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## **Trust or verification? Accepting vulnerability in the making of the INF Treaty**

*Nicholas J Wheeler, Joshua Baker, and Laura Considine,<sup>1</sup>*

In December 1987, US President Ronald Reagan and his Soviet counterpart General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev met in Washington to sign a treaty abolishing an entire class of nuclear weapons. In the press conference before its signing, Reagan declared that the treaty reflected the wisdom in the old Russian proverb ‘Dovorey no provorey - trust, but verify.’ With regard to the verification provisions of the treaty, the US president claimed that ‘[t]his agreement contains the most stringent verification regime in history, including provisions for inspection teams actually residing in each other's territory and several other forms of onsite inspection.’<sup>2</sup> The implication of Reagan’s statement was that the signing and eventual implementation of the INF treaty became possible between two distrusting adversaries because it combined both trust and the promise of intrusive verification, and without either of these elements, there would have been no treaty. It also made clear that Reagan viewed trust and verification as distinct, but complementary concepts. But these propositions raise the question is left unanswered in Reagan’s statement (and indeed in the Russian proverb) as to the causal relationship between trust and verification. Put differently, is trust a requisite for the agreement and implementation of verification regimes, or is verification merely a surrogate for the lack of trust?

To answer this question, the chapter sets up two competing approaches for conceiving the causal relationship between trust and verification, both of which challenge Reagan’s notion that trust and verification are distinct, but complementary ideas. The first approach does this by conceiving of the relationship between trust and verification as an inverse one; the greater the level of verification that is sought, the lower the level of trust between two antagonistic states. In the case of the INF Treaty, this approach would hold that the intrusive verification mechanisms were

themselves indicators of the lack of trust between the United States and the Soviet Union. Consequently, the argument goes, it is a misnomer to think in terms of ‘trust, but verify’ because verification is itself a substitute for trust. In such a scenario, a verification regime would have to be established because the parties have no trust in each other. This logic has recently been at play in US-Iran interactions, where the Obama administration has sought to sell the 2015 Iran nuclear deal by stating that it is based on verification and not trust<sup>3</sup>. Obama administration officials have repeatedly demonstrated an example of the ‘surrogate’ argument by stating that an intrusive, foolproof verification arrangement is needed because the US government cannot rely on trust in securing Iran’s compliance with the terms of the deal.<sup>4</sup>

The second approach to understanding the relationship between trust and verification considers that states will only agree to intrusive methods of verification if they have expectations as to the other party’s trustworthiness. Verification is therefore not a surrogate for trust, but is in fact highly reliant on the pre-existence of trust. This is because implementing intrusive verification regimes, such as the INF Treaty, makes leaders vulnerable in a multiplicity of ways, and we argue that this willingness to accept vulnerability is a key indicator that one party believes the other is potentially trustworthy. Trust and verification are not, therefore, as Reagan contended, distinct but complementary concepts. Instead, they exist in a symbiotic relationship where each is dependent on the other if arms control agreements are to be successful. It is our argument that it is this latter approach that best explains how the INF Treaty both became possible and we make good on this claim by showing how Soviet perceptions, and crucially Gorbachev’s, changed as to US (and crucially Reagan’s) trustworthiness. The chapter shows how this approach to the INF Treaty reveals the limitations of the ‘trust, but verify’ formulation because Gorbachev’s decision to enter into new and highly stringent verification arrangements was dependent on this expectation of the US leader’s trustworthiness.

## **Trust and verification during the Cold War**

The dominant US approach to verification during the Cold War resembled the first of the two approaches we outlined above. The US government assumed that verification was an essential component of arms control treaties because the Soviet Union could not be trusted to honor its agreements. The assumption was that when Moscow signed a treaty its leaders did so in the firm knowledge they would cheat on it, or secondly, even if the current intentions of Soviet leaders were to comply, this could change in the future.<sup>5</sup> To prevent either of these outcomes, the US government demanded highly intrusive forms of verification.

The purpose of verification is to monitor a party's compliance with an agreement/treaty. Monitoring is crucial to verification because it is the process by which information is obtained to make assessments about whether others are complying or not. In the field of nuclear arms control and disarmament, the detection of non-compliance must be timely enough so that the other party or parties can either individually or collectively respond to militarily significant violations. What is deemed a militarily significant violation cannot be determined in the abstract, and it will depend upon the perceptions of decision-makers as to the risks and costs of any future break-out. Policy-makers have to decide whether cheating has taken place, and if so, whether this has exposed their state to a significantly increased risk of attack.

The issue of whether the Soviet Union had cheated on arms control agreements with the United States became highly politicised in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The Reagan administration charged Moscow in the early and mid-1980s with violating the 1972 Interim Agreement on Strategic Arms (SALT 1) and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM), both signed in 1972. It was an article of faith among the 'ideological fundamentalists'<sup>6</sup> driving US policy in the early 1980s that even if there was no direct evidence of Soviet cheating, it should be assumed that given the Marxist-Leninist character of the Soviet state, Moscow's apparent compliance hid the real

cheating that was taking place.<sup>7</sup> As such, even a pattern of Soviet compliance was interpreted by the first Reagan administration as Moscow mimicking signals of trustworthiness to disguise its treaty violations. As Allan Krass wrote in 1985, ‘[u]nder these assumptions it is, of course, impossible to imagine verification leading to a growth of trust. It will in fact lead only to demands for even more verification and even greater distrust.’<sup>8</sup>

On the surface, the Soviet Union appears to have adopted a very different view to the United States on the question of the relationship between trust and verification. Rather than see verification as a surrogate for trust, Soviet negotiators have argued, in the words of Viktor Israelyan (when speaking to the Geneva based Committee on Disarmament in 1981), that it ‘should not be built upon the principle of total distrust by states of one another and should not take the form of global suspiciousness.’<sup>9</sup> Instead, as Roland Timerbaev (then a senior official in the Soviet foreign ministry) contended in his 1983 book on verification, the Soviet view was that ‘[a]greements for restraining the arms race must be based on a certain degree of mutual trust among the parties to the agreements.’<sup>10</sup> This chapter provides support for this view given our core contention that the INF Treaty became possible because of the trust that was built between the two sides prior to the signing of the Treaty. The problem with US and Soviet thinking in the early 1980s was that both superpowers believed that the other had shown by its actions that it could not be trusted, and as a result, each believed the other would necessarily cheat on any arms control agreement. It was this deadlock in superpower relations that Gorbachev was to break, and he did so by developing a belief in the trustworthiness of his US counterpart that opened the door to new conciliatory actions, including the signing of the INF Treaty. Before turning to this story of changing perceptions of US and Soviet trustworthiness, it is necessary to provide the conceptual scaffolding that supports our empirics.

### **Trust, trustworthiness, and vulnerability**

In emerging trusting relationships, our key litmus test of whether actors believe that another actor can be trusted, and the extent of that trust, is their willingness to accept new vulnerabilities and/or to live with existing ones. Aaron Hoffman similarly defined trust as ‘an attitude involving a willingness to place the fate of one’s interests under the control of others in a particular context. This willingness is based on the belief, for which there is some uncertainty, that potential trustees will protect the interests placed in their control, even if they must sacrifice some of their own interests in doing so.’<sup>11</sup> In this definition, Hoffman applied to International Relations the standard cross-disciplinary definition of trust which is summed up in Denise Rousseau and her co-researchers definition: trust is ‘a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another.’<sup>12</sup> But Hoffman wanted to go beyond this psychological approach to trust, and argue that what is important is whether actors act on this trust, not simply the intention to do so as in Rousseau et al’s definition.<sup>13</sup> The key action that begins a trust-building process is the acceptance of vulnerability on the part of one or both parties.

Our approach here can be located within the cross-disciplinary literature in trust research that puts vulnerability at the heart of understanding and analyzing processes of trust-building. The paradox of vulnerability as a property of trust is that actors only take on the risks of making themselves vulnerable because they do not expect to be exploited. As the moral philosopher Annette Baier expressed it: ‘trust *is acceptance* of vulnerability to harm that others could inflict, but which we judge that they will not in fact inflict.’<sup>14</sup> Given the importance of vulnerability to our conceptualization of trust, it is necessary to make two important clarifications. The first is that an actor’s acceptance of vulnerability, because they ‘judge’ that the other will not harm them, does not mean that their judgement is necessarily correct. The existential reality might differ fundamentally from the subjective perception of the actors themselves. As the trust researcher Barbara Misztal has put it, ‘talking about vulnerability means taking into account subjective perception of a given

situation, not only referring to objective or external risks.<sup>15</sup> In short, there is no objective measure of vulnerability against which to judge the behavior of the actors concerned.

This leads into the second point which is that actors take on vulnerability in at least two different dimensions when they trust. The first relates to what Wheeler calls *trust as authenticity*, which refers to the idea that the party trusting (the trustor) - and thereby taking on vulnerability - believes that the other party (the trustee) does not have malevolent intentions towards them or their state.<sup>16</sup> The second is what Wheeler calls *trust as capacity* which he defines as the belief on the part of the trusting agent that the trustee can be relied upon to deliver on any promises and commitments that they enter into.<sup>17</sup> Even if one actor believes in the authenticity of another, there could be uncertainty as to how far a trusted counterpart can deliver on their promises, given the tumultuous nature of domestic politics. Vulnerability, then, can be experienced in a number of different ways, and on a number of different levels in an emerging trusting relationship.

Our argument here challenges the proposition of Vincent Keating and Jan Ruzicka, two prominent trust researchers in International Relations, who have argued that trust and vulnerability are incompatible. They have argued that, 'Actors in a trusting relationship will have little to no feeling of vulnerability precisely because trust functions to cognitively reduce or eliminate their perception of risk in the situation.'<sup>18</sup> For them, the acceptance of vulnerability is not an indicator of trust because 'the existence of a trusting relationship means that vulnerability is not knowingly experienced by the actor.'<sup>19</sup> While we accept that in established trusting relationships, such as that between the United Kingdom and the United States, actors may not always experience vulnerability consciously, their formulation fails to capture a situation where actors knowingly experience vulnerability, but are not troubled in doing so because they trust.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, by writing vulnerability out of the story, Keating and Ruzicka neglect to see that 'the act of trust needs to be seen as offering both a solution to the problem of our vulnerability, and as exposing us to more risks.'<sup>21</sup> We

recognize that in highly embedded trusting relationships,<sup>22</sup> it is possible that habits and practices of trust can develop that does not rest on specific personal relationships of trust. However, in emerging trusting relationships such as between the US and Soviet leaderships in the mid to late 1980s, the development of trust can be so intrinsically tied to the interpersonal level that subjective feelings of vulnerability – both in terms of *authenticity* and *capacity* – may play a far greater role. We go on to demonstrate this by arguing that Gorbachev, on the basis of increasingly positive expectations about Reagan's motives and intentions, took specific actions aimed at signaling the Soviet Union's trustworthiness that entailed accepting some degree of vulnerability.

### **Gorbachev's changing perceptions of US trustworthiness**

When negotiations over reducing/eliminating the superpowers' INF forces began in 1982, there were few expectations of a breakthrough given the deep enmity between the two sides. After NATO followed through on its decision in 1979 to deploy US Cruise Missiles to US bases in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, and the US Pershing II to US bases in the Federal Republic of Germany, the Soviet Union responded by walking out of all arms control negotiations. While Moscow eventually returned to the negotiating table in March 1985, both sides continued to treat the negotiations as a continuation of their seemingly enduring competition. Yet just two years later, the frozen hostility of the Cold War was melting away in a manner that would have been previously unthinkable, and a key moment in this process was the signing in December 1987 of the INF Treaty. It is our contention that a necessary (but not sufficient) condition of the INF Treaty was Gorbachev's changed perception of Reagan's trustworthiness, and that crucial to this transformation was the personal trust that developed between Reagan and Gorbachev, as well as among the key advisors of the two leaders.

Reagan was initially hesitant about the possibility that Gorbachev would significantly change Soviet security and defence policy. As noted earlier, the first Reagan administration

believed that the Soviet Union had persistently exploited previous arms control agreements. In an internal memorandum, the US president noted that he anticipated no change in the underlying behaviour of the new Soviet leader, who he saw as ‘totally dedicated to traditional Soviet goals.’<sup>23</sup> Similarly, there was little optimism on the Soviet side about a thaw in relations. Pavel Palazchenko, the long serving interpreter to Gorbachev and Soviet foreign minister, Eduard Shevardnadze, depicted the atmosphere at the time as ‘quite pessimistic about the prospects of U.S.-Soviet relations, at least while Ronald Reagan was in office.’<sup>24</sup> The prevailing mood was therefore not conducive to a departure from the ‘confrontational policies’ of the past.<sup>25</sup>

However, the traditional practice of US-Soviet enemy imaging conflicted with Gorbachev’s own conviction that the superpowers were caught in a spiral of fear and mistrust that was feeding an ever-escalating armaments competition. The Soviet leader was strongly influenced by a group of key advisors within his inner circle that included Alexander Yaklov, Anatoly Chernyaev, and Shevardnadze (who replaced Andrei Gromyko as foreign minister in 1985). These so-called ‘new thinkers’ pressed upon him the proposition that the only security in the nuclear age was mutual or what the 1983 Palme Commission had called ‘common security’ – the notion that security should be achieved in common or not at all. Gorbachev gave official expression to these ideas in February 1986 in a speech to the 27<sup>th</sup> Party Congress. In this speech he outlined the necessity for a demilitarisation of the US-Soviet relationship and the normalisation of Soviet relations with the rest of the world, stating that ‘[e]qual security is the imperative of the times. Ensuring this security is becoming increasingly a political issue, one that can be resolved only by political means. It is high time to replace weapons by a more stable foundation for the relations among states.’<sup>26</sup>

The new Soviet thinking on security showed an awareness of how both superpowers might be ensnared in what has been termed ‘security dilemma dynamics’; hostility driven by mutual fear and not predatory ambition.<sup>27</sup> Gorbachev and his key advisors appreciated that even though the

Soviet Union might profess defensive motives and intent, its enemies were not so easily reassured in the face of Soviet conventional capabilities which were configured for offensive operations against NATO forces. Gorbachev rejected the 'ideological fundamentalism' that depicted the United States and its allies as inherently aggressive by virtue of their capitalist values and interests, and acknowledged that Soviet actions had created legitimate Western fears as to whether the Soviet Union had malign intent. Consequently, Gorbachev began developing new policies of common security that were designed to reassure the United States and NATO about the peaceful/defensive motives and intentions of the Soviet Union. An example of this can be seen in Gorbachev's discussions before the Reykjavik meeting, where he states that 'nothing will come out of it if our proposals lead to a weakening of US security. The Americans will never agree to it. Thus, the principle is as follows: increased security for all on the way toward equal reduction of armaments levels.'<sup>28</sup> Here, the Soviet leader exercised what Ken Booth and Wheeler have called 'security dilemma sensibility'. They defined this as 'an actor's intention and capacity to perceive the motives behind, and to show responsiveness towards, the potential complexity of the military intentions of others. In particular, it refers to the ability to understand the role that fear might play in their attitudes and behaviour, including, crucially, the role that one's own actions may play in provoking that fear.'<sup>29</sup>

It was one thing to cognitively frame the US-Soviet conflict as an example of security dilemma dynamics, but it was quite another to make this empathetic awareness the basis of new Soviet trust-building initiatives given the risk that such policies might be exploited by the US government. What appears to have been crucial in leading Gorbachev to act on this empathy and accept a new measure of vulnerability was the trust he placed in Reagan. The initial step on this journey was his first summit meeting with Reagan in Geneva in November 1985. Those involved later stressed how important the meeting had been in encouraging the two leaders to believe they could work with each other.<sup>30</sup> Gorbachev himself recalled that 'our dialogue was very

constructive...and increasingly friendly the better we got to know each other.<sup>31</sup> The most important outcome of the summit was that each pledged that neither side would 'seek military superiority'.<sup>32</sup> This was a decisive rejection of the nuclear war-fighting policies that had characterised the first Reagan Administration, and an acknowledgment of the reality that the only security in the nuclear age was common security.

The now declassified transcripts of the Geneva meeting reveal Reagan and Gorbachev's awareness of the role that trust could play in improving US-Soviet relations. Both leaders spoke of the importance of increasing political dialogue at all levels and expanding opportunities for trade as a means of achieving increased trust.<sup>33</sup> In an excerpt from the diary of Anatoly Chernyaev, Deputy Head of the International Department of the CPSU, written just after the Geneva summit, he observed that '[S]omething cardinal has occurred: the arms race is going on, nothing has changed in the military confrontation, but a turning point is noticeable in international relations'.<sup>34</sup> While it would be naive to think that one summit meeting could reverse decades of suspicion and animosity, the meeting went some way to convincing Gorbachev that he could work with Reagan. Moreover, it seems that Gorbachev increasingly appreciated that if trust were to be built between the leaders of the United States and the Soviet Union, this would require more than declarations of good intentions. What was needed beyond such declarations were concrete actions which could begin to break down the 'barrier of mistrust'.<sup>35</sup>

Gorbachev's first attempt to let his actions speak louder than his words was his proposal on 15 January 1986 for global nuclear disarmament by the year 2000. However, he was disappointed by the US rejection of his disarmament vision and by what he saw as Reagan's continuing bellicose rhetoric.<sup>36</sup> Chernyaev describes a feeling at the time among Gorbachev and his closest advisors that the 'hand [Gorbachev] extended was left suspended in mid-air'.<sup>37</sup> The Chernobyl disaster three months later reinforced Gorbachev's developing belief that, in Yevgeny Velikhov's words, 'a great

instinctive leap to break the old cycle<sup>38</sup> of mistrust, suspicion, and secrecy in East-West negotiations was required. Gorbachev's first 'leap' occurred the following month. In the face of strong opposition from 'the General Staff, the Ministry of Defense, and the KGB,'<sup>39</sup> he instructed his chief negotiator, Ambassador Grinevsky, at the deadlocked Stockholm Conference on Confidence and Security Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe to accept unprecedented on-site inspections.<sup>40</sup> This concession was highly significant, not only because it made possible the signing of a new treaty that increased military transparency on both sides, but also because it held out the promise that Moscow might be prepared to accept an equally demanding standard of verification in the nuclear arena.

Whether Gorbachev's willingness to accept on-site inspections in Stockholm would have still occurred in the absence of his first face-to-face encounter with Reagan in Geneva the previous November is a fascinating counter-factual. As noted above, Gorbachev was disappointed with the US response to his January 1986 disarmament proposal and he was looking for more evidence that Reagan could be a partner in the task of ending the nuclear arms race. The Soviet leader was eager to meet Reagan again and proposed a meeting in Reykjavik.<sup>41</sup>

The two leaders came tantalisingly close to agreeing on the abolition of all nuclear weapons during their two days of negotiations in Iceland. But what stood in the way of the two leaders reaching such a momentous agreement was Reagan's insistence that nuclear disarmament proceed in tandem with the development and testing of the proposed US missile defence shield (the Strategic Defence Initiative [SDI]). Reagan had announced his dream of protecting the US public from Soviet nuclear missiles in March 1983 and the president remained fervently committed to the development of SDI at Reykjavik. Despite the failure of Reagan and Gorbachev to reach an agreement, the meeting was a crucial moment in the building of trust between the two leaders. Gorbachev reflected in 1992 to George Shultz that Reykjavik was the turning point in bringing

about the end of the Cold War.<sup>42</sup> This was confirmed by Chernyaev who considered that ‘[a] spark of understanding was born between them, as if they had winked to each other about the future.’<sup>43</sup> Such sentiments were shared by Reagan who wrote in his *Memoir* that ‘[l]ooking back now, it’s clear there was a chemistry between Gorbachev and me that produced something very close to a friendship.’<sup>44</sup>

Gorbachev was disappointed with Reagan’s subsequent response to his far-reaching arms reduction proposals at Reykjavik.<sup>45</sup> However, he made a crucial distinction after the summit between Reagan and his inner circle’s motives and intentions which he saw as peaceful/defensive, and the position of the hawks in Washington who he considered had not given up the quest for nuclear superiority. For the hawks, Gorbachev reasoned, SDI could not be traded away because it was a critical component in their bid for a first-strike strategy. According to Anatoly Dobrynin, the veteran Soviet Ambassador to the United States, Gorbachev told him after he returned from Reykjavik that ‘he could work with Reagan’ and that he ‘saw in him a person capable of taking great decisions.’<sup>46</sup> This view is supported by Chernyaev who claimed that ‘After Reykjavik, he [Gorbachev] never again spoke about Reagan in his inner circle as he had before.’<sup>47</sup> Gorbachev began to think that in Reagan he had a partner who he could work with in leading the world away from the abyss of nuclear destruction. Rather than viewing Reagan as a representative of ‘US imperialism’, Gorbachev, in Andrei Grachev’s words, began to view him ‘as a trustworthy partner, who shared similar hopes and ideas.’<sup>48</sup> Gorbachev began after Reykjavik to put this conviction to the test, and in doing so showed his willingness to accept an increased level of vulnerability for both himself and the Soviet Union.

### **Gorbachev’s vulnerability in the making of the INF Treaty**

Gorbachev was anxious to turn the positive atmospherics that had developed between him and Reagan in Iceland into concrete agreements that limited the US-Soviet nuclear competition. To this

end, the Soviet leader took some key decisions during 1987 that only became possible because Gorbachev had come to believe that he could trust Reagan and his inner circle. As we noted at the beginning of the chapter, it is in the nature of trust that actors only accept vulnerability when they have strong expectations that their trust will not be exploited. There is, however, always a degree of uncertainty in this regard. The unilateral trust-building steps taken by Gorbachev in 1987 indicate that he judged that his trust would not be exploited, yet he still made himself vulnerable in a number of interrelated ways.

The first major conciliatory move came in February 1987 when Gorbachev proposed delinking INF from SDI.<sup>49</sup> He confirmed this proposition at a meeting in April 1987 in Moscow with Shultz.<sup>50</sup> Gorbachev, writing in his *Memoir* in 1996, described this meeting as a ‘milestone.’<sup>51</sup> He reflected that he had gained the impression, strengthened by Shultz’s subsequent actions, that here was a US policy-maker who ‘genuinely wanted to sustain the dialogue’ and who was prepared to work to transform ‘our agreement in principle into productive cooperation.’<sup>52</sup> Interestingly, however, the accounts of this meeting at the time tell a different story. In his report to the Politburo, Gorbachev expressed his disappointment with Shultz not reciprocating Soviet concessions and failing to bring anything new to the table. He explained this at the time as Shultz being ‘too closely connected to the military-industrial complex.’<sup>53</sup> From the memorandum of their conversation it appears that Gorbachev felt let down by what Shultz brought to this meeting following the de-linking move. Nevertheless, another major concession came in June 1987 when the Soviet Union finally agreed to on-site inspections (OSI) of INF missile manufacturing and storage sites. And the third occurred the following month when Gorbachev proposed the global ‘double-zero’ option that authorised the removal all INF and Short-Range Intermediate Nuclear Forces (SRINF) systems from both Europe and Asia.<sup>54</sup> These three concessions removed the obstacles towards the signing of the INF Treaty, which Gorbachev claimed in his *Memoir* represented ‘the first well-prepared step on our way out of the Cold War.’<sup>55</sup>

These moves that were so crucial in leading to the INF Treaty made Gorbachev increasingly vulnerable on a number of grounds. Even if Gorbachev had faith in the *authenticity* of Reagan and Shultz, and believed that they would not willingly and knowingly exploit his trusting moves, it was less clear to Gorbachev that they had the *capacity* to follow through upon what they had agreed. Reagan was increasingly beleaguered in domestic battles at home, with the Republicans having lost control of the US Senate in the November Congressional elections, and the presidency increasingly mired in the Iran-Contra scandal. Consequently, Gorbachev knew that there was a risk that the US president, with less than two years left in office, might not – even if he wanted to – have the *capacity* to deliver an agreement on strategic nuclear arms.<sup>56</sup> This in turn made Gorbachev politically vulnerable in the Soviet Union. If the INF Treaty negotiations ultimately failed, and Gorbachev had nothing to show for making these dramatic concessions, he would be exposed to those hardliners who continued to believe in the malign intent of the US government. Gorbachev was therefore becoming increasingly worried that Reagan was losing ground to the hardliners in his own administration. Gorbachev's increasing uneasiness in this regard was made clear in the aforementioned April 1987 meeting, where he lamented the lack of US reciprocation of his de-linking move by stating that 'the position of the U.S. administration is one of very real extortion from its partner, it is a position of treating its partner disrespectfully'<sup>57</sup>

The proposition advanced in this chapter that Gorbachev's trust in Reagan played a pivotal role in making possible the INF Treaty runs up against the objection that Gorbachev had no choice but to cooperate given the Soviet Union's desperate economic situation. Given the weaknesses of the Soviet economy, it is argued by some that any Soviet leader at this time would have been compelled to make concessions in the way Gorbachev did.<sup>58</sup> Such a position downplays the significance we have attached to Gorbachev's new thinking and his exercise of security dilemma sensibility in the transformation of US-Soviet relations. We agree that the material pressures

exerted by a declining economy were important enabling conditions of Gorbachev's actions, and it is difficult to imagine that he could have secured domestic support for his new thinking had the Soviet Union not been so materially weak. But what is crucial to our argument is that material factors were insufficient by themselves to explain the trust-building actions that Gorbachev took in 1986-7.<sup>59</sup>

The road of conciliation and cooperation was not the only one that the Soviet Union could have taken at this time, and Gorbachev's actions were not an inevitable response to the material pressures that the Soviet Union faced. Such a view finds support from Chernyaev who asserted that the influence of domestic economic pressures, though important 'does not definitively capture Gorbachev's motives', which he argued also came from a number of elements that included his awareness of the potential devastation of nuclear war, his personal moral principles, and his belief that no one would attack the Soviet Union.<sup>60</sup> There were indeed others at that time such as Victor Grishin and Grigory Romanov, the closest contenders with Gorbachev in 1985 for the post of Soviet leader, who would most likely have adopted a more competitive approach to the US-Soviet relationship.<sup>61</sup> Robert English has maintained that the most likely outcome in the 1985 leadership competition in the Kremlin was a further continuation of East-West confrontation. The fact that a different course was chosen, he concludes, 'was thanks to the singular influence of ideas and the singular leadership of Gorbachev.'<sup>62</sup> Richard Ned Lebow and George Breslauer use counterfactual methods to likewise argue that if Grishin had been elected it would be hard to imagine a similar process of de-escalation.<sup>63</sup>

One striking aspect of the concessions that Gorbachev made in 1986-7 is that there was no equivalent reciprocation on the part of the US government. Yet Gorbachev persisted in making progressively more significant concessions, especially after Reykjavik, despite knowing that some Politburo conservatives advocated confronting the United States.<sup>64</sup> Against these critics, the Soviet

leader insisted that to retreat from cooperation would strengthen the hands of the conservatives in the Reagan Administration, leading to an escalation of the arms competition which would increase the risks of war and place enormous strain on the Soviet economy. Although the Reagan Administration did not positively reciprocate Gorbachev's moves, nor did they do anything to exploit them. Ken Booth has made an important distinction between 'positive reciprocation' and 'negative reciprocation.' Positive reciprocation refers to actions which are taken in direct response to a conciliatory move and which reward the initiating state with an equivalent concession. By contrast, negative reciprocation occurs if the state that is rewarded with the initial concession(s) does not seek to take advantage of the initiating state's move(s) by taking steps which make it less secure.<sup>65</sup>

Abraham Sofaer, then the Legal Advisor to Secretary of State Shultz, reflected at a conference to mark the twentieth anniversary of Reykjavik that whilst not engaging in large-scale gestures, the Reagan administration adopted three principles of action in response to Gorbachev's concessions. These were 'regime acceptance' (the administration would not try to overthrow or undermine the legitimacy of the Soviet system), 'limited linkage' (the US government would continue negotiations on arms control issues, despite differences in other areas such as human rights or espionage), and 'rhetorical restraint' (promising not to publicly 'crow' over any favorable Soviet actions).<sup>66</sup> The Reagan administration's principle of not crowing over Soviet concessions was also practiced in the human rights arena as explored by Sarah Snyder in her chapter in this volume. US negative reciprocation of this kind was sufficient to reinforce Gorbachev's confidence that future conciliatory moves would not be exploited by the Reagan administration. Writing in 2006, Sofaer considered that '[t]he increased trust that Gorbachev and...Shevardnadze developed for Reagan and Shultz was based...on confidence that no effort would be made to challenge the legal legitimacy of the Soviet regime, that both sides would avoid linking their many differences, and that Soviet leaders would not be publicly embarrassed when they took actions favoured by the United States.'<sup>67</sup>

Our claim that Gorbachev's trust in Reagan was pivotal to the making of the INF Treaty depends on the proposition that the Soviet leader chose to accept a new level of vulnerability as a consequence of his developing belief in Reagan's trustworthiness. We have shown that he accepted a certain level of vulnerability in terms of *capacity*; the risk being that a politically weakened Reagan would not prove capable of delivering on his promises. However, there is also evidence that the Soviet Union's concessions also entailed a certain level of vulnerability in terms of *authenticity*. The argument has been made by a number of scholars that the Soviet Union's concessions were materially meaningless because their nuclear weapons capabilities gave them a 'margin of safety' that allowed them to make these moves without decreasing their security.<sup>68</sup> What these arguments miss, however, is that what counts as an acceptable level of vulnerability is not fixed and should not be judged in the abstract.<sup>69</sup> It is, instead, the subject of political contestation and bureaucratic battles, and is decided upon subjectively by the actors themselves. What an acceptable level of vulnerability is for one actor may be very different to another. This is important to recognise as, despite the 'safety blanket' contention, Gorbachev's unilateral conciliatory moves were perceived by some within the Soviet leadership, especially the military, as increasing the vulnerability of the Soviet state to potential US exploitation. As we noted earlier, the move to agree to on-site inspections at the Stockholm conference, for instance, was strongly opposed by 'the General Staff, the Ministry of Defence, and the KGB.'<sup>70</sup> According to Ambassador's Lynn Hansen and Oleg Grinevsky, who the representatives at the Stockholm conference of the United States and the Soviet Union, respectively, the emotions had run high over this issue within the Soviet leadership, and during the Politburo meetings on the topic Marshal Akhromeyev Chief of the General Staff and advisor to Gorbachev, repeatedly accused Grinevsky, who was in favour of the measure, as being guilty of 'state treason.'<sup>71</sup> The point here is that Gorbachev's unilateral concessions were not made through a feeling of invulnerability, but rather through a belief he could trust in Reagan's *authenticity* not to exploit the Soviet Union's conciliatory moves.

## Conclusion

Without Gorbachev's decision to apply the principle of on-site inspections to the issue of INF, there would have been no treaty in December 1987. We have argued that this constituted a trust-building action – which we have crucially defined as one that entails an acceptance of vulnerability. Such an acceptance depended upon Gorbachev's belief that Reagan could be trusted not to exploit a conciliatory move of this kind. This confidence on the part of Gorbachev emerged out of the interpersonal dynamics that developed between Reagan and Gorbachev in the period 1985-87. Space has precluded a fuller discussion of how the face-to-face encounters between Reagan and Gorbachev and their officials built a climate of mutual trust.<sup>72</sup> But it is our contention that without Gorbachev's changed perception of Reagan's trustworthiness, the Soviet leader would not have been willing to accept the vulnerabilities – both to himself and to a lesser degree the Soviet state – which were entailed by making the concessions that made the INF Treaty possible. This new-found trust in Reagan not only led to the signing of the treaty between the two leaders on the White House lawn in 1987, but it also facilitated a successful verification regime that endured beyond their leaderships.

Our proposition that Gorbachev's acceptance of stringent verification measures in INF was a trust-building action reveals the limitations of Reagan's framing of the INF Treaty in terms of 'trust but verify'. In the case of INF, verification did not simply operate as complementary to trust; instead, the Soviet agreement to accept on-site inspections was dependent on prior changes in Gorbachev's perceptions of Reagan's trustworthiness. The problem with Reagan's use of 'trust but verify' was that it appeared to present these two concepts as dichotomous. We have argued that such an understanding fails to recognise that, in some contexts, decisions to accept more intrusive forms of verification might themselves be acts which depend on a prior level of trust and which, in turn, contribute to increasing that trust.<sup>73</sup> At the same time, we recognise that the developing trust

between Reagan and Gorbachev was not sufficient to obviate the US or Soviet requirements of highly intrusive verification provisions. Even if Reagan and Gorbachev trusted in each other's *authenticity* on the INF issue, they could not have carried, in the absence of these provisions, those within their governments who remained deeply suspicious of the other leader's intentions.

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<sup>1</sup> The chapter was originally presented by Wheeler and Considine at a conference on “Trust but Verify”: Confidence and Distrust from Détente to the End of the Cold War’, organised by the German Historical Institute, and held at the Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington, DC, 7-9 November, 2011. The chapter has been updated to take into account later work by Wheeler, and the chapter has been finalised with the addition of Baker.

<sup>2</sup> Remarks on Signing the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty at the White House, December 8, 1987 accessed at <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1987/120887c.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> For example, US Secretary of State, John Kerry, said that: ‘There is not a single sentence, not a single paragraph in this whole agreement that depends on promises or trust, not one. The arrangement that we worked out with Tehran is based exclusively on verification and proof.’ J. Kerry, “Remarks on Nuclear Agreement with Iran” September 8, 2015, accessed at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/09/246574.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> B. Obama, “Statement by the President on Iran”, July 14, 2015, accessed at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/07/14/statement-president-iran>.

<sup>5</sup> A.S. Krass, *Verification: How Much is Enough?* (Stockholm: SIPRI, 1985), 161.

<sup>6</sup> The concept of ideological fundamentalism is defined by Ken Booth and Nicholas Wheeler as a mindset of decision-makers that ‘assigns enemy status because of what the other is – its political identity – rather than how it actually behaves’ (K. Booth, and N.J. Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma: Fear, Cooperation and Trust in World Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 64-5.

<sup>7</sup> A.S. Krass, “Focus on: Verification and Trust in Arms Control,” *Journal of Peace Research* 22/4 (1985): 286.

<sup>8</sup> Krass, “Focus on,” 286.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Krass, *Verification*, 161.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in W. Heckrotte, “A Soviet view of verification,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 42/8 (1987): 12-15. Timerbaev’s original account is *Verification of Arms Control and of Disarmament* (Moscow: International Relations Publishers, 1983).

<sup>11</sup> A. Hoffman, *Building Trust: Overcoming Suspicion in International Conflict* (New York, NY: SUNY Press, 2006), 17.

<sup>12</sup> D.M. Rousseau, S.B. Sitkin, R.S. Burt, and C. Camerer, “Not so Different After All: A Cross-Discipline View of Trust”, *Academy of Management Review* 23/3 (1998): 395

<sup>13</sup> Hoffman, *Building Trust*, 17. See also N.J. Wheeler, *Trusting Enemies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016)

<sup>14</sup> A. Baier, *Moral Prejudices: Essays on Ethics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 152.

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- <sup>15</sup> B.A. Misztal, “Trust: Acceptance of, Precaution Against and Cause of Vulnerability”, *Comparative Sociology* 10/3 (2011): 364.
- <sup>16</sup> Wheeler, *Trusting Enemies* (forthcoming 2016).
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>18</sup> V.C. Keating and J. Ruzicka, “Trusting Relationships in International Politics: No Need to Hedge”, *Review of International Studies* 40/4 (2014): 7.
- <sup>19</sup> Keating and Ruzicka, “Trusting Relationships in International Politics”, 7.
- <sup>20</sup> Wheeler, *Trusting Enemies*.
- <sup>21</sup> Misztal, “Trust”, 364-5.
- <sup>22</sup> Booth and Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma*, 197-200.
- <sup>23</sup> Quoted in J. Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended* (London: Random House, 2004), 150. In his memorandum to President Reagan prior to the Geneva summit, US Secretary of State George Shultz also warned that the ‘New Soviet leadership is skilled and determined to protect the legacy they inherited from Brezhnev, Andropov and Chernenko’ (7 November 1985, Memorandum for the President). In addition, a November 1985 National Intelligence Estimate on Soviet domestic stresses predicted Gorbachev’s measures to be ‘activist but essentially conservative.’ See NIE11-18-85 Domestic Stresses on the Soviet System, accessed at [http://www.foia.cia.gov/docs/DOC\\_0000681980/DOC\\_0000681980.pdf](http://www.foia.cia.gov/docs/DOC_0000681980/DOC_0000681980.pdf)
- <sup>24</sup> P. Palazchenko, *My Years with Gorbachev and Shevardnadze: The Memoir of a Soviet Interpreter* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 38. Martin Walker also describes the contemporary Soviet view of the Reagan administration as being ‘concerned, threatening and relentless.’ M. Walker, *The Cold War: A History* (New York: Henry and Hook, 1993), 38.
- <sup>25</sup> J. Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 154. For example, a CIA evaluation of Gorbachev’s agenda for the 1985 Geneva summit was pessimistic, stating that the Soviet leader ‘probably approaches the November meeting with little expectation of any major substantive breakthrough on arms control or regional issues.’ CIA Assessment Gorbachev’s Personal Agenda for the November Meeting, from National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book no. 172 accessed at: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB172/index.htm>. See also A. Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow’s Ambassador to America’s Six Cold War Presidents (1962-1986)* (New York: Random House, 1995), 482-3; V. Zubok, “Gorbachev and the End of the Cold War: Different Perspectives on the Historical Personality” in W. Wohlforth, ed., *Cold War Endgame* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 209.
- <sup>26</sup> M. Gorbachev, *Political Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 27th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1986). This vision had previously been articulated in

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a speech to the Central Committee in 1985 which remains unpublished, see R. Garthoff, *The Great Transition: American-Soviet relations and the end of the Cold War* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1994), 257.

<sup>27</sup> For a discussion of security dilemma dynamics, see Booth and Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma*; N.J. Wheeler, "To Put Oneself into the other Fellow's Place': John Herz, the Security Dilemma and the Nuclear Age", *International Relations* 22/4 (2008): 493-509.

<sup>28</sup> 'Anatoly Chernayev's notes, Gorbachev's Instructions to the Reykjavik Preparation Group,' October 4· 1986, Document 5 National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 203 The Reykjavik File: Previously Secret U.S. and Soviet Documents on the 1986 Reagan-Gorbachev Summit, accessed at:  
<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document05.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> Booth and Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma*, 7.

<sup>30</sup> George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Scribner, 1993), 606-7; Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 169, 173.

<sup>31</sup> M. Gorbachev, *Memoirs* (London: Doubleday, 1996), 405.

<sup>32</sup> "Union of Soviet Socialist Republics-United States: Documents from the Geneva Summit," *International Legal Materials* 25/1 (January 1986): 102.

<sup>33</sup> Excerpt from "Memorandum of Conversation, Reagan Gorbachev Meetings in Geneva November 1985, Second Private Meeting," Accessed at:

[http://web.me.com/jasonebin/The\\_Reagan\\_Files/The\\_Summits\\_files/Geneva%20Summit%20Transcripts.pdf](http://web.me.com/jasonebin/The_Reagan_Files/The_Summits_files/Geneva%20Summit%20Transcripts.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> National Security Archives, "Excerpt from Anatoly Chernyaev's Diary, November 24, 1985," accessed at:  
<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB172/Doc26.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> A. Grachev, *Gorbachev's Gamble: Soviet Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008), 65.

<sup>36</sup> Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 412. Gorbachev was also discouraged by combative statements from the Reagan administration on Afghanistan and what he described as an 'unrestrained anti-Soviet campaign' of propaganda undertaken by the United States after the Chernobyl disaster, Garthoff, *The Great Transition*, 277.

<sup>37</sup> A. Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 56.

<sup>38</sup> Velikhov, a renowned Soviet physicist, was a member of the Soviet delegation to the Nuclear and Space talks in Geneva. Quoted in R. English, *Russia and the Idea of the West* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 217.

<sup>39</sup> L. Hansen and O. Grinevsky, "Negotiating CSCE" in S. Feldman, ed., *Confidence Building and Verification: Prospects in the Middle East* (Tel Aviv: Jaffee Center, 1994), 59.

<sup>40</sup> Hansen and Grinevsky, "Negotiating CSCE", 59.

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<sup>41</sup> Mikhail Gorbachev letter to Ronald Reagan, 15 September, 1986.

<sup>42</sup> R. Rhodes, *Arsenals of Folly: The Making of the Nuclear Arms Race* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2008), 271.

<sup>43</sup> Quoted in D. Reynolds, *Summits: Six Meetings that Shaped the Twentieth Century* (New York: Allen, 2007), 363

<sup>44</sup> Quoted in Reynolds, *Summits*, 366.

<sup>45</sup> For an example see Anatoly Chernyaev's notes from a conference with Politburo members, Gorbachev Conference with Politburo Members and Secretaries of the Central Committee, December 1, 1986, Document 28, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 203.

<sup>46</sup> Quoted in W. Jackson, "Soviet Reassessment of Ronald Reagan 1985-1988," *Political Science Quarterly* 113/4 (1998): 633. See also Gorbachev, *Perestroika*, 240.

<sup>47</sup> Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, 85.

<sup>48</sup> Grachev, *Gorbachev's Gamble*, 95.

<sup>49</sup> "Politburo February 26 1987. On Soviet-American Relations and Negotiations on Nuclear and Space Armaments". The INF Treaty and the Washington Summit: 20 Years Later, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 238 accessed at: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB238/index.htm>

<sup>50</sup> Memorandum of Conversation between M.S Gorbachev and U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz. April 14, 1987." The INF Treaty and the Washington Summit: 20 Years Later, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 238 accessed at <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB238/russian/Final1987-04-14%20Gorbachev-Shultz.pdf>

<sup>51</sup> Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 440.

<sup>52</sup> Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 440.

<sup>53</sup> "Politburo April 16, 1987. About the Conversation with Shultz." The INF Treaty and the Washington Summit: 20 Years Later, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 238 accessed at <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB238/russian/Final1987-04-16%20Politburo.pdf>

<sup>54</sup> For a discussion of Soviet INF concessions see also D. Druckman, J. Husbands and K. Johnston, "Turning Points in the INF Negotiations," *Negotiation Journal* (January 1991): 55-67.

<sup>55</sup> Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 443.

<sup>56</sup> D.E. Hoffman, *The Dead Hand: Reagan, Gorbachev and the Untold Story of the Cold War Arms Race* (London: Icon Books, 2011), 275; J.G. Wilson, *The Triumph of Improvisation: Gorbachev's Adaptability, Reagan's Engagement, and the End of the Cold War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), 123-4.

<sup>57</sup> "Memorandum of Conversation between M.S Gorbachev and U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz. April 14, 1987." The INF Treaty and the Washington Summit: 20 Years Later, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 238 accessed at <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB238/russian/Final1987-04-14%20Gorbachev-Shultz.pdf>

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<sup>58</sup> See W. Wohlforth, “Realism and the End of the Cold War,” *International Security* 19/2 (1994); S. Brooks and W. Wohlforth, “Power, Globalization and the End of the Cold War: Reevaluating a Landmark Case for Ideas,” *International Security* 25/3 (2000), and S. Brooks, and W. Wohlforth, “Economic Constraints and the End of the Cold War” in W. Wohlforth, ed., *Cold War Endgame*.

<sup>59</sup> N.J. Wheeler, “Investigating Diplomatic Transformations,” *International Affairs* 89/2 (2013), 492-495; Wheeler, *Trusting Enemies*.

<sup>60</sup> Chernyaev, oral history transcript, published in Wohlforth, ed., *Cold War End Game*, 20.

<sup>61</sup> G. W. Breslauer, and R. N. Lebow, “Leadership and the End of the Cold War: A Counterfactual Thought Experiment,” in R. K. Hermann and R. N. Lebow, eds., *Ending the Cold War: Interpretations, Causation, and the Study of International Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 161-88; V. Zubok, “Gorbachev and the End of the Cold War: Different Perspectives on the Historical Personality,” in W. Wohlforth, ed., *Cold War Endgame*, 208.

<sup>62</sup> English, *Russia and the Idea of the West*, 272.

<sup>63</sup> Breslauer and Lebow, “Leadership and the End of the Cold War”.

<sup>64</sup> English, *Russia and the Idea of the West*, 263.

<sup>65</sup> K. Booth, and J. Baylis, *Britain, NATO and Nuclear Weapons: Alternative Defence versus Alliance Reform* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), 205. See also A. Collins, *The Security Dilemma and the End of the Cold War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), 193.

<sup>66</sup> A. Sofaer, “A Legacy of Reykjavik: Negotiating with Enemies,” in S. Drell, and G. Shultz, eds., *Implications of the Reykjavik Summit on Its Twentieth Anniversary* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2007), 132.

<sup>67</sup> Sofaer, “A Legacy of Reykjavik,” 133.

<sup>68</sup> E.B. Montgomery, “Breaking out of the Security Dilemma: Realism, Reassurance and the problem of uncertainty,” *International Security* 31/2 (2006), 181, 183; A. Kydd, “Trust, reassurance and cooperation,” *International Organisation* 54: 2, 343; A. Kydd *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 222; C.L. Glaser, *Rational Theory of International Politics: The Logic of Competition and Cooperation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 208.

<sup>69</sup> Misztal, “Trust”, 364.

<sup>70</sup> Hansen and Grinevsky, “Negotiating CSCE”, 59.

<sup>71</sup> Hansen and Grinevsky, “Negotiating CSCE”, 61.

<sup>72</sup> Wheeler, “Investigating Diplomatic Transformations”; Wheeler, *Trusting Enemies*; M. Holmes, *Face Diplomacy* (manuscript on file with the author).

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<sup>73</sup> For this argument applied to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, see, J. Baker and N.J. Wheeler, “Iran nuclear deal is built of trust as well as verification”, *Birmingham Brief*, 16 July 2015, <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2015/07/iran-nuclear-deal-16-07-15.aspx>, (accessed 6 November 2015).