, economic problems were very important to Brezhnev. "He recommended ‘high yield’ technological cooperation," notes Brandt, "among other things, in the construction of nuclear reactors."

Pressed by Brandt to discuss the China factor, Brezhnev revealed only slight evidence of the anxiety attributed to the Soviet leadership by contemporary and later observers (Kissinger included) regarding the Sino-American reconciliation. Insisting that he was “not suspicious of Nixon’s forthcoming visit to China,” the general secretary went on to describe the Chinese as “hard to fathom” and predicted that “Nixon would have a hard time of it” in Beijing. Though he accused Mao of pursuing a “nationalistic and chauvinistic policy” and complained of China’s “anti-Soviet activities” in the Third World, Brezhnev professed to see “no immediate military threat” from that quarter.

To be sure, what the Soviet leader said on this occasion was probably somewhat less than candid. (Why did he make no mention of his reactions to the declining fortunes of Lin Biao, for example?) But even assuming that he was seriously worried about Chinese hostility, it seems hardly necessary to credit American triangular diplomacy for all the thrust behind Brezhnev’s Westpolitik. As he told Brandt, “the Soviet Union was ready to normalize relations with the United States, expand trade ‘without discrimination’ and initiate substantial exchanges ‘including space technology.’” This readiness to cooperate with America, in combination with a similar openness toward West Germany, had characterized Brezhnev’s policy since early in the previous year. Moreover, now that the Berlin problem was largely settled, a Brezhnev summit with the U.S. president seemed almost inescapable. The proposal for a summit that Dobrynin conveyed to Nixon on August 10 (the acceptance of which was made public during Gromyko’s trip to Washington in September) may have come a little earlier because of the China consideration (since the Soviets wanted Nixon to visit Moscow before Beijing), but it would have arrived all the same.

As the autumn progressed, Brezhnev and his foreign policy acquired increasing recognition and momentum. A significant hint of changing attitudes came on August 5, when Nixon for the first time communicated directly with the general secretary (and not through Premier Kosygin), dispatching a letter in which he reviewed the international situation. Shortly thereafter, in order to “balance off the US move to China,” Washington acceded to a long-standing Soviet request and agreed to sign, before
the summit, the understandings achieved in the SALT negotiations on avoiding accidental war and improving hot line communications.\(^\text{100}\) (The signing was accomplished on the occasion of Gromyko’s visit to the United States and constitutes the first tangible evidence that SALT could produce agreements.)

Meanwhile, in the weeks following the May 20 SALT bargain, and throughout the summer and fall, the president encouraged American businesses to enter into a variety of commercial arrangements with the Soviet government. The result, as we saw in chapter 5, was millions of dollars worth of contracts for American machinery and grain.\(^\text{101}\) With such agreements as well as Nixon’s acceptance of the summit invitation in his pocket, it is hardly surprising that Brezhnev’s state visit to France in October would be described effusively in the Soviet media as occupying the “center of international attention.”\(^\text{102}\) Nor is it surprising that at the November plenum of the Central Committee Brezhnev finally pushed through a full endorsement of his “peace program,” from this time on to be identified as “the foreign policy program of the XXIV Congress.”\(^\text{103}\) As early as September 1971 Politburo member Suslov (now prominent as champion of the drive for ideological discipline) had praised Brezhnev’s foreign policy as an “outstanding contribution to Marxist-Leninist theory.”\(^\text{104}\) During the last two weeks of 1971, virtually the entire leadership group—including the secretaries of the Central Committee—toured the country urging support for the new foreign policy line.\(^\text{105}\)

Yet, even with this support, Brezhnev could not dictate every decision. In fact, there is considerable evidence that the same Central Committee plenum that placed its imprimatur on the general secretary’s foreign policy once again denied him the premiership to which he so obviously aspired. There were many indications in the months before the plenum not only that Premier Kosygin’s political position was deteriorating (Podgorny, not Kosygin, went to Egypt to meet Sadat, for example, and he and Brezhnev met with Eastern European leaders in September) but also that Brezhnev was jockeying to have himself appointed head of government. Nevertheless, though Brezhnev played a central role in the discussions of the November plenum, it seems clear that Suslov, Podgorny, and others combined on that occasion to preserve the formal separation of party and government established after the fall of Khrushchev.\(^\text{106}\)

Another setback for Brezhnev during late autumn lay in the diplomatic realm. Here, the problem derived from the fact that Nixon and Kissinger consistently misinterpreted Soviet motives as the United States and the U.S.S.R. attempted to relate to the developing crisis in Indian-Pakistani relations. This had been the case since the previous August, shortly after the announcement of Kissinger’s visit to Beijing, when the
Soviet Union and India entered into a Treaty of Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation. Fearful that India would be encouraged to attack and even dismember Pakistan (newly vulnerable because of unrest in East Pakistan), Nixon and Kissinger were quick to conclude that “the Soviet Union had seized a strategic opportunity ... to demonstrate Chinese impotence and humiliate a friend of both China and the United States.”\textsuperscript{107} As a result, when war broke out in December 1971, the president and his adviser attempted to limit Indian objectives (particularly with regard to West Pakistan) by applying pressure directly on the Soviet government, using the hot line, establishing deadlines, threatening to cancel the summit, and sending the U.S. Navy into the Indian Ocean.\textsuperscript{108} They did this in spite of impressive evidence that the Soviet leadership did not favor war and was itself attempting to bring about a cease-fire and reassure Washington that Delhi had no aims beyond the independence of East Pakistan. (Indira Gandhi’s government also gave assurances to this effect at least four days before an armistice was achieved on December 17\textsuperscript{.}.\textsuperscript{109}

In the end, of course, the Soviets had considerable reason to be pleased, their Indian ally having defeated and politically divided its arch rival in the face of extreme American and Chinese hostility. Yet at the same time, Brezhnev and his colleagues obviously felt pushed around by Nixon and Kissinger. More than three years later, during a discussion of Soviet intervention in Angola, Georgi Arbatov recalls that Andrei Alexandrov said to Brezhnev, “Remember, Leonid Ilyich, how the Americans behaved during the conflict between India and Pakistan?” According to Arbatov, Brezhnev reacted very emotionally, said something quite nasty about U.S. policy, and suddenly lost interest in the matter at hand.\textsuperscript{110}

In any case, the first weeks of 1972, as Nixon prepared for and went on his much-heralded February visit to China, must have been a time of some unease for Brezhnev and his Politburo. The official attitude, as reflected in the general secretary’s trade union address of March 20 (and Brezhnev’s earlier remarks to Brandt), was that it was “quite natural” for Washington and Beijing to want to establish relations. But a hint of Brezhnev’s deeper feelings is indicated by his public assertion that “one must not overlook certain statements by the parties to the Beijing talks which give us grounds to believe that the dialogue went beyond the framework of bilateral relations .... How else is one to understand ... the statement made during the banquet in Shanghai that ‘today our two peoples [i.e., American and Chinese] hold the future of the whole world in their hands?’”\textsuperscript{111} Also revealing is the fact that, for about a month before Nixon’s departure for China and throughout his visit, Moscow’s press and radio waged an unusually vigorous campaign to undermine China’s international prestige and to show that Chinese foreign policy was chauvinist
and expansionist.\textsuperscript{112} Ironically, by March 20 Brezhnev apparently decided to adopt a less belligerent line. "Chinese official representatives tell us that relations between the USSR and the People's Republic of China should be based on the principles of peaceful coexistence," he noted. "Well, if Beijing does not find it possible to go further in its relations with a socialist state, we are prepared to conduct Soviet-Chinese relations on this basis today."\textsuperscript{113}

Within a few days, however, the strain of coping with China's opening to America was compounded as a consequence of North Vietnam's powerful invasion across the demilitarized zone. Nixon and Kissinger, of course, had been trying for many months to coax Hanoi into accepting the Thieu government in the South (and had "gone public" on January 25, 1972, for domestic political reasons, with the fact that Kissinger had been meeting secretly with the North Vietnamese for two and a half years). Furthermore, warned by U.S. generals as early as January of the likelihood of an enemy spring offensive, Nixon and Kissinger had repeatedly intimated to Moscow and Beijing that the United States would respond strongly if confronted with a military attack in Vietnam.\textsuperscript{114} Hanoi, on the other hand, driven by the realization that Chinese and Soviet pressure might soon compel it to accept a truce, was not about to forfeit the chance for one last all-out effort to overthrow the Saigon regime. The attack across the DMZ on March 31 was only the first of a series of coordinated offensives that continued for several weeks and that appeared a number of times on the verge of unraveling and destroying the South Vietnamese army.\textsuperscript{115} Thus Moscow was caught between its own need and desire for summit with the Americans and the needs and demands of its socialist ally on the far side of China.

As the intensity of Washington's defensive response in Vietnam mounted, the discomfort in the Kremlin grew as well. Unwilling to be driven from office by a North Vietnamese victory, Nixon (now largely without American land forces in Asia) stepped up the bombing of South and North Vietnam to an unprecedented extent.\textsuperscript{116} In addition, after Hanoi's representatives turned down the revised American peace proposal in negotiations with Kissinger on May 2, the president arranged for the mining of Haiphong and other harbors even though he knew that the cost for this might well be the summit with Brezhnev. In the face of such dramatic violence, Soviet hard-liners became increasingly vocal.\textsuperscript{117} Only after a prolonged and heated meeting of the Politburo on May 10 were Brezhnev, Kosygin, and Podgorny able to turn back the demands of Shelest and other conservatives for the cancellation of the summit. (Following this, they moved to protect their victory by depriving Shelest of his party chairmanship in Ukraine.)\textsuperscript{118} The Soviet navy commander, Admiral Sergei
Gorshkov, suggested sending in minesweepers to clear the North Vietnamese ports, but this idea too was rebuffed.\textsuperscript{119}

Brezhnev, obviously, decided that the war in Southeast Asia would not distract him from implementing the foreign policy he had previously defined. Indeed, his determination to stay the course despite provocative American actions is testimony to the power of his conviction that the Soviet Union required both a reduction in the costs of the continuing arms race and an infusion of the new technology that only the West could provide. His policy synthesis—which promised economic cooperation with Europe and America, less expensive military competition, more food and consumer goods, recognition as a superpower, domestic orthodoxy, and the ultimate triumph of socialism—continued to seem coherent and persuasive. Moreover, the pieces of the combination interlocked to such a degree that it did not seem possible to dispense with one of them without pulling down the entire structure.

The German treaty, for example, currently being debated in the Bundestag, could hardly be assured of ratification if the summit meeting with the Americans was called off.\textsuperscript{120} Nor could the trade pact initialed by the Soviets and the West Germans on April 7, 1972, be expected to survive without the ratification of the renunciation-of-force treaty.\textsuperscript{121} The American agreements hung together as well. Matters of trade were dependent on a SALT treaty, a security conference on an MBFR agreement, and so forth.\textsuperscript{122} Finally, of significance was the fact that Brezhnev had apparently concluded (possibly as a result of Kissinger’s April concession allowing North Vietnam to maintain its troops in the South after a negotiated settlement) that there was no reason why the war in that country had to be prolonged.\textsuperscript{123} When Hanoi refused to halt its spring offensive, the Soviet leader is reported to have remarked in disappointment to the French ambassador: “I wish our Vietnamese comrades were as wise at the negotiating table as they are brave on the battlefield.”\textsuperscript{124}

Behind the scenes, agenda building and preparations for the Soviet-American summit had been under way for several months. As early as the previous September, in conveying the formal invitation to Nixon, Gromyko had suggested, for example, that trade must be an item for discussion (and Dobrynin had followed up by arranging for an exchange of visits by the cabinet officers responsible for commerce).\textsuperscript{125} Subsequently, in January Brezhnev wrote the president and proposed a more extended list of summit topics, including SALT, the Middle East, European security, removal of obstacles to trade and economic cooperation, and expanding exchanges in science and technology. The Soviets also broached the idea of working out a Declaration of Basic Principles to govern relations between the two countries.\textsuperscript{126}
The response in Washington was not terribly thoughtful or systematic. Since, as Kissinger put it, American “interest in the subjects listed in Brezhnev’s January letter was not uniform,” some of these topics were largely ignored (e.g., the Middle East and the European security conference). Others were kept substantially in the “back channel” (e.g., SALT and the Declaration of Basic Principles). Still others were relegated to the appropriate cabinet departments (e.g., economic relations and cultural and scientific contacts). Meanwhile, Soviet leaders pressed hard for Kissinger to come to Russia for secret, pre-summit talks, in part because he had honored China with such a visit, but also, especially after the North Vietnamese offensive, because they saw this as a way of committing Nixon to the summit.

When the president decided to send Kissinger to Moscow in April (enticed by Brezhnev’s expressed willingness to discuss Vietnam), the Soviet leader took advantage of his chance to attack the major pending issues. Sensing Kissinger’s eagerness to save the summit (particularly after the American offered the aforementioned concession on Vietnam), Brezhnev proposed a variety of attractive compromises and arrangements. With regard to the continuing dispute over ABMs, for instance, he suggested that each side be permitted to protect its capital and one ABM site, a formula that Kissinger found less than perfect but acceptable. On SLBMs the general secretary obliged Kissinger by putting forward as his own the generous (to the U.S.S.R.) proposition that Kissinger had advanced to Dobrynin the previous March; he also agreed that the interim freeze on offensive weapons last for five years, as the Americans desired, rather than for three years, which was the most the Soviet SALT delegation at Helsinki had offered. Finally, the Soviet leader proved to be accommodating in accepting Kissinger’s revisions of Gromyko’s changes in the original American draft of the Declaration of Basic Principles, clearly appreciative of the fact that Kissinger was willing to endorse the key concept of Brezhnev’s “peace program,” namely, that there was no acceptable alternative to “peaceful coexistence.” In parting, Brezhnev emphasized again how important trade was to both countries. As noted earlier, there is evidence that Kissinger responded with considerable encouragement.

Three weeks later, following the unexpectedly mild Soviet protest regarding Nixon’s bombing and mining of North Vietnam, the president arrived in Moscow for the long-awaited summit. The negotiations that followed (May 22–29, 1972), occurring despite the continuing struggle in Southeast Asia, would be a particularly triumphant moment for the Soviet leader. Staged for display more than negotiation, the conference demonstrated to the world not only that superpower cooperation was possible
but also that the Soviet Union had obtained from the United States new respect, respite, and resources.

In truth, Brezhnev, loyally supported by Kosygin, Suslov, and Podgorny, was able to win American agreement to virtually his entire program. The Declaration of Basic Principles provided both an explicit endorsement of peaceful coexistence and an implicit, eagerly desired recognition of Soviet equality as a great power. The ABM agreement relieved the Soviet Union of its foremost concern with regard to the continuing arms race. The freeze on offensive strategic weapons was written in such a way as to minimize constraints on the modernization (and MIRVing) of Soviet missiles while putting a stop to mindless increases in existing weaponry. (Nixon and Kissinger achieved very little at the summit with their efforts to restrict replacement of “light” with “heavy” missiles, to limit increases in size of missile silos, or to include older Soviet submarines within already generous upper limits on submarine launchers.)

Though no agreements were signed at Moscow in the economic realm (aside from one establishing a joint U.S.–Soviet commission to resolve outstanding differences on economic issues), it was clearly understood that, as soon as questions of shipping arrangements and lend-lease debt were settled, a trade pact and financial credits would be within reach. A separate bargain specified that discussions could begin on Brezhnev’s much-desired European security conference in return for Soviet participation in MBFR talks. Behind all of this, of course, was a hidden bonus for the summit: the very fact that it was happening, tipped the balance in the West German Bundestag in favor of ratifying the Bonn-Moscow accords.

This was not a zero-sum game, of course. The United States (and the West) also benefited, if in different ways, from Soviet promises to “exercise restraint” and avoid seeking “unilateral advantage” (in the Declaration of Basic Principles) as well as from an ABM treaty, a brief (though flawed) freeze on offensive weapons, and more intensive trade, not to mention an improved Berlin situation and the commitment to work for further force reductions. Still, when one considers that what Nixon and Kissinger originally wanted was help in ending the Vietnam War and a slowdown in Soviet missile building, it is clear that on balance they accomplished fewer of their objectives at the summit than did Brezhnev. Perhaps they realized, in the end, that he did not have as much power to end the war as they had hoped. Possibly they assumed that they could rectify their errors of omission and commission regarding weaponry during SALT II negotiations. Certainly they were pleased to achieve a “peace cover” for themselves in case Nixon had to go before the American electorate with the war in Asia still unsolved (or faced with having ended it in a brutal fashion).
Be that as it may, for Brezhnev, after the high point of the summit, the summer and fall of 1972 would be a period of only mixed success. On the plus side was the steady progress toward completion of arrangements to implement economic détente, climaxing in October with the signing of trade agreements stipulating a maritime accord, credit opportunities, settlement of the lend-lease debt, and a U.S. promise to seek most-favored-nation status for the Soviets. How important this was to Brezhnev can be seen not only from his positive reaction at the time but from the way he behaved on trips to Bonn and Washington the following year, when he stressed to Germans how excited he was by giant cooperative deals and told Americans that he was eager for “large-scale trade worthy of the scale of our two big countries.”

The negative side of the latter half of 1972 for the Soviets included both foreign and domestic developments. First came the bombshell from Anwar Sadat in July, when (frustrated, he said, by Brezhnev's failure to do something for the Middle East at the Moscow summit) the Egyptian leader terminated the mission of the more than 15,000 Soviet military advisers in his country. Then came the great American grain fiasco of the later summer (following unprecedented crop failures in the U.S.S.R.): Soviet representatives purchased over $1 billion worth of grain, which drove up the price of wheat (and bread) in the United States and generated substantial American ill will. The agricultural setbacks in the Soviet Union were part of, and contributed to, a general economic slowdown in that country, manifested at the end of the year in growth rates that were even worse than those of 1969. At the plenum of the Central Committee in December Brezhnev was forced to begin a redefinition of his “peace program” of 1971, cutting back on his commitments to light industry and consumer goods in order to maintain agricultural and military-industrial investment.

Nevertheless, the general secretary clung steadfastly to détente and to the idea that international trade would solve his domestic economic difficulties. As it happened, 1973 would be a better year, with a record harvest, implementation of commercial arrangements, and following the Yom Kippur War and the OPEC oil embargo, a fivefold increase in the price of oil and gold (with which the U.S.S.R. was well supplied). It was not until 1974 that the policy synthesis with which Brezhnev justified, and for which he required, détente began to come apart.