

Margaret Thatcher's Role in Ending the Cold War

Margaret Thatcher's Foreign Policy

Margaret Thatcher szerepe a hidegháború lezárásában

Margaret Thatcher külpolitikája

Abstract

The present paper examines Britain's first female Prime Minister's foreign policy during the last years of the Cold War. Utilising memoirs, internal memos and recently declassified documents my thesis intends to illuminate why Margaret Thatcher adhered to the idea of possessing nuclear deterrence in the climate of disarmament and why she wanted to prevent the German unification after the fall of the Berlin Wall. It is also discussed how bitterly the English Prime Minister tried to slow down the unification process of the two Germanys, and how she wanted to keep the Warsaw Treaty intact. Setting aside the people's right to self-determination, she judged that the transitional presence of Warsaw Treaty troops should be elongated in Eastern Europe. Her ideological U-turn asserted itself when she turned from an anti-communist and ardent supporter of freedom of choice to a dignitary who would have preferred the maintenance of communist regimes because of Britain's balance of power interests. Unfortunately, her political visions collided with realpolitik since her allies were interested in a democratization process in former Soviet satellites, so her political shortsightedness concerning foreign affairs caused serious damage in the reputation of British diplomacy.

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1. Introduction

British foreign policy has been heavily based on the configuration and preservation of a favourable equilibrium in Europe and controlling major nautical straits and sea-roads, concealing its real political interests behind demagoguery. Palmerston, Disraeli, Eden and Thatcher herself represented this diplomatic tradition. During the ages of *Pax Britannica* the British Empire was a global hegemon, while in the post-war period the lion and unicorn have weakened so that England had no potency to prove its will in the concert of international diplomacy. As Anthony Eden, Margaret Thatcher did not apprehend the diminishing international prestige and decline of Britain, either. Even though Thatcher won the Falkland War in 1982, her late 80's foreign policy proved to be a fiasco. The Prime Minister's policy of deterrence fell on deaf ears in the clime of nuclear disarmament, although she managed to preserve the British nuclear arsenal which brought back the false image of being a super-power. Thatcher did not understand that the centres of power were drastically rearranged and during the Bush Administration she was set aside, while the transatlantic relationship between the US and West Germany were intensified. She was not able to object the German reunification and her standpoint concerning the future of Eastern Europe did not denote a statesperson who represents a liberal democracy. A radical deviation from her former anti-communist policy was observable when she formulated the idea which supported the elongation of communist regimes in the Eastern Bloc with the suppression of the Warsaw Treaty troops. Her underhand proposal to prevent the German reunification by Soviet interference can be considered morally disappointing. The Iron Lady's foreign policy did not meet the *realpolitik* either, since the Soviet Union did not adhere to the Brezhnev Doctrine during the ages of *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*. Her political conduct damaged the reputation of the British in the international arena of diplomacy. The present paper has the intention to analyse some of the relevant contemporary speeches, internal memos, articles, with special focus on recently declassified documents and summit talks between Thatcher and Gorbachev recorded by Anatoly Chernayev senior foreign policy advisor of the Soviet General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

2. Cold War Doctrines during the 80's: An Overview

2.1. British Post-War Period – Thatcherism and the Neoconservative Turn

It is not a superfluous step to examine the principles and political doctrines which moved the politicians in the last decade of the cold war before discussing their political decisions. With the emergence of the two superpowers in a bipolar world order Britain declined into the realm of second-class states. The dissolution of the former colonial empire and the Suez Crisis famously indicated a notable off-balance position in British foreign policy. Parallel with the diminishing international prestige serious internal problems smote Britain. The consensus policy which had existed between the Conservatives and Labour in the post-war period arm-in-arm with welfare-system built up in the 50's and 60's made Britain to the 'sick man of Europe' by the late 70's early 80's. Poor economic performance, garbage-heaps in the streets, drug abuse, immigration problem and racial discrimination were the main home affairs that Margaret Thatcher's first cabinet had to handle.

The present paper has no intention to outline the traits of Thatcher's struggle regarding Britain's internal affairs in the 80's since it concerns with foreign policy, yet, some of its aspects could be important to highlight Thatcher's conviction policy labelled Thatcherism. It proves to be predominantly important when discussing Margaret Thatcher's foreign policy to be aware of the domestic affairs of Britain whereas the two are inseparable. Her road to the premiership was not an easy run: her background did not make her a typical candidate for the leadership of the Conservative Party. She was a graduated chemist from Oxford, she had a working-class family background – she was a grocer's daughter, and *alas*, she was a woman. She was the absolute outsider in the traditional upper-class Tory establishment. Besides this, she did not share the ideas of the Conservative mainstream. As Milton Friedman¹ claimed: "...the thing that people do not recognise is that Margaret Thatcher is not in terms of belief a Tory. She is a nineteenth-century Liberal." (Observer)²

In the post-war period one of the most influential representatives of classical liberal idea was Friedrich August von Hayek. Thatcher read Hayek's *Road to Serfdom* when she was an undergraduate in Oxford, which turned to be a moral guideline to Mrs Thatcher instead of being a plain economic analysis. The doctrines which are laid in it became in the centre of

¹Milton Friedman: Nobel Prize awarded economist, during the 1960s he promoted an alternative macroeconomic policy known as "monetarism".

²*The Observer*. 29. September 1982

Margaret Thatcher's value system and since her governing style was a quasi-presidential style these guidelines were applied in her cabinet's policy.

Without going into details concerning the evolution of the liberal idea in the 20th century, some previous thought and schools must be mentioned, because Hayek's radical turn in economy and political ideology appears as a reaction to former ideas. He was an anti-Keynesian³ author, he rejected the benefits of state control in economy so he was anti-socialist, and even anti-welfarist since he denied the Rawlsian⁴ guidelines, as well. (Bayer 295) Hayek disallowed libertarian doctrines since he did not want the state-system to be fully eroded and felt him offended when he was labelled conservative.⁵ Hayek can be considered a follower of the authors of the classical liberal wing, such as John Stuart Mill, in the sense that he was an individualist, a pro free market and a pro free society thinker. In the core of the Austrian Nobel Prize winner economist and political philosopher's work was the criticism of planned economy, emphasising the benefits of spontaneous and mutual order of the market economy and basically the society itself. The state has only significance in securing the framework of free society and free market, he claimed. According to him, the basis of this self-organizing system is the private property and the rule of the laws. (Bayer 296) He strongly refused the idea of the distributive function of the state; as he assumes in *Road to Serfdom*, the permanent state interference in economy, the patronizing role of governments in a long run leads to a totalitarian state. (Hayek 90)

Many of the members of the British Conservative Party knew his works, and shared his stands, but in the post-war period the political consensus between the Labours and Conservatives, – the so called 'Butskellism', objected the free market economy. One of the principles of the consensus was that the state had to directly control much of the economy. Radical Tories could not articulate the aforesaid Hayekian guidelines, as these principles would have been contradictory to the conservative mainstream that time, so following the Hayekian liberal idea was absolutely out of question. (MTFound.) When Thatcher was elected to member of the parliament she said that first she would be a good backbencher. (*Death of a Revolutionary*) During her years in office as education secretary in the Heath government, she had to represent a social-liberal standpoint. In 1974 however, a small group of radical Tory MPs led by Keith Joseph and Margaret Thatcher decided that Britain needed a radical turn.

³John Maynard Keynes: British economist who argued in favour of state interference to mitigate the effect of recessions.

⁴John Rawls: American philosopher and a leading figure in moral and political philosophy, who advocated the role of social justice in egalitarian liberalism.

⁵See also: "Why I Am Not a Conservative" in *The Constitution of Liberty*

The circle of these politicians was outsiders among the traditional upper class Tory MPs. Many of them had working-class background; some of them had Jewish origin. They established a policy think-tank centre, under the egis of IEA⁶, where new economic and expenditure policies were developed mainly following the principles of Hayek and Friedman. (MTFound) Low income tax, but high value added taxation, deregulation of stock exchange market, tight control over public expenditure and money supply circulating in the economy are some of the keywords which can be associated with the new economic policy.

In 1975 Margaret Thatcher won the in-party election and became the leader of the Conservative party, but only from 1979 could she put these neoliberal principles in practice when she won the general election. The new policy met the strong objection of the upper class establishment of the Conservative Party, who agreed with labour socialists that the state should directly control much of the economy. The ports and docks were nationalized, trains and the transport system, moreover car, bus and airplane manufacturing was nationalized as the telecommunication and electricity, as well. Coal industry, oil, and gas, steel industry was in state-property, and the government had some of its own pubs and kindergartens, too. (*Death of a Revolutionary*) Britain was the very country which had the most state-owned property outside the communist hemisphere. One could spend a whole day without using the products or services of free-enterprise world. (ibid.) This patronising shift of the state in everyday life successfully extirpated the envy to feel responsibility toward the work. A former steel industry worker marked that they did not have to work efficiently; if a factory was verging toward bankruptcy the state supported it. They did not have to fear of job-losses. (ibid.) Besides this, these state-owned enterprises were in monopolistic position, there was no competition. The model was uneconomic and wasteful, because the government, the budget and at last the people paid the bill.

As a radical turn, reprivatization occurred in many industrial branches, and state-supports were cut. The 'wets', the Macmillan wing of the Conservative party accused them: "They want to sell the silver spoons first and later that furniture which is in the saloon." (ibid.) Factory closures together with job-losses and market losses mark Thatcher's premiership. These market losses mean serious problems to British economy ever since. The result was shocking; in the first years of Thatcher administration unemployment rate was rocketing from 1 million to 3.5 million, coal production fell back to its half, inflation increased to 22%. ("The Thatcher Years in Statistic") More than 1 in 5 Scottish became unemployed. This crisis

⁶ IEA: Institute of Economic Affairs

caused social conflicts. Strikes, protests were organised which led to bloody street clashes with the police. A recently published source indicated that Thatcher planned to use military forces against the striking coal-miners led by Arthur Scargill⁷ in 1984. (“Thatcher Debated Using Military”) The strike was considered unlawful, and the British police was unable to make order. This crisis was completed by serious cuts in the welfare system, and education.

In the same time, we must see this radical turn was necessary as England was on its knees, the nationalised state-industries did not work efficiently, and the benefit-policy encouraged people not to contribute to the budget. Those who managed to save their jobs, and had enough money could buy their own council house or flat for a relatively low price. The 1980 House Act radically changed the British ownership system, as more than 1.5 million families have had their first own-property since this time. (*Downing Street Years*) The privatization of nationalised industry gave possibilities to working class families and persons to buy shares from privatised enterprises. Due to stock market opening, the stock exchange flourished and share ownership became more common than trade union membership. There were more than 9 million shareholders most of them bought the shares of their own company for which they worked. The participation in profitmaking has pricked the labours to work harder, the salesmen to merchandise swifter. (*Death of a Rev.*) In the core of Thatcher’s policy was to give back the English citizens the freedom of choice, and self-esteem, so she emphasized the role of the responsibility of individuals. As she said in an interview to *Woman’s Own*:

...they are casting their problems on society and who is society? There is no such thing! There are individual men and women and there are families and no government can do anything except through people and people look to themselves first. It is our duty to look after ourselves and then also to help look after our neighbour and life is a reciprocal business and people have got the entitlements too much in mind without the obligations, because there is no such thing as an entitlement unless someone has first met an obligation...⁸

As a result, her cabinet managed to turn Britain from a country which was verging to bankruptcy into a thriving and prosperous state without harming seriously the principles of *Beveridge Report*. The GDP in 1979 reached 167,782 £m and when she resigned it improved to 229,952 £m. (“UK GDP since 1955”)

⁷Arthur Scargill: British politician and trade unionist who was the president of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) from 1982 to 2002. According to Thatcher’s memoir he was supported by the Libyan colonel Gaddafi. Colonel Gaddafi made a donation to the NUM, though the amount is uncertain, an estimated £ 150000. (Thatcher 312)

⁸The interview was made by Douglas Keay. The excerpt is from the transcription of Margaret Thatcher Foundation.

2.1.2. Thatcher's Foreign Office Oppositions

Just as many party leaders who came to power and got opportunity to govern a country, Thatcher herself was not well-informed either concerning foreign policy. Domestic affairs and acquiring the premiership were in her focus. When British territories were invaded by Argentinians and she ordered to send a task force to the Falkland Islands she had to be persuaded by commanders-in-chief that the troops could not reach the Falkland shore earlier than 50 days, as they are 7913 miles from Britain.(DSY) Between the Prime Minister and her Foreign Office was constant enmity. Diplomats of the Foreign Office accused her that her determination to recapture the Falklands was sprung from desire to strengthen her position in domestic affairs. (ibid.) On Thatcher's side, her presidential leading style did not find enough political breathing space under a patronising Foreign Office. A constant distrust characterised Thatcher's attitude toward her foreign secretaries. The core of the belligerent relationship can be found in the different way of thinking on foreign policy. Thatcher saw foreign policy not as a continuum, instead, a series of diverse problems with one desirable solution or even a zero sum game which Britain had to win. (Coles 48) Foreign Office however, committed itself to follow a tradition-based policy in which diplomats pursuing certain rules – the communication of diplomacy – performed their work. Thatcher often accused her staff that they did not act according to the interests of their nation; they were more attentive to inept diplomatic customs and former conventions. While Thatcher's unmannered behaviour often frustrated agreements, and she was a deranging factor in habitual diplomatic relations.

The Prime Minister's hostility towards the Foreign Office was not eased by Lord Carrington's departure.⁹(DSY) Carrington, Lord Pym and Geoffrey Howe¹⁰ were the target of the Prime Minister's perpetual cynicism, their initiatives were often ignored, and the real decision-maker was Thatcher in foreign affairs. During the latter period of Mrs Thatcher's premiership when the relation between her and Geoffrey Howe deteriorated, an extra private secretary was employed to keep contact between 10 Downing Street and the marginalized Foreign Office. (Dickie 92) With the increasing involvement of the Prime Minister in international affairs, a new style emerged. Thatcher gave utterance to her convictions without

⁹ Lord Carrington: British Conservative politician who served as British Defence Secretary between 1970 and 1974, Foreign Secretary between 1979 and 1982 and as the sixth Secretary General of NATO from 1984 to 1988. He resigned when Falkland crisis evolved. His successor Lord Pym was left alone in a debate where he offered a peaceful solution to the Falkland Crisis. The initiative was ignored and Pym resigned.

¹⁰ Sir Geoffrey Howe: British Conservative politician who was Margaret Thatcher's longest-serving Cabinet minister, successively holding the posts of Chancellor of the Exchequer, Foreign Secretary, and finally Leader of the House of Commons, Deputy Prime Minister and Lord President of the Council. His resignation on 1 November 1990 is widely considered to have precipitated Thatcher's own downfall three weeks later.

any protocol; her assertive outspoken directness alienated the whole British delegation at any board where they appeared.

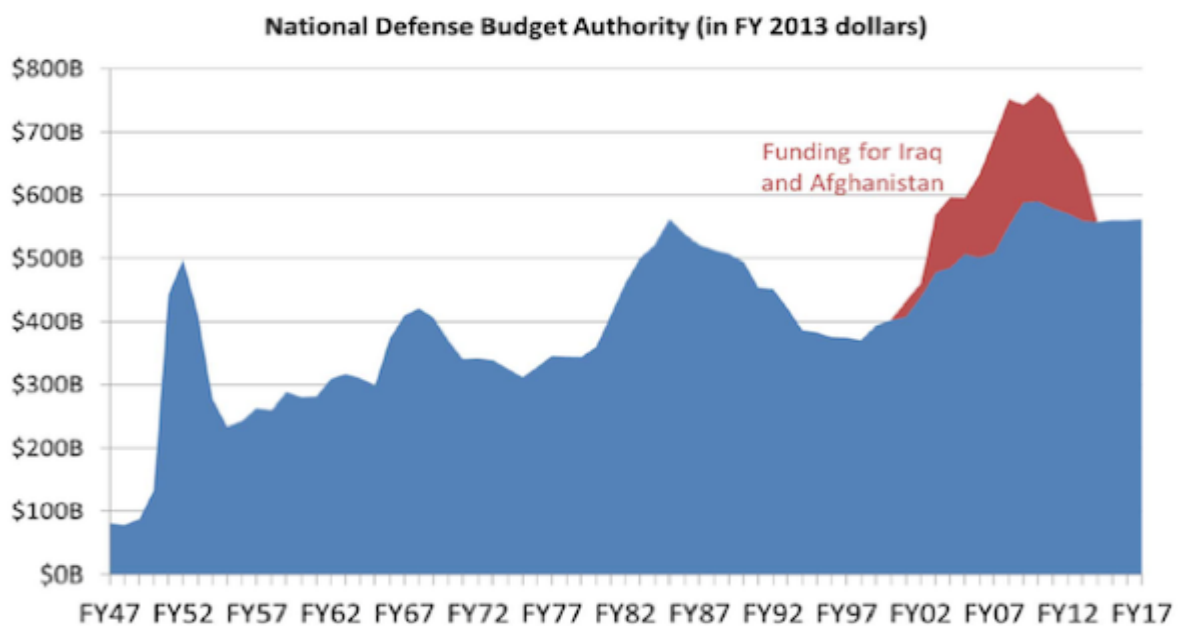
Along with the continuous controversy with the European Union, a special relationship developed between Britain and the United States. Neither Giscard d'Estaing nor Helmut Schmidt were pleased with the foreign policy priorities articulated by the Thatcher cabinet, while the English Prime Minister "wanted her money back", and wanted to renegotiate the EEC budget contribution. By the end of the 1970's the process of *détente* has slowed down partly because of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1980, partly because of the Pershing II nuclear warheads settled in Western Europe by NATO. The gradually growing opposition brought England and the United States closer. They governed their countries from the same ideological platform; both of them were conviction politicians. Thatcher and Reagan as two ideological co-partners unanimously disapproved the Soviet single-party state, they supported the idea of free capitalism and they were ardent upholders of arms race, although, Reagan in his second term reduced the US arsenal. A diverse set of different nuclear weapons arrived in Britain. The US supported England with sophisticated submarine-based ballistic missiles which were able to deliver thermonuclear warheads; Thatcher let the US fighters to use Royal Air Force bases when bombing Libya occurred in 1986. In the same year, Michael Heseltine defence secretary resigned because of the takeover of the last British helicopter manufacture by an American company. (DSY)¹¹ Disregarding some diplomatic split, such as the invasion of Grenada in 1983 or the question of 'dual-key arrangement'¹² concerning nuclear weapons, the transatlantic cooperation between America and England intensified.

¹¹ Westland Affair: was a debate over the question of who should control the last aircraft manufacture of England. Mr Heseltine was alone among ministers who supported the European consortium's rescue package while Mrs Thatcher favoured the deal being proposed by the American Sikorski Fiat group. The latter won the control over the works and Heseltine resigned. ("1986:Heseltine quits over Westland") The decision famously noticed the shift toward the transatlantic partner instead of the European Union.

¹²It was a recurring question why London did not demand a 'dual launch key' which would have prevented the United States from launching the sub-marine based missiles without British authority. The Americans offered a dual-key agreement if Britain paid for the missiles but as the missiles were in American property they had the right to launch them. Thatcher did not want to pay for the rockets and she trusted Reagan as much as she took the risk of being in the grasp of the United States. (Stewart web.)

2.2. Rollback Policy and the Reagan Doctrine

Not only Margaret Thatcher, but her ideological companion Ronald Reagan shared the idea of free market fiscal policy, minimum state, laissez-faire capitalism. It must be noticed that Neo-conservatism as political movement was originally born in the United States, and later radiated to Western Europe. The Reagan administration also made major welfare cuts: civil protesters, striking air-controllers and peace activists from the Berkeley were silenced. As Reagan said in his governor campaign speech: "...it's time to send those welfare bums back to work.", and white, right wing Americans liked it. On the other hand, he spent more money on developing US arsenal, as did Mrs Thatcher who never said "no,no,no" when military expenditure was discussed. The Reagan administration expended more than Lyndon Johnson's, the arms build-up in his second term cost more than the Vietnam War.



Source: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments

Reagan and Thatcher often scourged the USSR, the 'evil empire' that the state they run extends its dominance over every individual, and they use their supremacy to oppress the citizens. They were absolutely right; in the Soviet Union tens of thousands were in prison because of different political thinking, the force labour camps were full, not only in the USSR, but in the satellite states, as well. Reagan however, in the name of Rollback policy used his influence and targeted CIA actions so that particular states were handled as chess



the cause of future military conflicts.¹³

The Reagan Doctrine put the emphasis on military action as prominent instrument of foreign policy particularly in those countries of which governments were labelled Marxist. His administration overemphasized the Soviet threat, without having accurate informations on their nuclear arsenal, and his propaganda and media-machinery did not allow citizens to be informed. (*Untold*) Besides this, the Reagan administration also attempted to mould international law to accommodate to its interest. (Malawer 85) The real essence of his politics was to maintain the military, technological and economic supremacy of the United States and pass the decisions made by his administration using plain demagoguery. As George F. Kennan American advisor, Cold War theoretician suggest in an internal memo:

[...] we have about 50% of the world's wealth but only 6.3% of its population. This disparity is particularly great as between ourselves and the peoples of Asia. In this situation, we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity without positive detriment to our national security. To do so, we will have to dispense with all sentimentality and day-dreaming; and our attention will have to be concentrated everywhere on our immediate national objectives. We need not deceive ourselves that we can afford today the luxury of altruism and world-benefaction. (Kennan Doc. PPS23)

¹³ The conventional view that the US decision to supply the Mujahedeen guerrillas with Stinger anti-aircraft missiles would have increased the Soviet withdrawal is strongly argued by Soviet top-level officers including Eduard Shevardnadze and General Valentin Varennikov commander of Soviet forces in Afghanistan. As they claimed, this interference had delayed the Soviet withdrawal by increasing the Soviet military activity in the area. (Gibbs 243) The idea of supporting the Islamic rebels with arms originated from Zbigniew Brzezinski. He was the major foreign policy advisor and geostrategist of Jimmy Carter. Brzezinski was a notorious anti-communist and advocated the idea of weaken the Soviet Union with might and main.

2.3. Stagnation, *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* – Gorbachev

The years of 1984-1985 were the years of mourning and sorrow in Russia as the geriatric leaders Yuri Andropov and one year later Konstantin Chernenko exited. In the same year the celebrating of the 200th anniversary of Anglo-American diplomatic relation happened while no British leader visited Moscow for more than twenty years. A relatively young member of the Politburo – the supreme body of the Soviet Communist Party – Mikhail Gorbachev succeeded the senile party leaders. He was the very person who changed the ossified standpoint of seclusion and opened the Soviet foreign policy toward the West. The former Stavropol region party secretary inherited a complex set of diverse difficulties. In domestic affairs he had to dismantle overgrown bureaucratic state-machinery and handle the issue of decaying centrally planned economy. It proved to be a severe concern the escalation of the Afghanistan War and Gorbachev had to restrain the military expenditure severely. The newly elected General Secretary yielded a new political style; his openness was strange among the hardliner communists. In a Politburo discussion he remarked: “Soviet people have to come into direct contact with foreigners. We shouldn’t be afraid to allow free travel in both directions. Let our people find out that the world is large and diverse, and let foreigners discover that there is no ‘Soviet threat.’” (Chernyaev 39)

The *Glasnost*, meaning publicity or transparency was set in the core of his political credo. Such issues as alcoholism, anti-Semitism, food shortage, the horror of Stalin’s regime began to be publicly discussed in the press. The planning and distribution system, which was in practice since the 1930s, was also harshly criticised. Besides the issue of freedom of speech, the *Perestroika* or using the English phrase restructuring of the economy was the pivotal problem of Gorbachev’s party. The queues snaking in the streets marked a serious food shortage. Despite the favourable land-population ratio and the fact that the Soviet Union owned one of the best soils in the world, the country was a net food importer. The low labour productivity in agriculture – 20-25 percent of that in the US – and low return of investments input in irrigation and water control made this sector inefficient. (Ellman 1208) *Perestroika* encouraged the symbiosis of private and state sector giving possibility to develop small private agricultural activities, and giving more autonomy in decision-making employees instead of local party cadres and instead of river-control the melioration of salinized soil occurred. To point out the stagnation of the economy the agriculture was discussed above but in industry the same inefficiency was noticeable.

The Brezhnev launched Afghan War, which became the ‘Soviet’s Vietnam’ was also a ticklish affair. Due to the Glasnost, numbers of Russian mothers wrote to the *Pravda* inquiring what the great cause was why their sons fought in a strange country. The increasing expenses of the military conflict would have required the withdrawal of Russian troops as fast as possible. Nevertheless, expenditure cut in any armament was in agenda, the climatic arms race burden the Soviet budget enormously. When the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster happened, it pre-indicated the consequences of a possible atomic strike. As Gorbachev remarked:

I addressed arms reduction, including nuclear arms, and I proposed that by the year 2000 no country should have atomic weapons. I personally felt a moral responsibility to end the arms race. But Chernobyl opened my eyes like nothing else: it showed the horrible consequences of nuclear power, even when it is used for non-military purposes. One could now imagine much more clearly what might happen if a nuclear bomb exploded. According to scientific experts, one SS-18¹⁴ rocket could contain a hundred Chernobyls.¹⁵

¹⁴ The term refers to a certain type of intercontinental ballistic missile which belongs to the family of the R-36 ICBMs.

¹⁵ See also “Turning Point at Chernobyl” at ProjectSyndicate.org

3. The Gorbachev – Thatcher Summit in 1987

3.1. The Configuration of Bilateral Relationship

As it has been alluded to, the transatlantic relationship was tight between London and Washington, the British Foreign Office, however, opened up its policy toward the Eastern European Soviet satellite states in 1983-1984. Besides the plain economic interests to exploit these absorbing markets, the obvious aim was to stalk the USSR somehow and renew the West-East relation. (Egedy 441) The overture of this process was Howe's 1983 visit in Hungary and Thatcher's in 1984. Many commentators suggest that this visit was one of the first steps which led to the reformation of British-Soviet diplomatic relations. Thatcher was well aware that Kádár and Andropov had a good relation which reached back to 1956 when Andropov had been the Soviet ambassador in Budapest. She hoped that her remarks on President Reagan's plan to approximate the interests of the NATO and the Warsaw Pact would reach the Politburo. (Thatcher 384) The moment, however, was not apt as Andropov died six days later. Three more years elapsed until the first stellar summit occurred. Experts like Nigel Broomfield¹⁶ were needed for normalising the bilateral relations between Downing Street and the Kremlin, since it was not totally clear from which way the wind blew politically and economically in Russia. Broomfield's initiation was to invite Gorbachev not Romanov¹⁷ well before Chernenko's death. (Dickie 99) When Gorbachev visited London, Thatcher marked him as 'the man to do business with'. She was impressed by the character of future General Secretary and in the same time astonished how well briefed Gorbachev was. He quoted Lord Palmerston's dictum on England's 'eternal interests', he knew Thatcher's speeches and he was well-informed concerning leaked information from American National Security Council on US interest in not allowing the Soviet Union to emerge from stagnation. (Thatcher 390)

In 1985, on Chernenko's funeral they greeted each other as 'old friends'. The following day was a series of meetings for Gorbachev. The British Prime Minister manifestly haunted for Gorbachev's affiliation. Thatcher practising her feminine wiles on Gorbachev attempted to overshadow Kohl, Mitterrand, and even Reagan. During their personal meeting the "Madam" was all complimentary and charming. (Chernyaev 23) Gorbachev at this time

¹⁶ Sir Nigel Broomfield: He served in British embassies in Bonn and Moscow and with the Military Government in Berlin from 1969.

¹⁷ Grigory Romanov: First Secretary of the Communist Party in Leningrad, Gorbachev's rival in the Politburo. As Thatcher reminisces he was a hardliner Marxist, and he led an extravagant lifestyle: on his daughter's wedding he smashed many priceless crystal glasses in Hermitage. (Thatcher 382-383)

was an extremely popular figure; not only the so called Eurocommunists¹⁸ liked him but he had a remarkable reputation in the Western press¹⁹. So for Thatcher it might have proved politically beneficial to nestle a bit to Gorbachev. A Tory Prime Minister hand-in-hand with the Soviet Communist party leader was an arresting topic in the English liberal press in the gloomy atmosphere of domestic strikes. In their private meeting, after offering her condolences Thatcher briefly informed him about her former discussion and agreement on SDI²⁰ with Reagan in Camp David. (Thatcher 396) Rapidly, this emerging nuclear defence system got in the limelight of the Soviet arms and foreign policy. In the same year, Gorbachev – as newly-elected General Secretary of CPSU – and Reagan met in Geneva. This was their first stellar summit. The Strategic Defense Initiative was one of the cardinal issues of the meeting, and later it became the main object of arms reduction agreement in Reykjavík. Gorbachev made a request to confine the SDI program to research, but Reagan rejected the deal. This summit was crucial considering the British and French nuclear warheads as they were excluded from the INF²¹ negotiations, furthermore Thatcher was promised that UK nuclear deterrent would be modernized by the US under theegis of the Trident program. (ibid.: 397) The Iron Lady eased; her submarine-based thermonuclear warheads were promised to be developed.

3.2. The March 1987 Moscow Visit and Its Aftermath

Early in the year of 1987 Thatcher was invited to the Soviet Union. Before going to Moscow the British Prime Minister made brief appointments with Western leaders namely with Reagan, Mitterrand, and Chancellor Kohl to inform them about the line she intended to take and to inquire their judgement on the new Soviet leader. Western heads of state formulated their concerns that Gorbachev would not be able to accomplish his reforms among the hardliner Marxists, without the support of General Staff of Soviet Armed Forces and the

¹⁸Eurocommunism was a trend in political ideology where Western European countries harmonizing their established institutions tried to apply the Marxist theories to their system. As a result communist parties started to spread in such countries as Italy, Spain and France. The 1980 Afghanistan invasion meant a severe break in the relationship of these parties and Moscow as they refused to participate in international communist conferences.

¹⁹ The western press called him “crown prince” and “most interesting person with a big future”. (Chernyaev 10)

²⁰ Strategic Defense Initiative was various types of plans to prevent the first strike in a possible nuclear war. It included ground-based anti-ballistic missiles and space-settled systems, from laser to X-ray weapons. It has been merely a science fictional fantasy, a propaganda issue which mainly served the purpose of deterrence. SDI meant a severe fear in a country like Russia, where computer technology was in a decade’s delay. Thatcher grievously miss-states when she remarks that Reagan’s refusal on the SDI question had a pivotal role in sweeping away Communism, it was Gorbachev’s reforms which did.

²¹ INF: Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces

KGB. The draconian measures against alcoholism seemed to be equivalent to a political suicide. It was a 'jam tomorrow, and meanwhile, no vodka today' policy as a British political advisor suggested. (ibid.: 396) Kohl straightforwardly asserted that Gorbachev had little chance to survive, even though, he is a Communist and his modernization plan worked in the framework of the Soviet system. Reagan shared some information about the technological parameters of SDI. (ibid.: 402) Thatcher like a broker of the Western Hemisphere left England to scout the 'Russian Bear'.

According to Thatcher's memoir she spent a lovely day after she arrived in Moscow. She visited an Orthodox worship in the morning and she attended the performance of *Swan Lake* at the Bolshoi with the Gorbachevs in the evening. They were chatting about the Russian way of bread-making and they were drinking Georgian wine. (ibid.: 405) This very pleasant day was followed by a less agreeable one, as bothersome topics were negotiated. The summit took place in the Kremlin in a narrow circle. The tone of the meeting can be described with the words: frank and direct. Gorbachev began with a reproach for Thatcher's speech she had recently given in Torquay: "Once again, communism and the Soviet Union presented as 'evil forces'. It was the same old talk about threatening the West's power position. We were very surprised by this. To tell you the truth, we even wondered if the Prime Minister would cancel her visit." (Chernyaev 99) Thatcher was surprised that her speech one week earlier was known by the General Secretary, since it was held in a campaign occasion as an electoral speech.²² (MTFound.) She retorted arguing that the Soviets held the advantage in both nuclear and conventional arms; in addition, they still adhered to the Brezhnev Doctrine²³. She illustrated Communism's striving for global dominance: "Take Yemen, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Angola, Nicaragua, the Cuban troops in African countries. [...] And what about Afghanistan?" (Record of Conversation 1987) Then Gorbachev countered: "We never proclaimed such a doctrine. There is the Truman Doctrine, the Eisenhower Doctrine, the neo-globalist Reagan Doctrine. All of these doctrines were publicly proclaimed by presidents. But you will not find our statements about 'planting the domination of communism' because they

²² She delivered this speech to the Conservative Central Council with the title 'Socialism Has Failed' in Torquay, Britain. (MTFound.)

²³ The Brezhnev Doctrine was Soviet Union foreign policy doctrine which was declared in the *Pravda* after the Prague Spring when the Warsaw Pact invaded Czechoslovakia. It predicted: "[...] It has got to be emphasized that when a socialist country seems to adopt a 'non-affiliated' stand, it retains its national independence, in effect, precisely because of the might of the socialist community, and above all the Soviet Union as a central force, which also includes the might of its armed forces. The weakening of any of the links in the world system of socialism directly affects all the socialist countries, which cannot look indifferently upon this. [...] Discharging their internationalist duty toward the fraternal peoples of Czechoslovakia and defending their own socialist gains, the U.S.S.R. and the other socialist states had to act decisively and they did act against the antisocialist forces in Czechoslovakia." (Pravda transl. by Novosti)

do not exist. They were just attributed to us.”²⁴ (ibid.: 3) Henceforth, the Soviet leader challenged the legitimacy of the Falkland encroachment, whilst Thatcher made him understand what dreadful threat the 1956 Hungarian and 1968 Czechoslovakian invasions had been. It might have been threatening as overnight 200000 Warsaw Pact troops appeared near to the Iron Curtain supported with heavy tank divisions. The whole summit continued in a highly intense atmosphere, however, the two leaders successively argued on the basis of mutual learning without the intention to ‘convert’ the other. As Gorbachev observed: “You are committed to your system, and we are loyally committed to ours. You are not going to make me a conservative, just as I do not expect to make you a communist. We have to recognize the reality.” (ibid.: 4)

Having left behind the ideological issues and blaming each other for engaging in military conflicts, they turned to the question of security and arms control. For Gorbachev the case of disarmament turned to be a cardinal question since he had to reduce the military budget to finance the development of domestic economy. He was extremely sensitive and worried about being humiliated by the West because he was well aware that the correlation between his restructuring plans and his determination to agree on arms control as soon as possible was well-known by Western dignitaries. He blamed Thatcher for frustrating the elimination of nuclear weapons. The British Prime Minister was not willing to change her position towards cutting the British nuclear arsenal, furthermore she reverberated her standpoint that nuclear weapons prevented wars. Without them they risked being dragged into a conventional war. Moreover, the elimination of nuclear weapons in Europe would have left the area defenceless in the face of the Soviet Union’s superiority in chemical and conventional weapons.²⁵ Besides this, the technology of producing atomic bomb was available; anyone could go to the US Library of Congress and read about how to build such a weapon. So the annulment of these arms would have been a starting point of a new arms race in which regaining the abolished nuclear weapons was the goal. (ibid.: 6) This sound reasoning was contested by the Soviet party secretary when he literally attacked his Western interlocutor accusing her of indifference to the ‘fate of humanity’. Thatcher turned to be particularly excited hearing such arguments. Moreover, Gorbachev remarked that Thatcher’s declaration on the beneficial trait of nuclear weapons made clear that she was an ardent supporter of those who accepted the risk of a possible nuclear war. The Prime Minister

²⁴After accession to office, Gorbachev admittedly deviated from the aforesaid principle; nevertheless, his predecessors adhered to the Brezhnev Doctrine.

²⁵ A noticeable number of English troops stationed in West Germany.

became so nervous that conversation got completely out of control. They started to interrupt each other and the discussion became so confused that Thatcher asked for recess. (Chernyaev 103) In the afternoon they continued the event but in a more moderate tone. Thatcher shared her experiences how the economy had changed and had been turned to prosperous in Britain under her government. Thatcher's radical free market turn had very little in common with Gorbachev's struggle with *Perestroika* but the Marxist party leader enthusiastically listened to the Neo-liberal improvements. The Prime Minister expressed her hope that Soviet economy would be able to overcome its poor performance. They discussed the status of USSR computer manufacturing and the issue of human rights in general but with putting strong emphasis on the treatment of Jews. Thatcher raised the question of Afghanistan, where Gorbachev was seemingly searching for some way out. (Thatcher 485) Despite the discrepancy in political ideology and the 'antagonistic' stance in the dispute of nuclear arms, they agreed and signed an appointment which contributed to better relations and greater confidence between them.

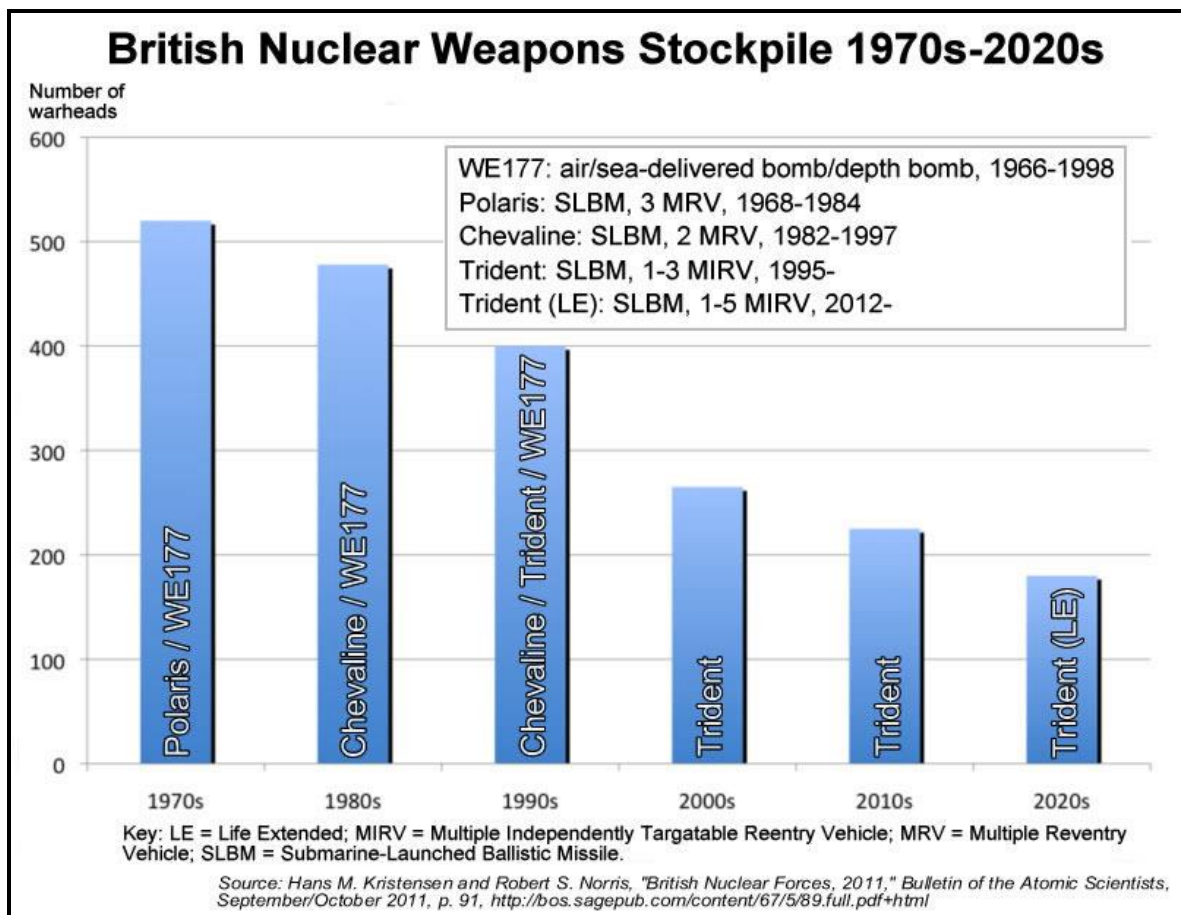
The meeting had many important consequences. On Thatcher's side, she could sense that in the Soviet Union the ground was shifting underneath the communist system, the central planned economy was showing its cracks. She could inform the Western leaders that fundamental alterations were happening under the surface. The Prime Minister gave an interview in the Soviet Television in which she openly talked about the proportion of nuclear warheads. She emphasised that Soviets were ahead of the United States in both conventional arms and nuclear missiles. She, moreover, pointed out the constant violation of human rights and discussed the reasons of the Afghan war. Nobody had ever told ordinary Russians these facts before. It occurred first time that a Western leader could make such a highly critical speech in Soviet television and the broadcast was allowed to go out uncut. (Thatcher 483) For Gorbachev the meeting with Thatcher proved to be also a diplomatic landmark, as he decided to turn toward Europe. Most of his meetings in 1987-1988 were with Western European dignitaries. (Chernyaev 106) The West began to trust Gorbachev more when they realised that ending the arms race was vital for his *Perestroika*. He emphasized the importance of renovating the undermined trust of the West in the USSR when he repeated Thatcher's sentences for his Politburo colleagues: "[...] We do not believe you. You take grave actions irresponsibly: Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Afghanistan. We could not imagine that you'd send troops to Czechoslovakia, but you did. The same again with Afghanistan. We are afraid of you. [...]" In addition he concluded: "[Thatcher] is sure that we have not given up the Brezhnev Doctrine. This is really something to ponder, comrades." (Chernyaev 104)

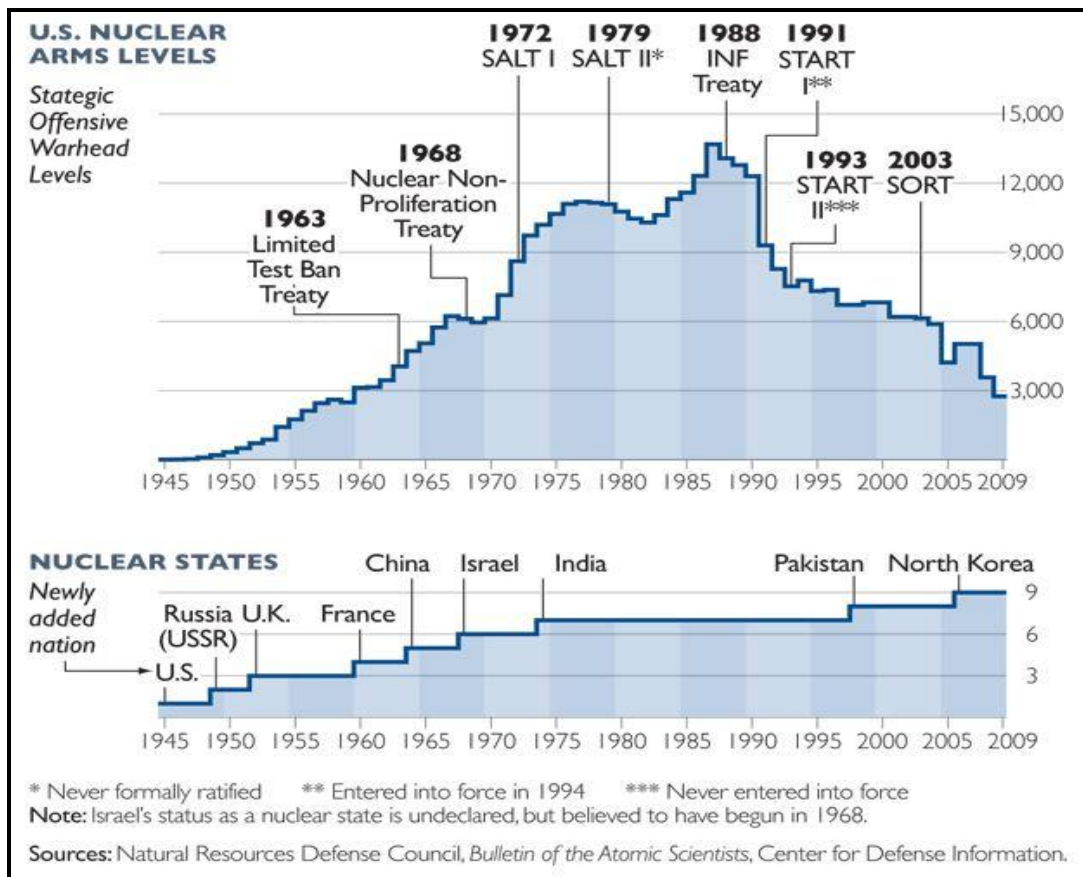
As the year of 1987 slowly ended, Gorbachev travelled to Washington to ratify the INF Treaty. Mrs Thatcher was given a clear assurance by President Reagan at Camp David that Britain's independent nuclear deterrent would not be affected by any US-Soviet arms reduction agreement, so she warmly invited Gorbachev to stop at Brize Norton²⁶ on his way to the United States. She was mandated to gauge Gorbachev's thinking concerning such issues as human rights, regional conflicts and arms control; furthermore Americans asked Thatcher to interrogate Gorbachev on Afghanistan. He answered that the solution in Afghanistan would be easier if the West had stopped supplying the Mujahedeen with arms and the question of human rights must be discussed with the particular country involved. (Thatcher 653) The issue of arms control also emerged and Gorbachev humorously remarked that Mrs Thatcher seemingly preferred to "sit on a powder keg rather than an easy chair." They ended their discussion expressing their hope that Gorbachev would return for a full visit next year to Britain. After the Soviet delegation – including Gorbachev's protégé Yeltzin – had left England, Thatcher telephoned Reagan and informed him on their discussion with the Party Secretary. Thatcher warned the President to count on a hard negotiation, and she advised not to call the Soviet leader his first name as he was undeniably friendly and open but also quite formal. Reagan thanked her for 'softening' the Soviet leader. (Thatcher 654)

The 1987 INF treaty turned to be a relatively success. It became the commencing act of an ulterior and more significant arms reduction: the 1991 START I. The year of 1987 proved to be productive for the British Prime Minister both in domestic and foreign affairs, as well. She won the general election at home and she skilfully pulled the wires in diplomacy, too. The documents famously indicate Thatcher's role in this triangular relationship with the American President and her Soviet interlocutor. While she leaked information in both ways according to her interests, she represented the West as an *avant-garde* in the Soviet Union. She exerted a remarkable influence on Gorbachev's thinking on economic reform, arms control and possible resolution of local conflicts. She managed to convince President Reagan that Britain's nuclear deterrent should not be affected by any Soviet-American pact, moreover, she achieved that England could participate in the Trident program which had aimed the renewal of submarine-based nuclear arms. It must be admitted that the safeguarding of this weaponry had important armaments role and had defensive function, more important was however, its political power than strategic. Owning nuclear warheads gave back to Britain the last delusory sense of being a superpower in the shadow of its diminishing

²⁶ Brize Norton is a village in Oxfordshire, here can be found the largest station of the British Royal Air Force.

international prestige. Any serious cut back in nuclear arms would have meant the deterioration of Britain in international diplomacy. To eliminate this arsenal was as irreconcilable with Margaret Thatcher's mind-set as to concede the colonial relic, the Falkland Islands to the Argentines.





By Hans M. Kristensen

4. The German Question and Thatcher's September 1989 Moscow Visit

While the years of 1987 and 1988 brought many important sessions and outstanding agreements in global politics, 1989 can be considered a year of turmoil.²⁷ During the period of 1985-1988 the Soviet leadership encouraged its satellite states, particularly the Eastern Bloc and the German Democratic Republic, to yield their own reforms in the framework of Socialism and the Warsaw Treaty. As Gorbachev pronounced: "The time when we helped them to form their economy, their parties and their political institutions is past. [...] We cannot lead them by the hand to kindergarten as we would little children."²⁸ (Savranskaya 7) Many motives of this liberalization, however, can be found in the stagnation of the Soviet Union and the dramatic drop of oil prices, which brought the Russians into a very difficult situation, as the fossil fuel export meant the main income for the USSR. In lack of financial means the *actio radius* of the Empire radically diminished. After Mathias Rust landed on the Red Square with his Cessna 172, Gorbachev had the opportunity to purge the top-level military administration.²⁹ The reform programs in Soviet satellite states were often associated with nationalism and political deviation. Protests were organised in the Baltic States with the participation of more than two million civil protesters to commemorate the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. (Krausz 270) In Uzbekistan, in Georgia and in Azerbaijan ethnic riots broke out. (ibid.) Religious movements strengthened, particularly in the GDR, which led to demonstrations. The Soviets had to conform to the circumstances and they slackened their grip. It turned to be a fortune that their then-leader was a reformer not a hardliner autocrat.

The dogmatic GDR leaders, however, being the 'last bastion of communism', received the idea of *Perestroika* dubiously and refused the reformation initiatives, moreover, negated the obvious decline of the regime on every forum. In 1987 Honecker publicly rejected the idea that East Germany should emulate Soviet political and economic reforms. (Savranskaya xxxi) In the age of broadcasting, the public opinion was well aware of the economic status of the Federal Republic of Germany; *Die Schwarzwaldklinik* lifestyle was wanted but the *Hospital at the End of City* way of living was obtained. Many of its citizens tried to defect. It was not an unusual case to see middle-aged persons waiting before the gates

²⁷ One of these important sessions was the 43rd U.N. General Assembly, where Gorbachev announced drastic cuts in Eastern European Soviet military presence and ultimately allowed Soviet satellite states to choose their own political paths. (CNN)

²⁸ From Mikhail Gorbachev's Speech to Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 28 May 1986.

²⁹ Rust's flight through the reportedly 'impregnable' Soviet air defence system led to the dismissal of several military officers opposing Gorbachev's reforms. This was the most significant turnover in Soviet military since Stalin's purges in the 1930's.

of West German embassies all over Eastern Europe. Many of them carried just a nylon bag. It proved to be more than question of living standard for those who were ready to flee with a plastic bag. Hungary was the first country which opened its borders and allowed East German citizens to emigrate to the West. Between Chancellor Kohl and Hungarian Prime Minister Miklós Németh a close relationship evolved, while the GDR and Romania condemned the Hungarians' policy toward its allies. (Kohl 48) In fact, Hungary violated many points of the Warsaw Treaty when it allowed East Germans to leave Hungary. To assure himself, Kohl telephoned Gorbachev to ask what the official Soviet standpoint was concerning the mass exodus, whereof the General Secretary answered that "Hungarians are good people". (ibid.: 49) Kohl eased when he became aware that the Hungarians were supported by the Soviet leader on this notion. On their meeting in June 1989, the German Chancellor and Gorbachev shared the same value system in many issues. Both of them were interested in a 'common European home', in a 'liquidation of nuclear weapons' they supported the idea of 'freedom of choice'. (Savranskaya 11) Both of them criticized the East German leader Honecker and his wife. Frau Honecker made statements in which she called the East German youth in arms to defend the achievements of socialism from external enemies, namely from Poland and Hungary³⁰. (ibid.: 31) Along with emigration, peaceful political demonstrations began, fuelled by diverse motives. In Leipzig the protests started with the support of the Lutheran Church, where dissatisfied citizens after the worship gathered in the churchyard to express their will for freedom to travel to foreign countries and to elect a democratic government. By the summer and autumn of 1989, nationalist movements appeared in Berlin, free thinkers and rock bands cried for changes explicitly.

Kohl's political program in the late 80's turned to the question of German reunification. Due to the mass migration and political discontent, the debate reopened over the issue as part of an all-European process. From the prospect of GDR it was one of the most perilous political extremes and the top level leadership required Kohl emphatically not to intervene into the domestic affairs of the GDR and not to foster conflicts to destabilize the country. Even Gorbachev, the great supporter of independent decision-making demurred, remarking that the post-war borders of Germany must be seen as concrete political reality. (Kohl 71) The German unification from Western perspective also proved to be an ambiguous question. The former Vice-President of the Reagan Administration, Bush came to power in the US, whose standpoint had not evolved yet. A temporary pause occurred in the US foreign

³⁰Mikhail Gorbachev and Helmut Kohl Conversation, on 14 June 1989.

policy activity since the new President needed time to study the situation before formulating his own policy, including the bilateral relationship with the USSR. (Miller Center) Seemingly, the European leaders supported the gradual transformations in the Eastern Bloc, and although at several boards they discussed the necessity of a common European home, it clearly got publicity from numerous conversations that actually nobody in Europe wanted a united Germany. (Savranskaya 30) The memory of a strong militaristic Germany was still very much in the centre of European leaders' thinking. Margaret Thatcher was quite explicit concerning the question. On her way back from Tokyo, on 23 September 1989 she stopped in Moscow to discuss the extant state of affairs.

When Thatcher was heading back to London, her VC10 plane had to land for refuelling in Siberia in Bratsk where she signed some photographs of herself to KGB agents. The following day she had lunch with Gorbachev, where she shared her most sensitive views on Germany. (Thatcher 669) Thatcher judged these remarks so confidential that she requested not to record them in writing. Anatoly Chernyaev, Gorbachev's aide complied but right after Thatcher ended her dictum, the advisor exited the room and noted down the Prime Minister's comments. (Savransakaya 530) The meeting itself started with Gorbachev's complaints about the difficulties of carrying his reformation plans into effect. Thatcher understandingly approved Gorbachev's laments and had redelivered her struggles with free market fiscal policy:

You have now reached the stage where every new step is more difficult than the previous one. It is important for people to see results, even though it is politically ungratifying task. For instance, I had to wait for two years before the first results. All the time I was criticized and when the success came it was received as something natural, and nobody thanked me.³¹ (ibid.: 530)

Gorbachev added that it proved to be a more complex problem in the USSR since more than 120 nationalities and ethnicities lived together. Thatcher raised the issue of Eastern Europe. She was very impressed by the spring of patriotism in Poland and in Eastern Europe in general and gave utterance to her understanding how difficult it could be to maintain the Warsaw Treaty intact. She entered into details of the German mass migration, as well. It was at this point when she asked not to record their conversation. Being in confidential atmosphere she became absolutely outspoken concerning Germany and Eastern Europe:

³¹ Record of Conversation between Mikhail Gorbachev and Margaret Thatcher on 23 September 1989.

Britain and Western Europe are not interested in the unification of Germany. The words written in the NATO communiqué may sound different, but disregard them. We do not want the unification of Germany. It would lead to changes in the post-war borders and we cannot allow that because such a development would undermine the stability of the entire international situation and could lead to threats to our security.

We are not interested in the destabilization of Eastern Europe or dissolution of the Warsaw Treaty either. [...] However, we are in favour of those processes remaining strictly internal; we will not interfere in them and spur the decommunisation of Eastern Europe. I can tell you that this is also the position of the US President. [...] ³² (ibid.: 531)

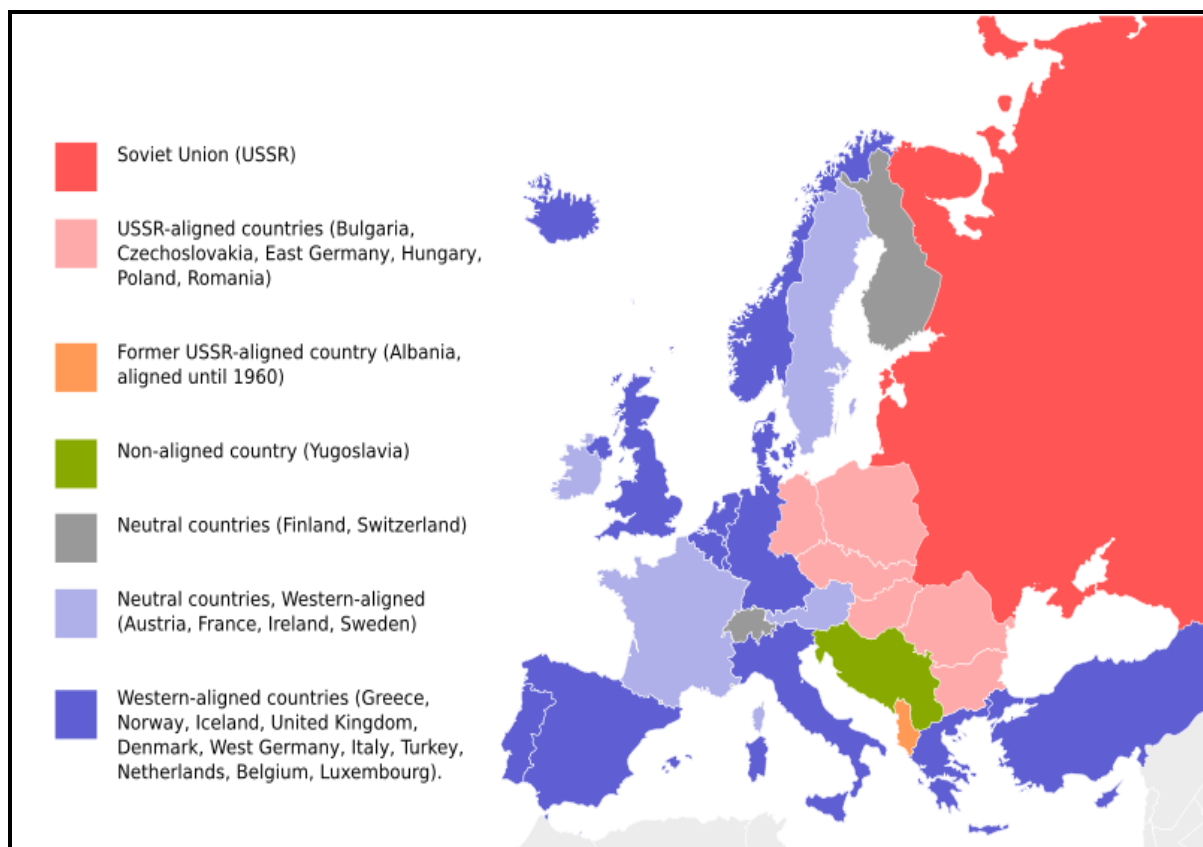
Answering to Thatcher's comment on the German question, Gorbachev declared that socialist countries should make their own decisions about their internal affairs and they should choose the way and the tempo of fulfilling their choice. The Soviet Union would not interfere in these processes. Chernyaev noted down after the Thatcher meeting: "She wants to prevent unification 'with our hands', without taking on the fight herself"³³. (ibid.: 92)

The Prime Minister's malignant remarks can be considered the prototype of duplicitous policy especially concerning the role of the NATO and the US in the question. As it has been alluded to above, due to the inauguration of the new President George H.W. Bush, a temporal pause occurred in the Soviet-American bilateral relationship. During this intermission, it was not totally clear for Soviets where the initiated thawing process advanced. Thatcher utilized this communication hiatus to suggest that the Americans' position was against German unification, as well. (ibid.: 33) Although it was true that Thatcher received a telegram from Bush in which he declared that the United States was neither interested in destabilizing Eastern Europe nor in forming an image of the Soviet Union as a threatening force. Thatcher served these diplomatic banalities as evidence of strong American disapproval in the question of German merger. (ibid.: 33) The connection between Thatcher and Bush, however, completely differed from the former special relation with the Reagan Administration, in which the British Prime Minister enjoyed a prominent position. Bush was often exasperated by Thatcher's constant talking and the President would have preferred to lead the discussions. The Prime Minister had to defer during the conversation and she never stinted on praises concerning Bush's politics. The focus of American foreign policy gradually turned to Germany, and England could feel the warm affiliation of its 'big brother' only in the Gulf Crisis again, when Thatcher deployed UK troops to the Middle East. (Thatcher 661)

³² Record of Conversation between Mikhail Gorbachev and Margaret Thatcher, on 23 September 1989.

³³ Notes from Chernyaev's diary, 9 October 1989.

Because of Britain's special relationship with the US and because of Margaret Thatcher's role in the triangular nexus with the Reagan Administration, Gorbachev was inclined to hear Thatcher's comment as evidence that the US standpoint on German unification was the same as the British. This idea was strengthened by Zbigniew Brzezinski Polish-American political theorist and geostrategist, who served as national security advisor in the Carter administration. Brzezinski visited Moscow in late October 1989 and expressed his preference to continue the maintenance of the two antagonistic military blocs, and he drafted the prospect of German merger. He pronounced: "[...] both blocs should be disbanded right now. I do not know what will happen if the GDR ceases to exist. There will be one Germany, united and strong. This does not correspond to either your or our interests."³⁴ (Savranskaya 34)



Cold War map of Eastern and Western Blocs in Europe

³⁴ From Aleksandr Yakovlev and Zbigniew Brzezinski Conversation recorded on 31 October 1989

4.1. The Favourable Equilibrium Seems to Tilt

Thatcher's anticipations proved to be correct concerning the changes in Germany. One month after the first demonstrations in Leipzig, October 9, 1989 more than 8000 residents crowded into the 800-year-old *Nicolaikirche*. Four other churches accommodated thousands more protesters. After the prayer meeting, not fearing from Stasi, a peaceful rally started. Their number swelled up to 70000. They carried nothing but candles and banners reading "*Wir sind das Volk*". The Stasi sent spotters in the crowd to cause troubles, but they were neutralized by protesters chanting "No violence". (Curry web.) It turned to be a fortune that Leipzig party functionaries neglected Honecker's shot-to-kill order against the civil protesters. (Büky 387) Historian Erhardt Neubert later called that night East Germany's "October Revolution". (Curry) Besides the Leipzig Monday demonstrations, other cities lodged demonstrations against the regime. The protesters thought it to be safer to demonstrate outside Berlin. The course of events accelerated. Gorbachev visited East Berlin which was followed by Honecker's compulsory retirement – he was actually forced to resign and Egon Krenz³⁵ became the leader of the regime. These continuous but minor actions were overshadowed by the fall of the Berlin Wall. On November 9, 1989 following the Socialist Unity Party's declaration about the new regulation of traveling, an enormous mass began gathering at the wall and the checkpoints. The citizens were informed by broadcast about the free travel decision and many of them wanted to leave the GDR immediately. At 10:45 pm the guards finally yielded the people to cross the checkpoints without identity check.³⁶

Kohl's office had a very busy term in the following days: several important phone calls succeeded each other, including conversations with Moscow, Washington, Paris and London. The Chancellor and his staff highly eased when Gennady Gerasimov Shevarnadze's spokesman communicated the Kremlin's official position according to which the opening of the borders between the two Germanys "had been the sovereign decision of the GDR" and the

³⁵ Krenz was in office only a few days after the demolition of the Berlin Wall and he was the very person who decreed the opening of the border, in fact. Later he was sentenced to six and a half years in prison for manslaughter and for participation in the crimes of the state. Honecker was accused of collective manslaughter of 68 persons who attempted to flee East Germany and having a decisive role in the construction of the Berlin Wall. Due to the absence of appropriate legal codification, he spent only 169 days in custody and fled to Santiago, Chile where he died.

³⁶ Chris Gueffroy was the last person shot while trying to get across the Berlin Wall. The twenty-year-old barman wanted to avoid compulsory military service, therefore with his friend he attempted to leave East Berlin, believing that the shot-to-kill order had been revoked. ("Death Strip") The case had happened on the night of 5 February in 1989 eight months before the day on which tens of thousands of protesters started to tear down the Berlin Wall encountering no resistance of the East German border guards. The impatience of the young men was understandable since the Berlin Wall was said to remain for fifty or one hundred more years.

new travelling orders could be considered “wise”. Bush congratulated and expressed his friendly support concerning the time to come. He asked the German Chancellor to outline his political prospect regarding the future of Germany. This note turned to be a later multi-step plan for the unification of Germany: Kohl’s ‘ten-point program’. (Kohl 99) Mitterrand warranted his amity toward Kohl and the Germans and expressed his sorrow not to witness the historical moments personally. The conversation with the British Prime Minister meant the hardest issue for Kohl. When he telephoned 10 Downing Street, he tried to explain to Thatcher what an ethereal and independent mood had overcome Berlin: the youth and the old were demolishing the wall and everyone was cheering like at a festival or a huge jamboree. Thatcher only replied that she had already seen the events on TV, and she felt it necessary to summon the heads of state of the EU as soon as possible. The summit took place in Paris in November 1989. (Kohl 93.)

The key event of the end of the Cold War in Europe was the fast unification of Germany. The wall which separated a nation was torn down by unarmed people and as a symbolic gesture the act of its demolition ended the division of the East and the West. An entire era in the history of the ‘socialist system’ came to an end furthermore the German reunification entered into its starting-point, although, there were several objections on the road toward the conjoined Germanys. The rapid resuscitation of Germany concerned those states which had suffered under the Nazi occupation; moreover, the two Germanys were the members of two antagonistic military blocs. What shall be the status of the future Germany? If they remained neutral they would tilt the well-arranged European security and defence system. They should eliminate the US planted Pershing II missiles and eliminate the nuclear shield of Europe; moreover, the troops of the NATO allies should leave the country. The same military cuts were needed in East Germany, where substantial Soviet tank divisions and troops stationed. If they joined the Warsaw Treaty, Moscow’s hand would have reached to Strasbourg. It was not totally clear what the Soviets’ position would be in case the new Germany became member of the NATO,³⁷ furthermore, the incorporation of East Germany, a state which had severe liquidation problems with a passive debt of more than 21 billion West German Marks, proved to be a severe economic burden. (Zatlin 103) The Thatcher suggested summit, which was held in Paris on November 18 and which was organised by Mitterrand, could not answer these problems. The idea of a reunited Germany got an icy reception.

³⁷ The question was clarified in the Malta Summit in December 1989, when the negotiators declared: “The unification should occur in the context of Germany’s continued commitment to NATO and an increasingly integrated European Community, and with due regard for the legal role and responsibilities of the allied powers.”(MTFound)

Thatcher was the most ardent supporter of status quo and she declared that the frontiers had to remain. Neither the Polish-German border, nor the inside border between the two Germanys could be the issue of negotiations. (Kohl 94) She argued that the unification of Germany would lead to the instability of the region.

In the background of her remarks, however, there were pure balance of power concerns.³⁸ It has turned out from declassified documents that her concerns were fuelled by the fear from a strong Germany in the middle of Europe which would become a dominant and active factor in the European Economic Community. She discussed the question in a private meeting with Mitterrand in the Elysée Palace. The session was recorded by Charles Powell Thatcher's foreign policy advisor and the notes were declassified four years ago. The documents here famously illuminated how bitterly Thatcher had tried to obstacle and slow down the process of German merger. Mitterrand, protecting the position of France in the EU, also opposed the reunification and accused the Germans of losing the cadence of diplomacy and that only the future unification was in the forefront of their foreign affairs:

The sudden prospect of reunification had delivered a sort of mental shock to the Germans. Its effect had been to turn them once again into the 'bad' Germans they used to be. They were behaving with a certain brutality and concentrating on reunification to the exclusion of everything else.[...] no doubt Germany could if it wished achieve reunification, bring Austria into the European Community and even regain other territories which it had lost as a result of the war. They might make even more ground than had Hitler. (Powell)

The Prime Minister suggested that they had instruments to slow down the process. They should elongate the transition period between the decision in principle on the reunification and its realisation in practice. They should insist that East Germany must take its place in queue for membership of the Community; Germans cannot ignore the agreements they signed. The English and the French must turn the Germans' own statements against them. They could remind the Germans that they had been arguing that reunification would only occur as part of ending the separation of Europe. Since Europe was a long way from that, the time has not come yet to fulfil the reunion. Thatcher emphasised that they must try to tie the Germans

³⁸ Preserving the preferable status quo has been a recurring theme in British diplomacy. In 1871 after the Franco-Prussian War, Disraeli gave utterance to his displeasure a few days following the proclamation of the German Empire: [...] This war represents the German revolution, a greater political event than the French revolution of last century. I don't say a greater, or as great a social event. What its social consequences may be are in the future. Not a single principle in the management of our foreign affairs, accepted by all statesmen for guidance up to six months ago, any longer exists. There is not a diplomatic tradition which has not been swept away. [...] The balance of power has been entirely destroyed, and the country which suffers most, and feels the effects of this great change most, is England.[...] (Money Penny 473)

down on a substantial transitional period, a decade or more before East Germany could obtain the EU membership. Mitterrand suggested that they should perhaps persuade the Soviet Union to stiffen East German resistance to reunification and he shared his experiences about the time he had spent in Leipzig.³⁹ He was convinced that several demonstrations had been encouraged and fuelled by West German ‘agents’, who had provided banners for the reunification. (Powell) The slogans really changed: the banners reading “*Wir sind das Volk*” turned into “*Deutschland, einig Vaterland*”.⁴⁰ Thatcher also formulated her concerns about the increasing economic influence of West Germany in Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary⁴¹. She felt sorrow imagining that only Rumania and Bulgaria had remained for the rest of them, but they agreed to weaken the leverage of German capital influx in the region and expand their own links. One of Thatcher’s most underhand comments planted in an interview she had given to the *Spiegel* might be the result of this arrangement. She remarked that in a personal meeting Kohl had told her that he did not recognize the Oder-Neisse border with Poland, which was the post-war frontier between the two states. This non-sense enraged Kohl and he imparted that he had never made such a statement. (Volkery web) Thatcher became the spokeswoman of those who felt the motivation to warn the public opinion against the Germans’ appetite for power. The Prime Minister’s statement: “We have beaten the Germans twice. Now they’re back” also deeply hurt the Chancellor. (Harding web) Her prejudice against all things German went so far that she forbade one of her colleagues to park his Volkswagen in the government parking lot. (Firchow 252) Otherwise, the English press was also against the German reunification process. The journalists of *The Times* invoked the spirit of Rapallo in their articles, alluding to the German Soviet approximation, or they were alarming with such headlines as the “Fourth Empire Is Being Born”. (Kohl 112)

The German Chancellor was well aware of these concerns and as he foresaw, only Felipe González Spanish and Charles Haughey Irish head of government supported the idea of a unified Germany without any precondition. Andreotti’s, Mitterrand’s, and even Ruud Lubbers Dutch head of state’s attitude was governed by world war memories. Yet, the distrust of the Downing Street proved to be the strongest. (ibid.: 119) It was no secret that the Prime Minister was a bitter opponent of reunification, but as it was revealed a few years ago, the British government played a far more constructive role in the German question. At this point

³⁹ Thatcher did not share the results of her conversation with Gorbachev on the notion of her wish to prevent the reunion by the hands of Soviets.

⁴⁰ The unified Germany is our native land.

⁴¹ Hungary for instance was supported with significant West German loans. In return for opening its borders Hungary got 500 million German Marks to finance its dying economy. (Kohl 49)

it is worth referring to Margaret Thatcher's opposition to her Foreign Office mentioned in the Chapter 2.1.2., which characterized her Foreign Policy right until the end of her premiership. Her Foreign Office was more farsighted and formed a totally reverse standpoint concerning the German unity, but the Iron Lady's shrill stubbornness overshadowed the determination of Foreign Office. When Christopher Mallaby, Britain's ambassador in Bonn, wanted to signal his support in the question of unity, he was reined by Thatcher. Also Douglas Hurd, then-Foreign Secretary, had to represent the Prime Minister's line obediently, echoing her sentence: "The reunification was not currently on the agenda." (Volkery) The Foreign Office, including Douglas Hurd, had to labour much to improve the reputation of the British during this key period of Cold War, and they had to repair relationships damaged during the increasingly Eurosceptic tone of Margaret Thatcher's final years. Hurd welcomed the reunified Germany into the European political community in 1990. Kohl's observations on Thatcher's way of thinking were relevant and sound. On the basis of personal encounters he reported that Thatcher had simply been unable to accept that Germany, having lost two world wars, appeared as a victorious and unified state at the end of the century. She thought history was unjust. Great Britain in World War II risked its own existence in the fight against Nazi Germany and sacrificed its colonies and its great-power status. Although Britain won the war, it suffered significant losses. (Kohl 119) They talked about Churchill several times, and Kohl had the impression that Thatcher had lived in a time before Churchill, somewhere in the nineteenth century when the main question had been the 'balance of power'. She represented the view that the post-war era had not come to an end and the centre of governance of Europe was still London. (Kohl 119) The centres of power, however, were dramatically rearranged during the Cold War, which England was incapable to apprehend. Britain was the first violinist who only managed to play in a second class orchestra.

In a personal appointment Kohl shared his views on Thatcher with Bush answering his question if there were any EC leaders opposed to his reunification plans. Kohl told him: "Great Britain is rather reticent. Thatcher thinks history is not just. Germany is so rich and Great Britain is struggling. They won a war but lost an empire and their economy. She does the wrong thing. She should try to bind the Germans into the EC." (Savranskaya 90) During this personal meeting in Camp David on 23 February 1990, Bush conveyed to Kohl that he had no objection to reunification and he gave green light to the process. Next day Thatcher and Bush had 45-minute telephone conversation in which Thatcher tried to draft how they should be thinking about the future of Western alliances and discussed her long-term balance of power visions in Europe. This concept supported a divided Germany in which Soviet

troops would rein the German dominance. (Thatcher 674) Thatcher's reminiscences are quite 'laconic' concerning Bush's answers⁴², however it is certain that she telephoned to Kohl the same day and accepted the reunification.⁴³ (MTFound.) By March 1990, Thatcher had to soften her standpoint publicly, although she organized a conference with the title "How dangerous are the Germans?" and said to the French ambassador to London that "France and Great Britain should pull together today in the face of German threat." (Allen web) Gradually all the EC leaders became reconciled to the state of affairs, and Thatcher remained alone with her resistance. In her memoir she admitted that the obstinate opposition was an error: "If there is one instance in which a foreign policy I pursued met with unambiguous failure, it was my policy on German reunification." (Thatcher 686)



"Germany becomes one country"

⁴² She only writes these lines about Bush's reaction in her memoirs: "President Bush as I afterward learnt failed to understand that I was discussing. It was the last time that I relied on telephone conversation to explain such matters." (Thatcher 674)

⁴³ Horst Teltschik's diary: Kohl-MT telephone conversation

5. Conclusion

England's first female Prime Minister exerted a policy which radically changed the development of England. Regarding her results, analysts have represented heterogeneous standpoints. It proves to be true concerning her foreign policy in many aspects. The role which the Prime Minister played in the Washington–Moscow–London triangular relationship gave her the opportunity to extend Britain's elbow-room in the international arena. She managed to achieve that the 1987 INF Treaty had not affected British nuclear arsenal and Britain had remained a nuclear power; however, Britain's deterrence solved rather to defend the morsels of the country's prestige. Thatcher had an important role to interconnect the Soviet Union and the United States; she delivered the information and messages like a broker. Her negotiations with Gorbachev approximated the General Secretary's politics to Europe and to the West; moreover Thatcher became the supporter of Gorbachev's *Perestroika* on any forum. The Soviet leader in 1988 at the 43rd U.N. General Assembly Session literally admitted to have been defeated in the Cold War and allowed the Soviet satellites to develop their own policy. Thatcher's aim to persuade Gorbachev to stiffen the resistance of East Germany to the reunification ran counter to realpolitik. Her standpoint to maintain the influence of the Warsaw Treaty in the Eastern Bloc can be seen as a radical U-turn compared to her early 80's anti-communist policy. The Prime Minister's political pragmatism and the status quo politics overwrote the rights of peoples to self-determination. Remaining under the suppression of strange political and military forces in order that the balance of power which was preferable to England should not change cannot be regarded as a fair deal. As Edmund Burke remarked: "Power gradually extirpates from the Mind every humane and gentle Virtue. Pity, Benevolence, Friendship are Things almost unknown in high Stations. Varæ amicitiae rarissime inveniuntur in iis qui in honoribus reque publica versantur, says Cicero". (Burke web) She consistently followed a conviction policy which excluded the initiatives of her cabinet if they differed from hers. This governing style often interlocked with arrogance and personal insults. These traits of her had a significant role in her deposal.

In the last period of Thatcher's Premiership, the special relation between England and America slackened due to the inauguration of Bush. The newly-elected President tried to step out from the shadow of Reagan and he reformulated several internal and foreign affairs. Among these, Bush shifted the focus of trans-Atlantic relationship from Britain to Germany. Thatcher and the new American leader's personal relation turned to be official; it could be considered rather reserved than cordial. On the other hand, Kohl and Bush became good

friends; even their wives were well disposed towards each other. Thatcher's determination to prevent the German interest to reunite their *Vaterland* in this context proved to be undesirable and counterproductive. Her political blindness arm-in-arm with her harsh Euro-scepticism significantly damaged the reputation of British diplomacy and John Major's hope of being "at the heart of Europe" was difficult to fulfil.(Young 195) The image of a reluctantly European Great Britain is still alive.

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Image 3: “Germany becomes one country” Source: RIA Novosti archive, image #428452, 35 mm slide <[http://visualrian.ru/ru/site/gallery/ - 428452](http://visualrian.ru/ru/site/gallery/-428452)>