FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT: RONALD REAGAN'S MORAL AND RELIGIOUS RHETORIC AND SOVIET POLICY, 1981-1989

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

in

HISTORY

By

CAROLINE KELLER PARSONS

APRIL 2015

at

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA AT THE COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON AND THE CITADEL

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis contributes to the historiography on President Ronald Reagan, political rhetoric, U.S.-Soviet Relations, 1980s politics, and religion in foreign policy. It examines the consistency and purpose of Reagan's religious and moral rhetoric in an attempt to gain an understanding of Reagan's rhetoric as it pertained to his Soviet policies. It draws largely from speeches, articles, summit meetings, interviews, personal correspondences, radio broadcasts, press conferences, political insider's memoirs, and Reagan administration documents that laid out foreign policy strategies for dealing with the Soviet Union.

I argue that throughout his two terms as president, while there was variance over time in some aspects of his rhetoric (*i.e.*, his characterization of the Kremlin), Ronald Reagan's rhetoric consistently pointed to religion and morality as central aspects of the Cold War and central causes of East-West tensions. He also consistently pointed to the Soviet system as the greatest moral evil facing the world, and his Soviet policies and interactions with Soviet leaders reflected his perception that religion and morality were at the heart of the Cold War and East-West relations. This thesis intends to provide a better understanding of the worldview Reagan presented in his public rhetoric and of the ways his foreign policy actions were, overall, consistent with that worldview. This study defines Reagan's public rhetoric as a tool of persuasion that sought to reshape public and private perceptions of the East-West relationship, the Cold War, and America's role in it.

For Mom and Dad,
who always encouraged me to search for the truth
and taught me that hard work is its own reward.

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Introduction

Ronald Reagan is one of the most unusual and interesting presidents America has ever had. Unlike many of the presidents before him, Reagan was not a career politician or war veteran. Although he gained some political experience during an eight-year stint as governor of California, Reagan was best known for being a Hollywood movie star. By popular standards, he was probably less qualified to be president than many of the other politicians in the country. Reagan has often been criticized for being the type of president who would nod off during staff meetings; yet he has also been praised for being the Great Communicator. How is it that a president who fell asleep at staff meetings and spent nearly an entire year of his presidency at his California ranch was elected twice by two of the largest electoral majorities in American history? To say the least, Ronald Reagan is an enigmatic figure. For these, and many other reasons, President Reagan and his time in office have been points of fascination for historians of the United States and the Cold War.

The journalist Lou Cannon grapples with the enigmatic image of this president who he argues proved to be a capable and involved president during the Iran-contra affair, yet demonstrated less than adequate comprehension and leadership abilities in his attempts to reform the economy.[1] The paradoxical picture of Reagan that Cannon presents largely stems from what the author sees as a disconnect between Reagan's words and deeds. In a harsher tone, historian Michael Schaller argues that "[l]ike the kindly, bumbling, myopic cartoon character [Mr.

[1] Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2000), 110.

Magoo], Reagan lived a politically charmed life in a world he thought he fully controlled but only dimly understood."[2] By contrast, Peter Schweizer, research fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution and president of the Government Accountability Institute, gives Reagan more credit and argues that the intelligent president intentionally abandoned détente (the pursuit of a relatively cordial, stable relationship with the Soviet Union) and sought to move beyond the containment policy to pursue a strategy of victory.[3] This perspective looks to Reagan as a great strategist and as a man who understood the world around him and reacted appropriately. Rick Perlstein, in *The Invisible Bridge: The Fall of Nixon and the Rise of Reagan*, investigates "the precise ways that opinions about him [Reagan] divided America."[4] Perlstein sees Reagan as a "divider" and asks why some people were "so eager and willing to follow" Reagan while others "saw him as a phony and a hustler." Ultimately, Perlstein points to Reagan's ability to "radiate blithe optimism in the face of what others called chaos – to reimagine the morass in front of him as a tableau of simple moral clarity" as the cause of people's polarizing opinions about him, and argues that Reagan "did the same thing as a politician: skillfully reframing situations that those of a more critical temper saw as irresolvable muddles."[5] Again, it is the divide between Reagan's rhetoric and actions that Perlstein points to as one of the most enigmatic elements of his presidency.

My thesis will address this connection between Reagan's words and actions through an analysis of his moral and religious rhetoric concerning the Soviet Union during his eight years as president. I seek to discern what effect, if any, his public language had on his Soviet policies.

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[2] Michael Schaller, *Reckoning with Reagan: America and Its President In the 1980's* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), viii.
[3] Peter Schweizer, *Reagan's War: The Epic Story of His Forty-Year Struggle and Final Triumph Over Communism* (New York, New York: Doubleday, 2002), 1-4.
[4] Rick Perlstein, *The Invisible Bridge: The Fall of Nixon and the Rise of Reagan* (New York, New York: Simon Schuster, 2014), xvi.
[5] Ibid.

Was Reagan's public rhetoric merely symbolic? Was it perhaps an attempt to maintain the support of the Moral Majority (a prominent political group associated with the Christian right), or merely a reaction to domestic and foreign events? Did his language change over time due to his changing perception of the Soviet Union or due to key events such as the crises of 1983 or Mikhail Gorbachev's perestroika and glasnost policies? Was his Soviet policy the result more of principle or pragmatism – or both at different times? My thesis will address the enigmatic image of Reagan during his eight years as president by studying his public and private rhetoric concerning the Soviet Union. My ultimate goal is to highlight the consistency, or inconsistency, between his rhetoric and actions.

Although Reagan often utilized overtly religious and moral rhetoric in his speeches, press conferences, and radio addresses, there is surprisingly little scholarship devoted to this rhetoric and the ways in which it converged with his foreign policy. Much of the popular and scholarly literature addresses the question of what type of president and politician Reagan was (competent or incompetent) and the effectiveness of his foreign and domestic policies. But these works do little to address the connection, or lack thereof, between his overtly moral and religious rhetoric and his Soviet policies.

Many scholars argue that Reagan approached the Cold War and the Soviet Union with a policy of peace through strength. Scholars have discussed this doctrine at length in many books about his contribution to the end of the Cold War. Such authors include Jack Matlock, Peter Schweizer, and Beth Fischer. Matlock, a former ambassador to the Soviet Union and White House advisor, argues that Reagan did indeed seek peace between the two superpowers as well

as an end to the Cold War from his first day in office.[6] However, Matlock pays little attention to the significance of the connection, or lack thereof, between Reagan's public and private rhetoric and what Matlock says was Reagan's goal of ending the Cold War. Instead, he focuses on the centrality of economic growth and military buildup to Reagan's policy of peace through strength. *Washington Post* reporter Lou Cannon, in his book *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime*, hints at the importance of Reagan's "innocent and unshakable belief in American exceptionalism," which was certainly a component of Reagan's political persona, but Cannon spends the majority of his book attempting to decipher the president's enigmatic personality and policies.[7] Even historian Andrew Preston, who has devoted a chapter of his book *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith* to studying the role that Reagan's religion played in his opinion of the Soviet Union and the Cold War, argues that it was Reagan's fear of nuclear holocaust and the rapidly approaching Armageddon that drove his peaceful approach to U.S.-Soviet relations. Moreover, Preston focuses primarily on the domestic response to Reagan's involvement in the Middle East and Central America rather than analyzing the connection between Reagan's Soviet policy and his moral and religious rhetoric.[8]

Beth Fischer makes a similar argument in *The Reagan Reversal*. She argues that Reagan "reversed" his approach with the Soviet Union in his second term; he sought to focus on the common humanity of the United States and the Soviet Union, and not their ideological rivalry (as he had done in his first term).[9] Fischer seeks to prove that this policy reversal was prompted by Reagan's fear of Armageddon and his desire to eliminate the possibility of nuclear war. While

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[6] Jack F. Matlock, Jr., *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 5, 79.
[7] Cannon, *President Reagan*, 711.
[8] Andrew Preston, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy* (New York: Anchor Books, 2012), 574-600.
[9] Beth Fischer, *The Reagan Reversal: Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1997), 32-33.

this fear may have influenced Reagan's foreign policy, neither Fischer nor Preston fully address his moral and religious rhetoric concerning the Soviet Union. Political scientist Paul Kengor focuses solely on Ronald Reagan's religious beliefs and argues that "it's impossible to understand Ronald Reagan fully – and especially his Cold War actions – without grasping the influence of religion on his thought."[10] He argues that although it is true that Reagan primarily kept his faith private, there is an "endless trail of religious remarks" in Reagan's public and private statements, and he concludes that Reagan was "motivated in every aspect of his life and career by his spiritual convictions."[11] This is a religious biography of Reagan that argues in favor of the genuine nature of his faith, but it is less of a historical investigation of the connection between Reagan's rhetoric and policies. These are only a few of the many books devoted to the study of Reagan, but they signify some of the major trends within the historiography. These books make broader claims about the nature of Reagan's foreign policy concerning the Soviet Union, or about his personal life, without investigating the connection between those policies and his moral language.

This thesis aims to explore Reagan's public and private rhetoric about the Soviet Union and the connection between his rhetoric and his foreign policy. It asks whether he was consistent or inconsistent in the words he used to characterize the Soviet state and the U.S.-Soviet relationship. This thesis will also consider the personal and political motives behind his words. Did he seek to gain support from the Moral Majority in order to maintain their political support? Did he make religious allusions and invoke the language of "moral struggle" in order to placate conservatives – a strategy that would allow him to follow a more open-minded, moderate policy course with respect to arms control, regional issues, trade, and a host of other bilateral U.S.-

[10] Paul Kengor, *God and Ronald Reagan: A Spiritual Life* (New York, New York: HarperCollins, 2004), xi.
[11] Ibid., ix.

Soviet matters? Did his language change over time in response to different circumstances, e.g., the crises of 1983, the accession of Mikhail Gorbachev, Gorbachev's perestroika and glasnost policies, and the Reagan administration's implementation of a democracy promotion policy? Did his language change over time due to his own changing impressions of the Soviet state and U.S.-Soviet relations? Finally, was Ronald Reagan more a man of principle or a man of pragmatism; did he prefer to stand by his words whatever the cost to his foreign policy, or did he seek pragmatic solutions to foreign policy problems no matter the cost to his principles? Was there a connection between his statements and his policies?

Identifying consistency, or the lack thereof, is a key to understanding the connections between speech and action. Politicians are often accused of having ulterior, political motives for incorporating moral or religious rhetoric into their public statements. As Paul Craig Roberts has written, "[w]e are all used to moral motives being unmasked as rationalizations for class and individual interests or explained as expressions of social, economic, psychological or political needs."[12] Many Americans are skeptical about whether politicians will follow policies that accurately reflect the religious or moral rhetoric they so often pronounce. The question of authenticity of rhetoric and of the connection between rhetoric and action are at the heart of the historiography of morality in foreign policy. American politicians have used religious and moral language in order to persuade the public that their political cause is a morally superior cause. This type of powerful language, which defines policies in terms of the moral duty of the citizen and nation, is intended to inspire dedication and loyalty to the specific mission or politician. Scholars who study morality in American foreign policy address the motives of the policymakers

[12] Paul Craig Roberts, "Morality and American Foreign Policy," *Modern Age,* (Spring 1977).

who use morally and religiously charged language, and they investigate the connection, or lack thereof, between their rhetoric and actions.[13]

This thesis will contribute to this historiography by examining the consistency and purpose of Reagan's religious and moral rhetoric in an attempt to gain an understanding of the purpose of Reagan's rhetoric as it pertained to his Soviet policies. It will ultimately engage with the historiography on Reagan, political rhetoric, U.S.-Soviet Relations, 1980s politics, and religion in foreign policy. My thesis draws largely from speeches, articles, summit meetings, interviews, personal correspondences, radio broadcasts, press conferences, and Reagan administration documents that laid out foreign policy strategies for dealing with the Soviet Union. It also draws from political insiders' memoirs, which, although they are a different type of primary source, offer firsthand accounts and observation on Reagan, his policies, and his beliefs. Above all else, this exploration of Reagan's moral and religious rhetoric contributes to the scholarship on America in the 1980s, morality in foreign policy, and the Reagan presidency.

I argue that throughout his two terms as president, while there was variance over time in some aspects of his rhetoric (i.e. his characterization of the Kremlin), Ronald Reagan's rhetoric consistently pointed to religion and morality as central aspects of the Cold War and central causes of East-West tensions. He also consistently pointed to the Soviet system as the greatest moral evil facing the world, and his Soviet policies and interactions with Soviet leaders reflected his perception that questions of religion and morality were at the heart of the Cold War and East-West relations. This thesis is intended to provide the reader with a better understanding of the worldview Reagan presented in his public rhetoric and of the ways his foreign policy actions

[13] George F. Kennan, "Morality and Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* (Winter 1985-86): 205-218; Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 4th. Ed. (New York: Knopf, 1967); Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, 50th Anniversary Ed. (New York: WW Norton, 2009)

were, overall, consistent with that worldview. This study defines Reagan's public rhetoric as a tool of persuasion that sought to reshape public and private perceptions of the East-West relationship, the Cold War, and America's role in it. Former White House council to the president Peter Wallison argues that "[t]he words in Reagan's speeches outlined and refined his policies…What he was doing in his speeches was setting limits in the form of principles."[14]

Many scholars who study Reagan and his moral and religious rhetoric have questioned the judgment and leadership abilities of the president in the same ways that many contemporary critics questioned Reagan. Richard Reeves writes that this perception of Reagan as a man who was out of touch with reality was one foreseen by those who worked closely with Reagan. He writes that Reagan's pollster, Richard Withlin, told Reagan in one of his first presidential campaign memos that they could expect Reagan "to be pictured as a simplistic and untried lightweight (Dumb), a person who consciously misuses facts to overblow his own record (Deceptive) and, if president, one who would be too anxious to engage our country in a nuclear holocaust (Dangerous)."[15] Reagan's public statements earned him a reputation as someone who was exacerbating the already dangerous situation that was the nuclear stand-off and as someone who did not clearly grasp what was going on in the world around him. In *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime*, journalist Lou Cannon points to this view of Reagan writing that

> The sad, shared secret of the Reagan White House was that no one in the presidential entourage had confidence in the judgment or capacities of the President…Pragmatists and conservatives alike treated Reagan as if he were a child monarch in need of constant protection…they gave him no respect.[16]

[14] Peter J. Wallison, *Ronald Reagan: The Power of Conviction and the Success of His Presidency* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2003), 31-32.
[15] Richard Reeves, *Ronald Reagan: The Triumph of Imagination* (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2005), 3.
[16] Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2000), 374.

Reeves, however, has a different opinion about what Reagan's rhetoric said about him. Reeves argues that Reagan was not "an unwitting tool of a manipulative staff. Quite the opposite."[17] Reeves contends that though they may have been smart, members of Reagan's cabinet were just another part of "'Reaganism,' a word that defined his dominance."[18] According to Reeves, Reagan is not given enough credit for the leadership role he played while in the White House. Reagan, not his cabinet, was the primary catalyst for the decisions and policies of the Reagan administration. Reeves asserts that "[a]mazing things, good and bad, happened in the 1980s because President Reagan wanted them to happen. He knew how to be president."[19] Reeves concludes that although "[n]o one ever called Reagan an intellectual…he did see the world in terms of ideas."[20] In Reeves's opinion, Reagan was an ideologue who held to a few ideas with "stubborn certainty."[21] Among these ideas were his opinions of communism and the Soviet Union. Reagan's overtly moral and religious Soviet-aimed rhetoric suggest that he did view the world in abstract ideas. Given this, it is understandable why those who viewed the Cold War in less ideological terms viewed Reagan's abstractions as an indication that he fundamentally misunderstood the war.

In a September 1982 speech at Kansas State University, Reagan invoked one of his favorite aphorisms from George Washington: "you [can't] have morality without the basis of religion."[22] Reagan argued that one of the greatest threats that emanated from the Soviet Union was their claim that an ideology that was fundamentally atheistic could be moral. Historian Robert Dallek argued in 1984 that while Reagan's depiction of communism was plausible, he

[17] Reeves, *President Reagan*, xv-xvi.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid., xvi.
[20] Ibid., xii.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ronald Reagan, "Remarks at Kansas State University at the Alfred M. Landon Lecture Series on Public Issues, September 9, 1982." *The American Presidency Project* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=42945

ultimately failed to recognize or understand that "Moscow is also a self-interested nation-state that is open to a certain amount of give-and-take in world affairs."[23] Dallek argued that the reason Reagan was unwilling to accept this fact of international politics was "because his description of the Soviet Union is less a balanced realistic view of its internal conditions and external aims than an amalgam of conservative complaints about conditions in the United States." Reagan argued that the Soviet Union and their communist ideology was the embodiment of all that was wrong with American politics and society. Dallek argued that Reagan pointed to the Soviet Union as a warning to Americans of what their society would become if they did not abandon current liberal political and cultural trends. Reagan definitely viewed communism as both a domestic and foreign threat. A communist government was and is the antithesis of a democratic government. Reagan argued that the Cold War was not just a crusade to secure human rights, but that it was a fight to protect the American way of life (as he understood it).

Historian Chester Pach argues that Reagan thought the Soviets were dangerous because they had carried out what Reagan called "the biggest military buildup in the history of man."[24] Reagan's military buildup suggested that he was deeply troubled by Soviet military strength because it relegated America to second place in terms of global power, it effectively put America on the defensive, and it allowed the Soviets to expand their global influence. However, a study of Reagan's rhetoric reveals that the president also saw the ideology of the Soviet Union as a grave threat to the U.S. that rivaled that of the nuclear threat. Reagan consistently portrayed the arms race and the Cold War as ultimately the result of the ideological conflict between democracy and communism.

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[23] Robert Dallek, *Ronald Reagan: The Politics of Symbolism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984), 131.
[24] Chester J. Pach, Jr., "Sticking to His Guns: Reagan and National Security," in *The Reagan Presidency,* ed. W. Elliot Brownlee, et al. (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2003), 86.

Journalist John Judis argues that American officials regularly express three ideas when they attempt to construct a moral foreign policy: the idea of the United States as God's "chosen nation," that the United States has a "mission" or a "calling" to transform the world, and that in carrying out this mission, the United States is representing the forces of good over evil.[25] Even a brief study of Reagan's Soviet rhetoric reveals that these were all cornerstones of his characterization of the United States' role in the Cold War.

Chapter one will explore Reagan's rhetoric concerning the Soviet Union throughout his two terms in office, as well as some of his rhetoric prior to becoming president, in an effort to make sense of his public and political persona, as well as to determine whether his public arguments changed in response to world events. I seek to discern the extent to which moral and religious perspectives influenced Reagan's opposition to the Soviet Union and communism and to gauge how much they influenced his understanding of the Cold War and America's role in it. Chapter two will focus on the policies of the Reagan administration concerning the Soviet Union and U.S.-Soviet relations. The second chapter pays special attention to Reagan's interactions with Soviet leaders in the form of letters and summits. It investigates the consistency, or the lack thereof, of the connection between what he and his administration publically stated and what they actually did.

The 1980 Presidential Election: A Turning Point

Reagan's opinion of what it meant to fight the Cold War can be expressed well in one simple phrase from a conversation he had with Richard Allen (who later became his foreign policy advisor) in January 1977. Allen went to visit Reagan in Los Angeles and recalls that the most significant thing Reagan said in their four hour conversation was, "My idea of American

[25] John B. Judis, "The Chosen Nation: The Influence of Religion on U.S. Foreign Policy." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, March 2005 http://carnegieendowment.org/files/PB37.judis.FINAL.pdf

policy toward the Soviet Union is simple, and some would say simplistic. It is this: We win and they lose."[26] "One had never heard such words from the lips of a major political figure," Allen wrote; "until then, we had thought only in terms of managing the relationship with the Soviet Union." Allen argues that in Reagan's binary view of the Cold War "lay the great difference, back in early 1977, between Reagan and every other politician: He literally believed we could win and was prepared to carry this message to the nation as the intellectual foundation of a presidency."[27] Such a bold foreign policy and statement at this time was not only simplistic and vague at its inception; it was also dangerous. What exactly did "We win and they lose" mean? Was the Cold War not much more complicated than Reagan's simple statement reflected? In the late 1970s, and even well into the 1980s, stating this proposition directly invited a military confrontation with Moscow and it also could be seen by the American public as a repetition of Barry Goldwater's 1964 rhetoric that earned him the reputation of being unstable and trigger happy. Nonetheless, Reagan ran a campaign that emphasized this narrow view of the world. One should note that although Reagan clearly did not like what the Soviet government did to its own people, a tough anti-Soviet policy was also consistent with American national interest since the 1940s.

Many see the 1980 presidential election between Ronald Reagan, the incumbent Democrat Jimmy Carter, and independent Republican Congressman John Anderson as a turning point in American history. In 1980 America was still struggling with the outcome of the Vietnam War, Nixon's Watergate scandal, the humiliating Iran hostage crisis, and the American military's inability to carry out a successful rescue mission. Those things, combined with the struggles with OPEC, skyrocketing inflation, and a struggling economy led many American citizens to lose

[26] Richard V. Allen, "The Man Who Won the Cold War." *Hoover Institute* (January 30, 2000) http://www.hoover.org/research/man-who-won-cold-war
[27] Ibid.

confidence in themselves, their leaders, and in America as a global superpower. To be successful and achieve the presidency, the candidates had to convince the American people that these problems could be solved. Reagan ran a campaign that sought to assure the American people that if he was elected, he could stimulate economic growth by cutting taxes and improving the efficiency of the economy through reduced government regulation and increased competition. He assured Americans that he could improve America's security by negotiating with the Soviet Union for a reduction in nuclear arms, and could ultimately restore the American people's optimism and confidence about their future by restoring to them their individual power and influence, which he argued the government had usurped.[28]

By July 1979, Carter's approval rating had plummeted to 29%. A number of different things contributed to Carter's decreased approval rating: his well-meaning but inept effort to pardon Vietnam draft dodgers; his tendency to straddle social issues like abortion and affirmative action, which left the impression of moral confusion; increasing concern over Carter's ability to handle foreign affairs; and the rapid rise in inflation after the 1979 Iranian revolution drove the price of oil sharply higher. In what became known as "The Malaise Speech," Carter attempted to bolster his approval rating and to convey to Americans that he recognized that "the true problems of our nation are much deeper-deeper than gasoline lines or energy shortages, deeper even than inflation or recession. And I realize more than ever that as president I need your help. So, I decided to reach out and listen to the voices of America."[29] To this end, Carter had invited business men and laborers, teachers, preachers, governors, mayors, and private citizens to Camp David to hear their ideas about how to fix the problems America was facing. After Camp David,

[28] Peter J. Wallison, *Ronald Reagan: The Power of Conviction and the Success of His Presidency* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2003), 55.
[29] Jimmy Carter, "Address to the Nation on Energy and National Goals: 'The Malaise Speech,' July 15, 1979" *American Presidency Project* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=32596

Carter embarked on a ten-day trip to speak to other Americans. He shared with his audience that the general consensus from those he had spoke with was that he was not "leading the nation," he was "just managing the government," "that ordinary people are excluded from political power," and that America was "confronted with a moral and spiritual crisis."[30] Carter said that these ten days had confirmed his belief in the "decency and the strength and the wisdom of the America people." He even went as far as to identify the American crisis as a "crisis of confidence." He asserted that America could rebuild their confidence "only if we tap our greatest resources – America's people, America's values, and America's confidence."[31] Although this was a well intentioned attempt to inspire confidence, it landed on deaf ears.

Reagan exploited Carter's low approval rating and tapped into Americans' belief that Carter was unable or unwilling to lead them, and that the federal government was not helping ordinary people. Schaller explains that Reagan emphasized "his humble origins, his career as an actor, soldier, and union official, his background as a Democrat, and his move to the Republican Party."[32] He communicated clear stances on social issues like abortion, said he could not and would not "stand by while inflation and joblessness destroy the dignity of our people," was staunchly anti-communist, and promised to lead America back to greatness.[33] The blithely optimistic Reagan connected well with almost every American constituency, and perhaps most importantly, he connected with the Moral Majority. Schaller argues that "Jimmy Carter had

[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Michael Schaller, *Reckoning with Reagan: American and Its President in the 1980s* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 39.
[33] Ronald Reagan, "Remarks Announcing Candidacy for the Republican Presidential Nomination, November 13, 1979." *The American Presidency Project* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=76116

mobilized fundamentalist Christians in 1976, but Reagan captured the movement four years later."[34]

Reagan recalled in his autobiography that in 1980, Americans had been told that "America was past its prime; we had to get used to less, and the American people were responsible for the problems we faced."[35] Additionally, Reagan wrote, "We were told we would have to lower our expectations; America would never again be as prosperous or have as bright a future as it once had." Reagan utterly rejected these claims. He ran a campaign based on the idea of "American exceptionalism" and argued that he "saw no national malaise" and "found nothing wrong with the American people."[36] The United States faced real problems in 1980, many of which Reagan acknowledged were of their own making. But instead of merely accepting what many saw as an irreversible decline, Reagan argued that Americans had simply forgotten who they were and what they were capable of.[37] Reagan argued that "[w]e [Americans] had to recapture our dreams, our pride in ourselves and our country, and regain that unique sense of destiny and optimism that had always made America different from any other country in the world."[38] In his October 1980 Presidential Debate with Carter, Reagan told Americans to "ask yourself, are you better off than you were four years ago?"[39] Reminding his national audience

[34] Schaller, *Reckoning with Reagan*, 36.
[35] Ronald Reagan, *An American Life* (New York, New York: Threshold Editions, 1990), 219.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Reagan often borrowed Puritan minister John Winthrop's idea that America was "a city upon a hill." Winthrop used the phrase to express not the inherent superiority of the Plymouth settlement, but its notoriety. Whether or not Plymouth failed, the eyes of the world would be upon her. Reagan used the term to express his belief that America stood as a shining example of truth and morality to the rest of the world. Another favorite phrase of Reagan's to describe America was "the last best hope of man on Earth," which he borrowed from one of his heroes, Abraham Lincoln. Reagan viewed America as the last bastion against the forces of evil in the modern world and believed that if she could not be successful in stopping them, not other country could.
[38] Ibid.
[39] "The Carter-Reagan Presidential Debate, October 28, 1980," *Commission on Presidential Debates* http://www.debates.org/index.php?page=october-28-1980-debate-transcript

that he believed America could once again be great, he told them "[t]his country doesn't have to be in the shape that it is in." He ended his closing statement in the debate by saying

> I would like to have a crusade today, and I would like to lead that crusade with your help. And it would be one to take government off the backs of the great people of this country, and turn you loose again to do those things that I know you can do so well, because you did them and made this country great.[40]

While Carter emphasized the difficult decisions he had faced that year by saying things like, "I alone have had to determine the interests of my country and the degree of involvement in my country," Reagan focused on the strength he saw in the American people. .

Given the circumstances of the time, Reagan had some clear advantages over Carter. Carter was forced to be specific and to defend his actual record of the previous 3 ½ years while Reagan could afford to be vague and allude to his belief in the strength and power of "the people." Additionally, Reagan had the distinct advantage of being a challenger against a relatively unpopular incumbent in a troubled time. Some polls leading up to the debate showed a close race into the final weeks. Allen's concerns about Reagan being perceived as unstable and trigger happy proved well founded as voters' generally negative feelings about the economy were offset by their fears of Reagan as a harsh conservative, a warmonger, and old and out of touch. But after this debate, held only a week prior to the election, Reagan surged ahead in the polls.

Reagan's 1980 victory over Carter was not predicted by the polls, and it shocked the pundits. In September 1980, the political commentator Morton Kondracke wrote that in spite of Republicans' hope that the GOP would enjoy a tidal wave victory over the Democrats, it was likely that not much would change in the coming election in terms of Americans' partisan

[40] Ibid.

alignment. This hope "was based on Republican poll data showing that three-quarters of the electorate believed that things 'are seriously off the track' in America and that 80 percent understood the Democratic Party had been in power during their derailment."[41] Kondracke argued that "there is little prospect now for a tidal wave in Washington. Whether any real prospect ever existed is open to debate."[42] Additionally, Kondracke argued that Reagan was clearly "not leading a partisan or ideological crusade."[43]

Reflecting on the 1980 election, journalist Burton Yale Pines argued in his 1982 book *Back to the Basics* that Reagan had acted as if he was carrying a mandate from heaven. "From the start," wrote Pines, "the incoming President [Reagan] behaved as if he was ushering in a new era."[44] Recalling the final months before the 1980 election, Reagan wrote in his autobiography that "[i]f I could be elected president, I wanted to do what I could to bring about a spiritual revival in America."[45] These ideas and goals were not so different in many ways from those of previous presidents. Carter had also run his 1976 campaign on the basis of restoring America's moral strength and reviving her greatness. In other words, Reagan in 1980 sounded to many like Carter in 1976. Yet Reagan clearly and harshly criticized the Carter human rights policy, arguing that it was ineffective, morally unsound, and ultimately threatening to the United States' security interests. But what was the difference between their policies? Writing in 1985, David Carleton and Michael Stohl argued that Reagan saw Carter's policy as "morally tenuous because it created a double standard, condemning minor human rights violators while overlooking major

[41] Morton Kondracke, "No Tidal Waves,"" *New Republic* 183, no. 13 (September 27, 1980): 10-14.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Burton Yale Pines, *Back to Basics: The Traditionalist Movement That Is Sweeping Grass-Roots America* (New York, New York, Morrow, 1982), 13.
[45] Reagan, *An American Life*, 219.

offenders."[46] Reagan had argued that he considered Carter's policy "ineffective because it actually reduced United States influence in the targeted nations. Moreover, Carter's policy was said to threaten United States security interests because it seriously undermined regimes which, while imperfect, were at least pro-Western."[47] In contrast to Carter, Reagan promised that by avoiding the pitfalls of the Carter policy and by properly understanding the moral questions involved, he would initiate a more realistic human rights program that was, in his opinion, both ethically sound and politically effective.

The Reagan critique was enunciated most clearly by political scientist Jean Kirkpatrick, who argued that it was better for the United States to support third-world anti-communist dictatorships than to support third-world communist revolutionaries. In her opinion, a foreign policy that equally challenged totalitarian regimes of the left and authoritarian regimes of the right failed to recognize that while there was potential for the authoritarian regimes to transition to parliamentary democracy, totalitarian regimes did not similarly evolve. This "Kirkpatrick doctrine" was the moral issue at the forefront of Reagan's interpretation of U.S. foreign policy. Kirkpatrick and Reagan believed that not differentiating between totalitarian and authoritarian regimes would jeopardize U.S. interests, weaken ties with allies, and ultimately weaken national security. This view of U.S. foreign policy was popular among neoconservatives, who were staunchly anti-communist and described themselves as "'pro-American and hawkish."[48] They argued that the "liberal bias in the media" prevented "people from getting an accurate picture of

[46] David Carleton, Michael Stohl, "The Foreign Policy of Human Rights: Rhetoric and Reality from Jimmy Carter to Ronald Reagan," *The Human Rights Quarterly* (May 1985).
[47] Ibid.
[48] Walter Goodman, "Neoconservatives Assess Political Trends and Foreign Policy," *New York Times*, May 14, 1984.

what is happening [in the U.S. and abroad]."[49] To the neoconservatives, Kirkpatrick and Reagan were bringing clarity back to U.S. foreign policy.

Whether or not the American people believed Reagan was leading a "spiritual revival," they certainly gave him more votes than they gave Carter. In a landslide victory, where Reagan won an astounding 90.9% of the electoral vote, the American people demonstrated that they believed they were not better off than they had been four years earlier.[50] Reagan carried every region of the country, including the industrial Northeast and Democratic South, to which Jimmy Carter owed his 1976 victory. Experts at the time particularly noted the significant support Reagan had received from working-class neighborhoods, which were the traditional heart of the Democratic electorate. Journalist/scholar Godfrey Hodgson explains that "this was interpreted as an event of more than electoral significance."[51] *Washington Post* journalist David Broder called Reagan's inauguration "the start of a new era" and "the biggest power shift in Washington since 1952."[52]

Reagan and Carter on Morality in Foreign Policy

In a radical departure from Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter made human rights the centerpiece of his foreign policy. Carter argued that U.S. support for human rights involved promoting "human freedom" worldwide and protecting "the individual from the arbitrary power of the state."[53] Carter believed in holding American allies and adversaries

[49] Ibid.
[50] "1980 Presidential General Election Results," *Uselectionatlas.org* http://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/national.php?year=1980
[51] Godfrey Hodgson, *The World Turned Right Side Up: A History of the Conservative Ascendancy in America* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1996), 2.
[52] Ibid, 3.
[53] Jimmy Carter, "University of Notre Dame - Address at Commencement Exercises at the University, May 22, 1977," *The American Presidency Project* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=7552

equally accountable for human rights violations. Consequently, Carter denounced human rights violations in the Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies. American allies like South Korea also came under harsh criticism for repressing dissent. To protect human rights, the Carter administration took tangible action including the suspension of military and economic aid. Carter also declared in 1977 that America was "now free of that inordinate fear of communism which once led us to embrace any dictator who joined us in that fear."[54] However, this statement was turned on its head when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979 and Carter resumed the doctrine of containment.

Reagan countered that Carter's wide-ranging concept of human rights had rendered American foreign policy ineffective and invariably anti-Western in its application as it publically criticized and denied aid to authoritarian, pro-Western governments, thereby destabilizing and undermining American allies around the world. By weakening pro-Western states through criticism and sanctions, Carter's foreign policy had also failed to adequately address the greatest threat facing humanity, the communist Soviet Union and its expansive nature. Therefore, the Reagan administration argued that Carter's foreign policy effectively promoted neither human rights nor United States security interests. Carleton and Stohl argued that "[a]t the heart of the Reagan critique is an entire reformulation of the moral issues surrounding the human rights issue."[55] Reagan's perception of communism and the Soviet Union led him to criticize Carter's foreign policy for neglecting to make a distinction between totalitarian and authoritarian nations. While Carter defined human rights, morality, and evil broadly, Reagan defined them narrowly, arguing that the communist Soviet Union was the most egregious violator of human rights; that the Soviet Union's expansionist nature and support of terrorist activities was the greatest global

[54] Ibid.
[55] Carleton and Stohl, "The Foreign Policy of Human Rights."

security threat; and that communism was the greatest ideological threat facing the world and the Western way of life. Reagan's narrow agenda and range of interests worked to his advantage in the 1980 presidential campaign because he appeared focused and concise. He had identified the enemy and had claimed that he intended to put that enemy on the defensive.

Most significantly for Reagan, communism was fundamentally atheistic. Reagan argued that the Soviet Union's denial of God and efforts to replace God with the state was fundamentally evil. Additionally, Reagan argued that the Soviet Union was evil because it denied its citizens civil liberties, which Reagan identified as being God-given. Broadly speaking, Reagan believed that evil ideologies and worldviews created evil conditions and actions. Given that Reagan viewed communism as the epitome of evil, his foreign policy was geared toward rolling back the tide of communism and spreading Western, democratic values. Reagan's Soviet policy was unique in that he wanted the U.S.S.R.'s internal policies to be a part of U.S.-Soviet discussions, and his foreign policy actions were intended to encourage internal reforms within the Soviet Union and its system of government. This goal caused Reagan to support regimes that were "basically friendly" to the U.S. in the name of stopping communism. Consequently, Reagan and his administration supported some (occasionally) abusive regimes such as the ones in Guatemala and El Salvador, and justified this support by arguing that traditional authoritarian governments were less repressive that revolutionary autocracies.

The Reagan administration spent nearly five billion dollars providing military and economic aid to El Salvador between 1981 and 1989. El Salvador had been racked by rebellions and poverty throughout the twentieth century. In the early 1980s, leftist insurgents mounted a challenge to the government. In 1983, the Reagan administration began providing the Salvadoran army with money and arms. However, the Salvadoran army squandered much of the money and

used the American weapons to wage a fierce campaign of repression against civilians suspected of sympathizing with the leftist insurgents. Army "death squads" killed nearly 70,000 peasants, teachers, union organizers, and church workers. After eight years of bloodshed, the Salvadoran government had carried out a limited range of democratic and liberal reforms, but it had not defeated the insurgents.

Michael Schaller argues that Reagan believed if he could win the proxy war in El Salvador, "it would undermine the appeal of communism and unravel Soviet self-confidence, creating a sort of Vietnam Syndrome in reverse."[56] Reagan justified his support to El Salvador by citing the Kirkpatrick Doctrine and even suggesting that leftist insurgents were committing atrocities and then blaming the right for it.[57] Whether Reagan's decision to support the Salvadoran army was a sin of omission or commission, Schaller argues that "the moral morass of El Salvador seemed crystal clear."[58] In reference to Reagan's theory that the human rights atrocities were not being committed the Salvadoran government, historian Doug Rossinow argues that "[t]here is no reason to think this was anything but a fanciful storyline that Reagan devised in a desperate effort to explain away ugly realities."[59]

During the 1980 election campaign, Reagan criticized Carter harshly for abandoning America's long-term client, Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza. Somoza's family had ruled Nicaragua as a fiefdom since the 1920s. In 1981, Reagan argued that the Sandinista leadership

[56] Michael Schaller, *Right Turn: American Life in the Reagan-Bush Era, 1980-1992* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 79.
[57] Ronald Reagan, "Question-and-Answer Session With High School Students on Domestic and Foreign Policy Issues, December 2, 1983," *The American Presidency Project* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=40827
[58] Schaller, *Right Turn*, 95.
[59] Doug Rossinow, *The Reagan Era: A History of the 1980s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 106.

was turning Nicaragua into a "Soviet ally on the American mainland."[60] And indeed, many Sandinistas were Marxists who bitterly criticized America for its long support of Somoza. Also, Reagan was correct in charging that they received Soviet aid, failed to hold free elections, stifled dissent, socialized parts of the economy, and served as a conduit of arms from the Soviet bloc to the Salvadoran guerillas. However Reagan exaggerated the threat that the Sandinistas posed to the Western hemisphere, especially when compared with the gory record of pro-American regimes in El Salvador. In 1981, Reagan instructed CIA director William Casey to organize anti-Sandinista guerillas into a fighting force that became known as the contras.

To covertly aid the contras, the Reagan administration relied on men whose actions contradicted Reagan's moral rhetoric. One example was Manuel Noriega, a Panamanian strongman who had gone into business with Colombian drug smugglers. As Reagan declared "war on drugs," his administration overlooked Noriega's sins in exchange for his cooperation in helping the contras. All of this was done in the name of anticommunism. Historian Wilbur Edel argues that Reagan's assertion that "the Soviet Union underlies all the unrest that is going on" led many people in third world nations to conclude that "their freedom was less important to the U.S. than their support of the Reagan Doctrine."[61] Throughout his presidency, Reagan's moral appeals and religious language would be bedeviled by the actions of Salvadoran "death squads," the contras, and even CIA agents in Central America.

Reagan's support of the contras and Salvadoran army could be explained, even justified, by geopolitical analyst Robert Kaplan's argument that "there are actions of state that are the right

[60] Ronald Reagan, "Address to the Nation on the Situation in Nicaragua," March 16, 1986, *The American Presidency Project* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=36999.
[61] Wilbur Edel, *The Reagan Presidency: An Actor's Finest Performance* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1992), 168.

things to do, even if they cannot be defined in terms of conventional morality."[62] Furthermore, if these elements of Reagan's foreign policy were done in an effort to protect United States allies and ultimately to protect the interests of the U.S., and if they accomplished both of these objectives, then Kaplan argues that such actions are justifiable as they are judged by the standard of public outcomes, not private intentions. Kaplan writes that "[i]n protecting the public interest of even a liberal power, a statesman cannot always be nice; or humane."[63]

[62] Robert D. Kaplan, "The Tragedy of U.S. Foreign Policy," *The National Interest* (August 1, 2013) http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/the-tragedy-us-foreign-policy-8810?page=show
[63] Ibid.

Chapter One

Making the World Over Again: Ronald Reagan's Moral and Religious Soviet Rhetoric and the Spiritual Cold War, 1981-1989

This chapter will explore Ronald Reagan's rhetoric concerning the Soviet Union throughout his two terms in office (1981-1989), in an effort to make sense of his public and political persona, as well as to determine whether his public arguments were consistent. This chapter seeks to discern the extent to which moral objectivity and religion influenced Reagan's opposition to the Soviet Union and communism and to investigate the purpose religion and morality served in President Ronald Reagan's public rhetoric concerning the Soviet Union and communism during his time as president. It asks: was Reagan's public rhetoric merely symbolic? Was it intended to shore up the support of the Moral Majority (a prominent political group associated with the Christian right), or was it a reaction to domestic and foreign events? Did his language change over time due to his changing perception of the Soviet Union? Furthermore, did his rhetoric remain consistent during his eight years as president?

This chapter will show that during a time when American foreign policy had become characterized by the pursuit of détente, Reagan intentionally reignited the rhetoric that pointed to communism as an evil, immoral, and inhumane ideology in an attempt to convey to the world that political democracy and personal freedom (two things that were inseparable for Reagan) could not peacefully coexist with communism. He also sought to refocus the national discussion to the issues that he argued were at the heart of the Cold War: religious faith and moral behavior.

I will argue that during his two terms as president, Reagan's rhetoric concerning the communist Soviet Union remained consistent in its identification of the Cold War as a moral and religious conflict and in arguing that communism's embrace of atheism rendered it the greatest ideological evil of the modern world and made the Soviet Union the greatest global threat. The Reagan administration's policies toward the U.S.S.R. were different from its policies toward some other communist states, most notably China. Reagan saw Moscow as more worthy of U.S. attention and criticism than Beijing. There are several possible reasons for this. Given the Soviets' high level of global involvement and their apparent attempts to establish communist regimes in the Americas and the Middle East, Reagan perceived them as a greater threat than Beijing. Also, Reagan thought that China was adopting an independent foreign policy and a more open economic policy. Whether or not his perception was correct, Reagan viewed the Soviets as ringleaders in the effort to expand communism, as the Soviets did much to aid their clients in places like the Middle East and Ethiopia. Reagan's intense focus on fighting the Cold War lent itself to a narrow binary view of the world; to his mind, if Soviet communism was defeated, the Cold War would end.

Although both were communist countries, Sino-Soviet relations deteriorated as the countries fought over territory. The Soviets' late 1970s military buildup in East Asia and Soviet treaties with Vietnam and Afghanistan heightened China's fear of the potential threat of Soviet encirclement. Beijing identified the Soviet Union as "the most dangerous source of war."[64] In 1979, Beijing notified Moscow that it would formally abrogate the long-dormant Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance. In the 1980s, China's policy towards the

[64] *China: A Country Study*, Ed. Robert L. Worden, Andrea Matles Savada and Ronald E. Dolan http://countrystudies.us/china/

Soviets shifted again, this time in line with China's adoption of an independent foreign policy and a more open economic policy.

Beijing's adoption of an economic and technological modernization program and their opposition to Soviet hegemony signaled to the Reagan administration that while China was still a communist country, it was moving towards strategic and economic cooperation with the West. This made China a potentially important component in the U.S. foreign policy goal of weakening Soviet power. Former Secretary of State George Shultz wrote that in order to "make use of our common interests against Soviet actions in Cambodia and Afghanistan…[w]e would do what we could to edge the Chinese regime toward a more open and just society."[65] Shultz made numerous visits to China to work towards improved relations by discussing such issues as emigration, economics, regional issues, and nuclear proliferation. One of the biggest stumbling blocks to the relationship was the United States' support of Taiwan. The decision to strengthen U.S. diplomatic relations with China was a difficult one for Reagan. *Washington Post* editor Stephen Rosenfeld wrote that "[w]hat made the question so tough for Reagan was his instinctive anti-communism, an attitude making him hesitate to accommodate a communist power, here China, even when it was demonstrably in the American interest and when he could do so without jeopardizing the security of Taiwan."[66] However, in this instance, historian Michael Schaller argues that "Reagan's gut anti-communism did not prevent him from muting his feelings and acting pragmatically."[67] Due to Beijing's anti-Soviet stance and move towards strategic and economic cooperation with the West, Reagan viewed support of China as a strategic move that

[65] George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York, New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1993), 386.
[66] Stephen S. Rosenfeld, "The Conduct of American Foreign Policy: Testing the Hard Line," *Foreign Affairs*, 1982 Special "America and the World" http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/37139/stephen-s-rosenfeld/the-conduct-of-american-foreign-policy-testing-the-hard-line
[67] Schaller, *Reckoning with Reagan*, 138.

could potentially weaken Soviet power, which he saw as the greatest threat to the Western way of life and to the world, and as compatible with the main focus of his foreign policy. Shultz also writes that although the President trimmed some of his harsh comments about China's human rights abuses and communist ideology, he did not altogether abandon it. He writes that when Reagan visited China in April 1984, he "did not hide his own beliefs or tailor his comments to please his own hosts" and spoke constantly about the virtues of America and the moral imperative of human rights issues. The president "wore American values on his sleeve and spoke of them with pride. It was Vintage Reagan," wrote Shultz.[68]

The effect and purpose of Reagan's rhetoric throughout his time in office is perhaps best understood in the framework of his stated goal of "peace through strength." A major component of achieving peace through strength was Reagan's military buildup. Political scientist Beth Fischer explains that the Reagan administration believed at the beginning of Reagan's first term that the Soviets had dramatically increased their military strength while the West had significantly decreased their military strength. This left the U.S. on the weak side of a dangerous military imbalance. Moreover, the Reagan administration ascribed an offensive intent to the Soviet military buildup. Reagan officials dismissed the idea that the Kremlin might be threatened by the U.S. responding to the imbalance with its own military buildup. Reagan initiated a military buildup that was intended to restore the U.S. to what Reagan argued was its rightful place in the world (the dominant superpower), and to prevent the United States from taking second place to the Soviet Union. The military buildup would also theoretically serve as a deterrent to a Soviet attack on the U.S. and Soviet global expansion as doing either in the presence of a strong U.S. military would cost the Soviets much more than they were willing to

[68] Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 398.

sacrifice. By effectively rebuilding U.S. military strength and curbing the advance of an evil empire, Reagan argued that the U.S. could achieve peace by negotiating with the U.S.S.R. from a position of military strength. However, his military buildup was largely seen as an offensive maneuver by the Kremlin, and much of Europe was fearful of being caught in the middle of a U.S.-Soviet nuclear war. However there was much more to Reagan's doctrine of peace through strength than the military buildup.

In the same way that Reagan argued he had to rebuild U.S. military strength, he also believed he had to rebuild U.S. moral strength. As this chapter will show, Reagan argued that American morality was derived from its belief in God while Soviet immorality was derived from its atheism. Through his moral and religious Soviet rhetoric, Reagan was attempting to convince Americans, and the rest of the world, that the communist Soviet Union was inferior to the U.S. because it rejected the existence of God and instituted an economic and political system that replaced God with the state. Conversely, America was morally superior because it was founded on and embraced Judeo-Christian values that secured fundamental civil liberties for its citizens. By continually emphasizing religion and morality in his public Soviet rhetoric, Reagan was seeking to encourage the public perception of foreign policy, East-West relations, and the Cold War as fundamentally moral and religious issues. Reagan was seeking public support for his portrayal of the Cold War as a spiritual conflict.

For Reagan, the Cold War and his Soviet policy were not just about arms reduction or the necessity of American economic superiority. Reagan argued that those ideas could not be divorced from human rights issues, or rather the lack thereof in the Soviet Union. Leading up to Reagan's election as president, journalist Bernard Gwertzman explained (in reference to the Carter Administration) that Reagan intended to refuse "to negotiate arms control accords

divorced from other issues with the Soviet Union."[69] By "other issues," Reagan specifically meant a "'consistent policy' in human rights. He said he objected to punishing countries 'basically friendly' to us for rights violations while at the same time trying to develop relations with countries 'where human rights are virtually nonexistent."[70] In other words, Reagan wanted the United States to punish left-wing human rights abusers more harshly than right-wing human rights abusers. Dealings with the Soviet Union could not be divorced from what he considered to be central moral issues, namely, the lack of political democracy and religious freedom, civil liberties, and private property rights in the U.S.S.R. Reagan argued that the morality of the Soviet Union, which denied its citizens basic human liberties, had to be called into question. And for Reagan, it made no sense to have discussions with the Soviet Union that were void of human rights topics. From the beginning of his presidency, Reagan made morality a central issue of the Cold War.

Couching the Cold War in moral terms was not unique to Reagan. Morality was also a common component of President Carter's foreign policy and his public rhetoric. Carter's moralism was focused on humanitarian efforts derived from the Social Gospel.[71] When considered broadly, Carter's foreign policy sought to transcend ideology with preventative diplomacy. Carter believed in the complex interdependence of all nations and in the necessity of a joint pursuit of ambitious human rights and humanitarian goals. The Carter administration centered its foreign policy on Social Gospel issues in order to demonstrate its renewed dedication to the cause of human rights. Examples of such issues include world hunger and population

[69] Bernard Gwertzman, "Reagan Favors Linking Arms Talks To Soviet Behavior Around World: Differences on Human Rights," *The New York Times*, November 7, 1980.
[70] Ibid.
[71] The Social Gospel movement was a Protestant Christian intellectual movement in the 20th century aimed at applying Christian ethics to social problems, i.e. economic inequality, poverty, crime, racial tension, clean water, and hunger.

control. Overall, the Carter administration struggled to clarify the connection between its humanitarian and human rights goals. It also struggled to provide a clear definition of "human rights issues." The Carter administration's broad definition of human rights ultimately gave Reagan and other presidents the freedom to assimilate their own version of human rights into their foreign policies.

As we have seen, Reagan adopted the "Kirkpatrick Doctrine" that it was better to support third-world anti-communist dictatorships than to support third-world communist revolutionaries. Kirkpatrick distinguished between pro-western and communist dictatorships arguing that the pro-western dictatorships were authoritarian regimes while the communist dictatorships were totalitarian regimes. She argued that traditional autocrats left existing allocations of wealth, status, power, and resources while favoring an affluent few and maintaining the masses in poverty. They worshiped traditional gods, observed traditional taboos, and overall did not disturb the habitual patterns of family life, work, and leisure. "Because the miseries of traditional life are familiar," Kirkpatrick argued "they are bearable to ordinary people who, growing up in the society, learn to cope as children born to untouchables in India acquire the skills and attitudes necessary for survival in the miserable roles they are destined to fill. Such societies create no refugees."[72] Conversely, Kirkpatrick argued, precisely the opposite was true of communist, totalitarian regimes. Communist regimes

> create refugees by the million because they claim jurisdiction over the whole life of the society and make demands for change that so violate internalized values and habits that inhabitants flee by the tens of thousands in the remarkable expectation that their attitudes, values, and goals will "fit" better in a foreign country than in their native land.[73]

[72] Jeane Kirkpatrick, "Dictatorships and Double Standards," *Commentary,* November 1, 1979 https://www.commentarymagazine.com/article/dictatorships-double-standards/
[73] Ibid.

Therefore, Kirkpatrick argued, it was acceptable, at times even good, for the United States to support authoritarian regimes. Overall, "traditional autocrats tolerate[d] social inequalities, brutality, and poverty while revolutionary autocracies create[d] them."[74] Moreover, authoritarian regimes had shown an ability to transition to parliamentary democracy, while totalitarian regimes had not. Kirkpatrick argued that the U.S. government needed to understand the key differences between the two types of regimes and to protect U.S. interests by supporting anti-communist regimes. The Kirkpatrick Doctrine allowed Reagan to present a contrasting foreign policy with that of the Carter administration, and, most importantly, it allowed him to build a foreign policy that was at its core anticommunist. Reagan used the Kirkpatrick Doctrine to undermine Soviet authority and influence in every hemisphere. President Reagan was so impressed by Kirkpatrick and her ideas that he named her his ambassador to the United Nations.

On January 29, 1981, Reagan held his first press conference as president and spoke explicitly about communism and the Soviet Union for the first time since his election. During the question and answer portion of the press conference, Sam Donaldson from ABC News posed this question: "Mr. President, what do you see as the long-range intentions of the Soviet Union? Do you think, for instance, the Kremlin is bent on world domination that might lead to a continuation of the cold war, or do you think that under other circumstances detente is possible?"[75] "[S]o far," Reagan answered, "détente's been a one-way street that the Soviet Union has used to pursue its own aims. I don't have to think of an answer as to what I think their intentions are; they have repeated it…[their goal is] the promotion of world revolution and a one-

[74] Ibid.
[75] Ronald Reagan, "The President's News Conference, January 29, 1981," *The American Presidency Project* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=44101
Détente was the pursuit of a relatively cordial, stable relationship with the Soviet Union.

world Socialist or Communist state, whichever word you want to use."[76] For Reagan, the answer was simple. Détente, and particularly the Soviet Union's abuse of the policy, were two of the fundamental problems that perpetuated the Cold War. Furthermore, Reagan argued,

> the only morality they [the Soviet Union] recognize is what will further their cause, meaning they reserve unto themselves the right to commit any crime, to lie, to cheat, in order to attain that, and that is moral, not immoral, and we operate on a different set of standards, I think when you do business with them, even at a detente, you keep that in mind.[77]

Writing about this press conference, syndicated columnist Richard Reeves notes that for Reagan, "after decades of crusading anti-communism, the words were routine. For a president they were harsh."[78] This was not new rhetoric for Reagan, and it reflected that for the new president, the issue of the immorality of the Soviet Union was the paramount issue in the Cold War. Not to speak openly about it would be to ignore the fundamental nature of the conflict. Former U.S. ambassador to the U.S.S.R and Reagan advisor, Jack Matlock, points to this press conference as one that displayed "several themes that remained in the bedrock of his [Reagan's] policy toward the Soviet Union throughout eight years in office."[79] Matlock notes that the majority of media responses to this press conference were characterized by an emphasis on Reagan's attack on the Kremlin. For example, a *New York Times* headline from the following day read "President Sharply Assails Kremlin."[80] In Matlock's opinion, the media's portrayal of the President's remarks as a personal attack on the Kremlin leadership betrayed their fundamental misunderstanding of the point Reagan was trying to make. Contrary to the media's interpretation,

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[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Richard Reeves, *Ronald Reagan: The Triumph of Imagination* (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2005), 9.
[79] Jack F. Matlock, Jr. *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 4.
[80] Bernard Gwertzman, "President Sharply Assails Kremlin; Haig Warning on Poland Disclosed," *The New York Times,* January 30, 1981.

Matlock argues that "Reagan referred to lying and cheating not as a personal moral defect of the Soviet leaders but as a feature of the philosophy they held."[81] Furthermore, Reagan went on to deny the allegations that his words were a personal attack on Soviet leaders. When asked about his remarks subsequently, Reagan assured the press that he was not "castigating them [Soviet leaders] for lack of character. It's just that they don't think like we do."[82] Reagan's harsh remarks were a reflection of his opinion of communism as a philosophy and as a system of government. The fundamental flaw of the Soviet Union was in the communist ideology that was the bedrock of the Soviet system.

A theme of Reagan's rhetoric throughout his presidency was that religion was an essential component in what he argued was the inherently bankrupt nature of communism. On February 16, 1981, about two weeks after his first press conference, Reagan was quoted as saying of the Soviet Union, "[t]hey don't subscribe to our sense of morality; they don't believe in an afterlife; they don't believe in a God or a religion. And the only morality they recognize, therefore, is what will advance the cause of socialism."[83] Reagan argued that what made communism and the U.S.S.R. morally inferior was their rejection of God. Reagan argued that the atheistic nature of communism, which he identified as the bedrock of the entire political philosophy and the ensuing policies, was the culprit for the immoral nature of the ideology and the ensuing Soviet system. Reagan was harshly criticized for his understanding of the Cold War and communism. Neoconservatives and political pundits pointed out that economic interests were a crucial element in the Soviet Union's political philosophy, and that realist self-interest often dictated its foreign policy.

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[81] Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 4.
[82] Ronald Reagan, "The President's News Conference, May 13, 1982," *The American Presidency Project* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=42517
[83] "On Soviet Morality," *Time* 117, no. 7, February 16, 1981: 19.

In a 1981 speech at the Conservative Political Action Conference Dinner, Reagan argued that an ideology that rejected God was contradictory to moral good. Reagan stated that "the Marxist vision of man without God must eventually be seen as an empty and a false faith – the second oldest in the world – first proclaimed in the Garden of Eden with whispered words of temptation: 'Ye shall be as gods.'"[84] The reason communism was immoral, Reagan argued, was because it echoed the oldest sin in the world, idolatry – man setting himself up as god instead of looking to *the* God was the premise of communism. Following the precedent he set in his inaugural address and his first press conference, Reagan focused on morality and religion as the central issues of the Cold War and as the most grievous failures of communism and the Soviet Union. Quoting McCarthy era informant Whitaker Chambers, Reagan told his audience he believed that "'[t]he crisis of the Western world…exists to the degree in which it is indifferent to God.'"[85] It was important for Reagan to establish early in his presidency that he intended to be the same man the conservatives and Moral Majority voted for in 1980. *New York Times* journalist Hedrick Smith wrote that in his speech at the Conservative Political Action Conference,"[t]he President warmed the hearts of some of his most loyal right-wing followers in Washington…when he and several advisers served up the strongest burst of fervent conservative rhetoric yet to come from the Administration."[86] Despite the strong rhetoric, Smith pointed out that the White House was currently taking steps to "clip the wings of influential conservative activists and, to their dismay, bringing Vice President Bust into the forefront of foreign policy." Given the confusion surrounding the consistency of Reagan's rhetoric and action, Smith wrote that "[a] certain political ambivalence is not entirely new for Mr. Reagan, but at this stage it

[84] Ronald Reagan, "Remarks at the Conservative Political Action Conference Dinner, March 20, 1981," *The American Presidency Project* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=43580
[85] Ibid.
[86] Hedrick Smith, "Reagan's Mixed Signs: Conservatives Encouraged by Words From President, Wary of His Deeds News Analysis A Test of Willingness More Doctrinaire Remarks Foreign Policy Role for Bush," *The New York Times*, March 28, 1981.

raises questions about how far he intends to push the Russians." While the president's rhetoric established him as a "conservative ideologue," people were skeptical about what actions would follow and were intensely afraid that nuclear war was just around the corner. Reagan needed to demonstrate to traditional conservatives that he was a dyed-in-the-wool conservative and to temper some of the skepticism and concerns surrounding his beliefs, actions, and abilities.

Reagan's primary opposition to communism could be found in its rejection of God. This is key to understanding why Reagan brought the focus of the discussion on the Soviet Union back to the issue of morality and religion. For Reagan, the Soviets' (and communism's) lack of morality was directly linked to their rejection of God; the former was a result of the latter. Reagan went on in this speech to tell Americans that the real task at hand was for them to reassert their commitment to a "Higher Authority." This speech showcases that for Reagan, the fundamental difference between communism and democracy was that the former had replaced God with a man, namely Karl Marx. Reagan argued that it was time for America to reaffirm her faith in God so that she could stand as a formidable opposition to the Soviet Union. This was "a turning point," a "time for choosing."[87] Reagan's revival of the "time for choosing" line, which was taken from his 1964 speech on behalf of Republican presidential candidate Barry Goldwater, was a reference that his audience would have known and liked. The line indicated to Reagan's audience that the president's beliefs had not changed over time.

From the beginning of his presidency, Reagan was intensely interested in human rights issues in the U.S.S.R. Pundits argued that it was essential for Reagan to remember that America was a country that separated church and state. They argued that a belief in political democracy and expanded civil liberties may have been related to Reagan's criticism of Soviet atheism, but

[87] Reagan, "Remarks at the Conservative Political Action Conference Dinner, March 20, 1981."

that ultimately these were two very different realms. Historian Andrew Preston argues that Carter understood this foundational separation of church and state to mean a stringent separation of religion and politics.[88] "I have never found any incompatibility between my religious convictions and my duties as President,"[89] Carter told a questioner at a town hall meeting in Pittsburgh during the 1980 campaign. He continued,

> I have never found anything in the Bible, in the Old or New Testament, that specifies whether or not we should have a Department of Education in the Federal Government or whether you should have a 13-1 bomber or the airlaunched cruise missiles— [laughter] —or whether we should share with Panama, the rest of this century, operation of the Panama Canal or whether we should be able to guard it in the next century as has been worked out. Those kinds of measuring rods to define what is an acceptable Christian are contrary to my own beliefs.

Carter closed by mentioning the biblical politics of Jerry Falwell and by extension other leaders of the Religious Right, as embodying the antithesis of his own beliefs. He contended that he respected their right to express their views, but drew the line at "putting a measuring stick on a political figure and saying he is or is not an acceptable person in the eyes of God." Carter said that in such cases, he sought to "remember the admonition in the New Testament: 'Judge not that ye be judged' and 'God is love.' So, it's not a big problem for me."[90] Unlike Carter, Reagan constantly used religion to measure whether or not Soviet leaders and their communist political system were acceptable in God's eyes. While pundits, conservatives and liberals alike, argued that belief in political democracy and expanded civil liberties were not fundamentally connected to embracing the Judeo-Christian worldview, Reagan argued that these things were inseparably connected.

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[88] Andrew Preston, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy* (New York: Anchor Books, 2012), 576.
[89] Jimmy Carter, "Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a Town Meeting, October 29, 1980," *The American Presidency Project* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=45386
[90] Ibid.

Preston argues that one of Carter's biggest problems was his separation of religion and politics. He argues Carter failed to " comprehend the religious mood of the country...he had forgotten that the Protestant left…and major institutions like the Catholic Church, also looked to religion for political guidance. To them as to the Religious Right, the Bible was in fact pretty clear on whether the United States should develop the B-1."[91] In Preston's opinion, the Religious Right "was immersed in foreign policy issues." And during the second half of Carter's term, the Soviets appeared to have retaken the offensive and were marauding all around the world. During the second half of his term, Carter revived the rearmament program and re-launched the very same Cold War he had tried to suspend only two years before: "Carter was either incapable or incompetent to meet the communist threat, said Falwell and other leaders of the Religious Right, and had made it worse through his dithering, disarming, and negotiating."[92] Reagan, however, explicitly connected religion to policy and spoke consistently of belief in God and the protection of political democracies and civil liberties as being inherently intertwined. Preston argues that in 1980, Reagan "recognized the latent power of the Religious Right and moved swiftly to take advantage of it in ways nobody else could."[93] Although religious rhetoric and morality in foreign policy were not unique to Reagan, Preston claims that "[i]n a significant but little noticed shift, Reagan reconfigured the Judeo-Christian civil religion from what it had been since the 1930s – a way to foster inclusiveness – into a rhetorical device to attack liberalism and secularism."[94] In his public rhetoric, Reagan used definitions of morality derived from his interpretation of Judeo-Christian beliefs to criticize and undermine the Soviet Union and its atheistic communist

[91] Preston. *Sword of the Spirit,* 677.
[92] Ibid., 578.
[93] Ibid., 581.
[94] Ibid., 582.

philosophy. For Reagan, the rejection of God did mean the end of political democracies and civil liberties.

Many Americans had also criticized President Carter's overt moralism, and Reagan had run a campaign for president as the anti-Carter. However the difference in Reagan's and Carter's religious rhetoric, as Preston asserts, was that "Carter used religion to galvanize Americans for the struggle and demonize their enemies," while Reagan deployed religious imagery that appealed "to the patriotism of civil religion that linked together God and country, mission in nation."[95] Like Carter's, Reagan's rhetoric was overtly moralistic, but he ultimately offered a competing vision of morality with Carter. Carter's moralism was focused on humanitarian efforts derived from the Social Gospel, as well as the Wilsonian and liberal internationalist traditions. Reagan's moralism was fundamentally about ideology – patriotism, free-market principles, and the like – and the possibilities inherent in those ideologies.

An excellent example of Reagan's stated goal concerning communism and the Soviet Union can be found in his 1981 address at the University of Notre Dame. Speaking to the crowd of graduating seniors and proud onlookers, Reagan said that "[t]he West won't contain communism, it will transcend communism. It won't bother to dismiss or denounce it, it will dismiss it as some bizarre chapter in human history whose last pages are even now being written"[96] Again, he made a point to say that he believed that the superiority to be found in American democracy was a direct result of the United States' commitment to God. It was from this "belief in a Supreme Being, and a law higher than our own" that American "intellectual and spiritual values" had their foundation. Atheistic communist ideology could not possibly be moral

[95] Ibid., 578, 581.
[96] Ronald Reagan, "Address at Commencement Exercises at the University of Notre Dame, May 17, 1981," *The American Presidency Project* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=43825

by virtue of its rejection of God. He argued that the Cold War as a spiritual and ideological conflict.

While it is important to note that Reagan was speaking to a predominantly Catholic crowd who would likely welcome his rhetoric on the connections between God and morality and the rejection of God and immorality, it does not discredit the argument that Reagan fundamentally viewed the Cold War and communism in these ways. Reagan's previous comments concerning God and communism were not made in front of predominantly Catholic or Protestant crowds. The basic theme of God being the source of morality in a political system or society remained consistent regardless of what group Reagan was addressing.

Wall Street Journal reporter Timothy Schellhardt wrote that in his speech at Notre Dame, Reagan had "resumed his rhetorical assault on the Soviet Union, by saying it possesses only 'a façade of strength.'"[97] Addressing Reagan's assertion that "[t]he time has come to dare to show the world that our civilized ideas, our traditions, our values are not – like the ideology and war machines of totalitarian societies – a façade of strength," Schellhardt wrote that "although he didn't mention the Soviet Union by name, the President's remark didn't leave any doubt that he was referring to that country."[98] Reagan's Notre Dame address was a continuation of his "heavy verbal assault on the Soviets." As a result of his harsh rhetoric, many people saw Reagan as a cavalier warmonger. On May 17, 2,500 people gathered in South Bend to protest Reagan's appearance at Notre Dame. The three-hour rally was organized by a host of Midwestern religious organizations and was an "echo of the antiwar demonstrations of the late 1960s." The protest was a response to the Reagan administration's decision to increase arms supplies to the government

[97] Timothy D. Schellhardt, "Reagan Resumes Anti-Soviet Rhetoric At Notre Dame: President Says the West Will 'Transcend Communism'; Security Extremely Heavy," *Wall Street Journal,* May 18, 1981.
[98] Ibid.

of El Salvador. At the time, El Salvador was enduring a civil war between government forces and leftist rebels, whom the Reagan administration believed were communist insurgents supported by the Soviet Union. The protestors called Reagan "a heartless 'slasher'" and charged that his decision to arm El Salvador's government forces was "horrendous." Notre Dame professor of politics, Peter Walshe, called the administration's policies "'clearly in conflict with the Christian ideal of service and justice, [and ones which] debase the Judeo-Christian concept of love."[99] This opposition demonstrates that there were many religious opinions on foreign policy and on what constituted a proper moral posture that were quite different from the one Reagan presented.

The Reagan administration's decision to supply the Salvadoran government can be traced back to the Kirkpatrick doctrine. While the civil war or the government in El Salvador may have been troubling, it was certainly not as evil, according to Reagan, as the communist Soviet Union. If "'[t]he crisis of the Western world…exist[ed] to the degree in which it [was] indifferent to God," then the greatest threat facing all of humanity was Soviet Marxism which fundamentally rejected god and the idea that people's inalienable first amendment rights found their origin in him. [100] Civil war was bad, but communist expansion was worse. In his public rhetoric, Reagan was attempting to convince the American public that the U.S.S.R. was the very antithesis of morality by virtue of its embrace of atheistic communism. To Reagan, this was enough to justify supplying the Salvadoran government.[101]

In August 1981, *The Week in Review* asked political analysts to talk about the images and the realities of Reagan's first six months as president and what they might mean for the future.

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[99] Ibid.
[100] Reagan, "Remarks at the Conservative Political Action Conference Dinner: March 20, 1981."
[101] This inconsistency will be addressed more fully in the Conclusion.

Harry C. McPherson concluded that America had traded an administration "that talked continually of the ambiguities and the difficulties in any foreign policy decision and that also used the language of internationalism, the language of peaceful cooperation," for an administration that "puts things much more into a firm 'we versus they' context; that in my judgment had made too much of some foreign policy dangers as it perceives them."[102] McPherson was absolutely right in asserting that Reagan's foreign policy and Soviet aimed rhetoric could be boiled down to an "us versus them" mentality. Reagan viewed the Cold War in a narrow binary and found Soviet communism to be the threat that deserved his attention. Reagan approached the Soviets with harsh public rhetoric and the largest peacetime military buildup in over a decade to prevent America from coming in second to the Soviet Union. He viewed America as the only country capable of effectively confronting and stopping the Soviet expansion. But in order to prove a formidable opponent, Reagan believed that American military strength needed to be revived.[103]

Reflecting on Reagan's first year as president, journalist William Pfaff wrote that Reagan "thinks that the Russians are behind all of the world's troubles."[104] Pfaff, like other pundits and American citizens, was frustrated with what he saw as Reagan's oversimplification of the world's problems and argued that the president's comments and actions revealed that he did not have a proper "grasp of Marxism or of the motivations of a society." In Pfaff's opinion, Reagan and other "progressive" Americans erred in assuming that "men everywhere are essentially alike in their ambitions, and these are to achieve what Americans already enjoy."[105] The narrow worldview Reagan presented in his rhetoric led many to argue that Reagan fundamentally

[102] "A New Set of Principles, Pursued in Tough Terms," *The New York Times*, August 2, 1981.
[103] This will be addressed more fully in Chapter 2.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid.

misunderstood that "men do bad things for good reasons and that men's and nation's interests sometimes inevitably collide for reasons which have nothing to do with morality."[106] To many, Reagan was over-spiritualizing something that really had nothing to do with morality or religion. Reagan's critics were absolutely right that he portrayed the world, and especially the Cold War, in a narrow binary which essentially communicated that many of the problems the world faced could be solved by weakening Soviet control and influence and by strengthening U.S. control and influence. He had characterized the foreign policy and international relations, which many people thought had nothing to do with morality or religion, as fundamentally moral or religious issues. This narrow binary through which Reagan viewed the Cold War and East-West relations frustrated his critics and supporters throughout his presidency as the neoconservatives also argued that Reagan's over-spiritualization of the Cold War prevented him from using more forceful tactics with the Soviet Union that they argued were essential to wining the Cold War.[107]

From the very beginning of his presidency, Reagan spoke with a sense of urgency about what he believed were great threats to the freedom the West enjoyed. In Reagan's speech to the British Parliament at Westminster in June of 1982, which is sometimes referred to as his "First Evil Empire Speech," Reagan identified what he believed to be the threats the Western world was facing. Speaking of the grim picture before them, Reagan stated "we see totalitarian forces in the world who seek subversion and conflict around the globe to further their barbarous assault on the human spirit."[108] "Must freedom wither in a quiet, deadening accommodation with totalitarian evil?" he asked. In the face of this totalitarian evil that threatened the freedom,

[106] Ibid.
[107] The neoconservatives will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 2.
[108] Ronald Reagan, "Address to Members of the British Parliament, June 8, 1982," *The American Presidency Project* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=42614

Reagan said he believed the mission of the West was "to preserve freedom as well as peace." Ever the optimist, he encouraged his audience that

> It may not be easy to see; but I believe we live now at a turning point. In an ironic sense Karl Marx was right. We are witnessing today a great revolutionary crisis… not in the free, non-Marxist West, but in the home of Marxist-Leninism, the Soviet Union. It is the Soviet Union that runs against the tide of history by denying human freedom and human dignity to its citizens.[109]

Why did Reagan argue that the Soviet Union and communist ideology were nearing their demise? In his words, it was because "man's instinctive desire for freedom and self-determination surfaces again and again." Even behind the Iron Curtain, man's desire for freedom could not be silenced. Critics said that Reagan was wrong to assume that all people defined freedom in the same way that he did. Reagan stated that he understood that change in the Soviet Union would not happen over-night; it would not be an instant transformation. However, he said that he believed the transformation was possible and that while the West needed to exercise caution in "forcing the pace of change," it was also essential that they did "not hesitate to declare our ultimate objectives and to take concrete actions to move toward them. We must be staunch in our conviction that freedom is not the sole prerogative of a lucky few, but the inalienable and universal right of all human beings." Above all else, Reagan made it clear that although pursuing the spread of democracy, arms control talks, and increasing military strength were important, the lack of those things was not what fundamentally hindered peace in the East-West conflict. Reagan argued that atheistic communism hindered peace and the spread of democracy. The West, Reagan argued, had to maintain their strength (specifically military strength) in the hopes that it would never have to be used, "for the ultimate determinant in the struggle that's now going on in the world will not be bombs and rockets, but a test of wills and ideas, a trial of spiritual

[109] Ibid.

resolve, the values we hold, the beliefs we cherish, the ideals to which we are dedicated." To Reagan, the Cold War was fundamentally a spiritual war.

Christian Science Monitor writer Joseph Harsch was frustrated with the president's comments. Harsch wrote that Reagan had "preached an East-West ideological crusade to a British Parliament deeply involved in a nonideological war."[110] Reagan had spoken confidently about the Cold War being an ideological and even spiritual struggle. But Harsch did not view the Cold War in the same way and warned that "Mr. Reagan is not likely to find many converts to the ideological view of the world he presented to a bemused audience in the Palace of Westminster last week."[111] A *Wall Street Journal* reporter asserted that Reagan "used his address to the British Parliament to preach a sermon on the virtues of democracy" and that this "sermon" was "aimed more at convincing British and American television viewers that Mr. Reagan is a man of peace and of substance, and isn't a trigger-happy intellectual lightweight, as he is sometimes portrayed."[112]

Europe in the early 1980s was dominated by the revived fear of nuclear war, some of which had been encouraged by Reagan's rhetoric and policies. Europeans were helplessly caught between two nuclear superpowers, and here was Reagan, a warmongering "cowboy," trying to pin all the world's problems on the Soviet Union, in essence poking the Red Bear with a stick. Furthermore, Reagan was speaking about abstract ideas of morality and religion instead of pushing for arms talks. To many, Reagan's understanding of the Cold War as a moral and religious struggle showed that he fundamentally misunderstood the conflict and was ignoring the reality of potential nuclear war. Parliament was involved in a non-ideological war because their

[110] Joseph C. Harsch, "Ideologies Entwined," *The Christian Science Monitor*, June 11, 1982.
[111] Ibid.
[112] "Reagan, in a Speech before Parliament, Praises Democracy," *Wall Street Journal*, June 9, 1982.

primary concern was avoiding a nuclear holocaust. People viewed Reagan as an intellectual lightweight and as out of touch with reality. By focusing on democracy, Reagan was trying to demonstrate to his Anglo-American audience that he stood for reasonable, rational principles that they could agree on. He was also attempting to convince them that the Judeo-Christian worldview was central to the existence of democratic principles.

On October 8, 1982, the communist government of Poland, which Reagan referred to as a "military dictatorship," outlawed Solidarity, a free trade Union to which a large number of Polish farmers and workers belonged.[113] Reagan, outraged by this legislation, took to the radio on October 9 to state his and America's opposition to the decision and support for those who were fighting for "one of the most elemental human rights – the right to belong to a free trade union." Reagan closed his national radio address by declaring to his listeners that he believed the "struggle in the world today for the hearts and minds of mankind is based on one simple question: Is man born to be free, or slave?" The answer to this question seemed to have been quite plain to Reagan, indeed he suggested that it was an answer long known by people in "country after country." "We are free by divine right," Reagan declared. "Those who would have it otherwise commit a crime and a sin against God and man." To Reagan, it was not just that the Soviets committed crimes against humanity; it was that they actually sinned against God and man by denying people their God-given (divine) rights. The issue was deeper than communist governments' unwillingness to implement democratic forms of government. The fundamental issue was that by denying their people personal freedom, they were violating and denying people's God-given rights.

[113] Ronald Reagan, "Radio Address to the Nation on Solidarity and United States Relations With Poland, October 9, 1982," *The American Presidency Project* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=43110

Reagan's words were also likely an attempt to gain the support of Polish-American voters and union members – two constituencies that the Republican Party had been trying to win for years. Indeed, a large number of blue-collar voters had turned out as "Reagan Democrats" in the 1980 election, and President Reagan undoubtedly hoped to build their support. While Reagan's support of trade unions was new, his criticism of communist totalitarianism was not. Reagan likely saw this as a speaking opportunity with a two-fold purpose: another chance to speak out against the evils of communism, and an opportunity to assure "Reagan Democrats" that they had made the right choice by voting for him in 1980.

Due to his forceful and blunt rhetoric concerning communism and the Soviet Union, and the biggest military buildup in over a decade, Reagan had been accused of being a warmonger from the time he started campaigning for president. It was his "Evil Empire" address that really scared people and perpetuated Reagan's cavalier image. It caused people to wonder how the president of the United States could be so disconnected from reality. On March 8, 1983, Reagan addressed the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida. In this speech, Reagan clearly articulated his moral opposition to the Soviet Union and his belief that morality needed to be the focus of East-West relations. Attacking détente as he understood it, Reagan argued that if "history teaches anything, it teaches that simple-minded appeasement or wishful thinking about our adversaries is folly. It means the betrayal of our past, the squandering of our freedom."[114] Reagan's rhetoric suggests that he believed appeasement (Reagan's interpretation of 1970s détente), or seeking to peacefully coexist with such an immoral government was not only naïve, but that it also would not solve the issues which had caused and perpetuated the Cold War. The answer to a conflict that was an ideological one was to do away with the ideology that was

[114] Ronald Reagan, "Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida, March 8, 1983," *The American Presidency Project* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=41023

morally inferior or evil. While many argued that realist self-interest often dictated the actions of both countries and that therefore, these actions were essentially amoral, Reagan argued that because the U.S. instituted a democratic form of government based on Judeo-Christian values, their actions and system of government were morally superior to those of the atheistic Soviet Union. In the case of the Cold War and East-West relations, he argued that it was wrong to view both sides as being "equally at fault, to ignore the facts of history and the aggressive impulses of an evil empire, to simply call the arms race a giant misunderstanding and thereby remove yourself from the struggle between right and wrong and good and evil." This was an ideological struggle, a struggle for moral good. And again, Reagan turned the focus to religion arguing that he had "always maintained that the struggle now going on for the world will never be decided by bombs or rockets, by armies or military might. The real crisis we face today is a spiritual one; at root, it is a test of moral will and faith. Reagan pleaded with Americans to

> [P]ray for the salvation of all of those who live in that totalitarian darkness—pray they will discover the joy of knowing God. But until they do, let us be aware that while they preach the supremacy of the state, declare its omnipotence over individual man, and predict its eventual domination of all peoples on the Earth, they are the focus of evil in the modern world.

Notice that Reagan used the word "until" when speaking of the demise of the Soviet Union. This word choice suggests that the question in his mind was not "if" the Soviet Union would fall, but "when." Reagan was attempting to convince his audience that his (and likely their) interpretation of good as being defined by Judeo-Christian values, that he viewed as being the foundation of American democracy, would eventually triumph over Soviet communism. He was arguing that democracy would prove to be superior to communism. The way to resolve the Cold War was to restore morality, to spread a government that found the basis of its authority and the importance

of securing human rights in their knowledge of God. The fundamental issue of the Cold War for Reagan was the atheistic premise of communism.

It is worth reflecting on whether or not Reagan spoke of the Cold War and East-West relations in overtly moral and religious terms to garner support from his constituency. This is a common reason for the introduction of morality to foreign policy. Conservative Christians had been edging into the political arena even before Barry Goldwater's 1964 campaign. While evangelical Christians' involvement in conservative causes noticeably increased after the fall of Richard Nixon in 1974, figurehead of the New Right Paul Weyrich claims that he saw the potential of the evangelical vote as early as 1962 when the Supreme Court ruled that it was unconstitutional for state officials to compose an official school prayer and encourage its recitation in public schools.

Yet 1980 saw a new level of involvement of the evangelical right in politics. The Moral Majority was a key voting group in Reagan's election as they mobilized millions of people to the polls and distributed "morality ratings" in churches. Yet their support of Reagan was odd in certain aspects and the Moral Majority was overall skeptical about Reagan. The reasons for their skepticism included Reagan's career as a movie star, the fact that he was divorced and remarried, and the many moderate-to-liberal laws that he signed as governor of California. Additionally, Reagan was a light drinker and was fond of telling off-color stories. Reagan fulfilled much of the Religious Right's political platform in only one area: a hard-line anti-communist foreign policy. Preston argues that in 1980, "this was more correlation than cause, for Reagan was already committed to ending détente and reigniting the Cold War."[115] Journalist and scholar Godfrey Hodgson argues that the Moral Majority was "prepared to overlook personal backsliding in a politician who, like Reagan, would talk about the evangelical beliefs he had inherited from his

[115] Preston. *Sword of the Spirit*, 583.

mother, a keen member of the Disciples of Christ."[116] While the majority of voters were on the fence until the last minute in the 1980 election, they ultimately chose to overlook Reagan's shortcomings and voted to elect him as president. Reagan may not have been the best man for the job, but he was certainly better in the eyes of the Religious Right than the other candidates.

It is no coincidence that Reagan delivered his "Evil Empire" address to a group of conservative evangelicals. This speech served not only as an opportunity for Reagan to once again identify the Cold War as an ideological and spiritual struggle, but it was also an opportunity for him to assure his supporters that he had not changed his mind since entering office. His beliefs and worldview still lined up with conservative evangelical values. The speech was tailored to this audience in the belief that Reagan's harsh rhetoric and worldview would find enthusiastic ears.

Many politicians, journalists, preachers, and everyday people in America pointed to the danger of war that accompanied the arms race as the paramount issue of the Cold War. The arms race and the threat of nuclear war was no doubt as serious an issue to Reagan as it had been to other presidents. But Reagan framed his Cold War goals and strategies in such a way that the moral question was paramount and in ways that identified the moral question as the reason for the U.S. military buildup. Reagan's "Evil Empire" speech again shows the president consistently voicing his opposition to the Soviet Union and communism in terms of ideological and religious differences.

The typical response to this speech was epitomized in the indignant article of columnist Anthony Lewis in the *New York Times*. Lewis searched his repertoire for the appropriate adjective to describe Reagan and his thinking: "Simplistic." "Sectarian." "Terribly dangerous."

[116] Godfrey Hodgson, *The World Turned Right Side Up: A History of the Conservative Ascendancy in America* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1996), 179.

"Outrageous." But none of those seemed to accurately convey what he was thinking. Finally, Lewis settled on "primitive…the only word for it."[117] Lewis believed the central issue of the Cold War was the danger of nuclear war. He maintained that neither religion nor moral or spiritual questions could adequately address the issues of the Cold War. "Can the concept of good and evil determine whether 10,000 nuclear warheads is enough?" he asked. Lewis disagreed with the connection Reagan drew in his public rhetoric between U.S.-Soviet relations and morality. Furthermore, he found it absurd that Reagan would claim that "'freedom prospers when religion is vibrant.'"[118] Others shared Lewis's opinion. One particularly damning critique came from an editorial in *The Republic* entitled "Reverend Reagan." "According to Ronald Reagan," the author argued, "history is reaching a climax. He portrayed his country as embattled, set upon by enemies from without and within…The enemy without is Communism."[119] Fundamentally, the author asserted, Reagan's speech left the whole world with the impression that he "was contemplating holy war. The enemy within is 'modern-day secularism.' With his implication that the two [communism and secularism] are working toward a single end, which is the weakening of America, Mr. Reagan insulted multitudes."[120] By implying that the Cold War was primarily a religious conflict and that he intended to wage "holy war" on the Soviet Union, *The Republic* charged that Reagan had offended the masses and had shown himself to be intolerant. Reagan's comments were not only insulting; they were rudimentary. The journal asserted that Reagan's description of the Cold War as a spiritual battle was a "staggering oversimplification." The president's "spiritualization of politics," his "slander of secularism," and his invocation of a quote from Whittaker Chambers (that secularism "collaborates in

[117] Anthony Lewis, "Onward, Christian Soldiers," *The New York Times*, March 10, 1983.
[118] Ibid.
[119] "Reverend Reagan," *New Republic*, April 4, 1983, 7-9.
[120] Ibid.

Communism's attempt to make man stand alone without God") reduced the president's speech to "an orgy of cheap shots."[121] Particularly offended by the speech's explicit religious language, the author concluded, "We elected a President, not a Priest." Furthermore, Reagan's larger point "that political struggles are spiritual struggles" proved that he either entirely misunderstood or ignored the real "question[s] at issue." His thesis that "policy decisions must have religious reasons" showcased the president's elementary thinking and profound misunderstanding of the nature of democracy. The editors advised, "The President should cease these celestial navigations. There is business on earth. He is not in the White House to save our souls, but to protect our bodies; not to do God's will, but the people's."[122] *The Republic's* criticism was correct in asserting that Reagan's rhetoric suggested that he viewed "doing the people's will" and "saving their souls" as the same thing. People who did not view political struggles as spiritual struggles, like Reagan did, were deeply offended by the president's portrayal of the Cold War and policy decisions.

Reagan's rhetoric suggests that he believed the most urgent problems facing the world were the ideologies (primarily communism) that replaced God with man and thus created inhumane and immoral societies and social conditions. In his "Evil Empire" speech, he did not offer a specific proposal for challenging the Soviet Union. The president used his speech to reiterate to one of his largest constituencies that he viewed the Cold War as a spiritual struggle and to express and explain his opposition to the nuclear freeze movement arguing that "a freeze now would be a very dangerous fraud, for that is merely the illusion of peace. The reality is that we must find peace through strength."[123] Reagan said that he would agree to a freeze "only if we

[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid.
[123] The Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign was started in 1980 by defense and disarmament researcher Randal Forsberg. Designed to stop the drift toward nuclear war through a U.S.-Soviet agreement to stop the testing,

could freeze the Soviet's global desires" and that ultimately a freeze "at current levels of weapons would remove any incentive for the Soviets to negotiate seriously in Geneva and virtually end our chances to achieve the major arms reductions which we have proposed. Instead, they would achieve their objectives through the freeze." He argued that a nuclear freeze "would reward the Soviet Union for its enormous and unparalleled military buildup. It would prevent the essential and long overdue modernization of United States and allied defenses and would leave our aging forces increasingly vulnerable."[124] Reagan urged his audience to speak out against those who "would place the United States in a position of military and moral inferiority" and to "resist the attempts of those who would have you withhold your support for our efforts, this administration's efforts, to keep America strong and free, while we negotiate real and verifiable reductions in the world's nuclear arsenals and one day, with God's help, their total elimination."[125] Critics' fears and frustrations with Reagan and this speech were not totally unfounded as the president used vague terms to describe steps towards preventing nuclear war. "Resisting" people's attempts to undermine the administration's efforts could have meant any number of things. Reagan's assertion that his administration was negotiating for real and verifiable reduction in nuclear weapons was also vague, as he did not provide further explanation of these negotiations or proposed cuts. The writers of the aforementioned articles were looking for concrete proposals to alleviate the fear of nuclear war. Reagan had offered them abstract ideas of spiritual and moral war and no specific details about arms reduction.

Two months after his "Evil Empire" speech, Reagan was still receiving flak from the press. In May 1983, *Washington Post* journalist Richard Cohen expressed similar opinions to

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production, and deployment of nuclear weapons, the freeze campaign escalated into a mass movement that swept across the United States. It attracted the support of nearly all peace groups, as well as that of mainstream religious, professional, and labor organizations.

[124] Reagan, "Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida, March 8, 1983."

[125] Ibid.

those that Anthony Lewis had expressed in the *New York Times*. He began his column by asking, "What does Ronald Reagan have in common with my grandmother? Answer: They both are religious bigots."[126] What exactly was it that made Cohen's grandmother and Reagan "religious bigots"? Cohen explained that "until the day she died," his grandmother believed "that anyone not of her religion was less than human. She ascribed to that person all sorts of animalistic qualities, specifically a total lack of respect for either life or property." Cohen thought that Reagan's "Evil Empire" speech and his religiously and morally charged rhetoric smacked of the same sort of bigotry that characterized his grandmother. Cohen wrote, "It is not, I think, going too far to say that our president holds the same views…Time and time again, the president has gone into this business that the difference between 'us' and 'them' is that we have religion and they don't."[127] The "us" in Cohen's column and Reagan's rhetoric was of course the United States and the "them" was not just the Soviet Union, but "any communist country and any communist or communist sympathizer – regardless…of religious affiliation." Cohen argued that the argument Reagan made in his public rhetoric – to have morality you must have religion, namely Christianity – was a false dichotomy. "[R]eligion or the lack of it," Cohen concluded, "does not necessarily have anything to do with morality. The president is proof of that. He's got religion. What he lacks is tolerance."[128]

Americans' legitimate fears of nuclear war were further perpetuated several months later. On November 20, 1983, ABC aired a made-for-T.V. movie entitled *The Day After.* This movie portrayed the events leading up to and ensuing from a nuclear attack on Lawrence, Kansas, at the hands of the Soviet Union. This graphic and disturbing film proved to be a controversial topic for the American public. Surpassing *Gone With the Wind* as the broadcast with the highest number

[126] Richard Cohen, "Convictions," *The Washington Post*, May 26, 1983.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid.

of viewers, *The Day After* amassed 100 million viewers the night it aired.[129] After watching the movie, many Americans came to the conclusion that they would "rather die than survive a nuclear war."[130] *The Day After* visually portrayed what was a very real fear for many Americans during the early 1980s: nuclear holocaust. Cohen and Lewis likely did not see Reagan's speeches as mere words. Like many other Americans, they probably really did think that not only was Reagan a religious bigot, but he was leading the United States down a path toward World War III.[131]

Reagan's first term as president had seen no summits with Soviet leaders. The only meeting he had with a Soviet leader was his impromptu meeting with Soviet ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin during a February 1983 meeting at the White House originally scheduled for just Dobrynin and secretary of state George Shultz.[132] While the fact that the Soviet Union saw three different leaders in a period of three years played a significant role in the absence of U.S.-Soviet summits on Reagan's first term, this was not the only reason Reagan and the Soviet general secretaries did not meet. There was also a mutual lack of trust, and the two sides were unable to agree on the goals of a summit meeting.[133]

Soviet leaders were highly offended by Reagan's words. In the same manner that his military buildup put them on the defensive, so too did his harsh rhetoric. The significance of Reagan's rhetoric to his policy of peace through strength was an important element of what historian Doug Rossinow says was the Reagan administration's goal to "increase stress on the Soviet system and slow its ascendancy, giving the United States time to regain its strategic

[129] Jon Anderson, "'Day After' Draws Record TV Audience," *Chicago Tribune*, November 22, 1983.
[130] Glen Collins, "Students Voice Fear and Hopelessness In Talks the Day After 'The Day After,'" *The New York Times*, November 22, 1983.
[131] In September 1984, the British television network BBC aired a television series that depicted England being caught in the middle of a U.S.-Soviet nuclear war. The series serves as a demonstration that fear of nuclear war permeated American and Europe during the mid 1980s.
[132] This meeting is discussed at greater length in Chapter 2.
[133] These will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 2.

dominance."[134] Finnish scholar Jan Hanska explains how stories have been used to revitalize the belief of the people in America. Its examines how Reagan spun a web of stories combining religious, mythical, and other beliefs to create an America with myth-like qualities as an objective belief. He argues that "[n]arratives that combine politics and religion often try to teach the way of interpreting[the world, society, etc], and to give a sense of belonging to a community, that can understand such narratives."[135] Following this argument, it is also possible that in pushing an "us versus them" vision of the world in which the United States represented good and the Soviet Union represented evil, Reagan could effectively combat the malaise of the late 1970s and restore Americans' confidence in the United States as a prosperous and strong nation. Especially in his first term, such a strategy could work to garner support for the 1984 election as well as Reagan's foreign policy. While this likely played a role in Reagan's moral and religious Soviet rhetoric, to view it as being the entire purpose of his rhetoric is too narrow of a view as his portrayal of the Cold War as a spiritual struggle and of communism as a fundamentally evil ideology persisted throughout his second term.

1985 saw the ascension of Mikhail Gorbachev as general secretary of the Soviet Union. Unlike his predecessors, Gorbachev was not willing to use force in the form of nuclear weapons to save communism. Cold War historian John Lewis Gaddis argues that Gorbachev was different from his predecessors in his sweeping away of "communism's emphasis on the class struggle, its insistence on the inevitability of a world proletarian revolution, and hence its claims of historical infallibility."[136] This, as well as Reagan and Gorbachev's common aversion to nuclear weapons, made Gorbachev a man that Reagan said he could do business with. It is a well documented fact

[134] Doug Rossinow, *The Reagan Era: A History of the 1980s* (New York, New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 67.
[135] Jan Hanska, *Reagan's Mythical America: Storytelling as Political Leadership* (New York, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 137.
[136] John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2005), 197.

that Reagan abhorred the idea of a nuclear war.[137] Reagan and Gorbachev worked well together during Reagan's second term because both men rejected 1970s détente that had effectively turned "a dangerous situation into a predictable *system*," as its ultimate purpose "was not to end that conflict [the Cold War]…but rather to establish rules by which it would be conducted."[138] Reagan and Gorbachev were not interested in constructing a predictable system that did not genuinely address any of the reasons for the system. While both assigned different reasons to the tense East-West relationship and the perpetuation of the Cold War, both men genuinely desired to do away with the reasons and causes that had made the system of détente necessary and thereby ensure lasting improvements in East-West relations. Consequently, there was a change in Reagan's rhetoric in his second term as he moved away from attacks on the Kremlin and vamped up his emphasis on the spread of democracy. His religious rhetoric also increased as he began to use religious illustrations more frequently in his public statements. Both are due to the fact that he recognized that Gorbachev was different from his predecessors. Reagan's second term was also characterized by a more open-minded foreign policy that was cautiously supportive of democracy promotion and was much more vocal about human rights. His popularity and presidency were also weakened by the Iran-Contra affair. However, Reagan's characterization of the Cold War as a fundamentally spiritual conflict and of the atheistic foundation of communism as its source of immorality did not change. He called on Gorbachev to recognize the fundamentally flawed nature of his government's ideology and to change it.

In a speech delivered at the Conference on Religious Liberty in April 1985, Reagan took another opportunity to verbalize his belief in the connection between religion, human rights, and

[137] Beth Fischer, *The Reagan Reversal: Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1997); Paul Lettow, *Ronald Reagan and His Quest to Abolish Nuclear Weapons* (New York, New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005).
[138] Ibid., 198.

morality. Once again, it is not a coincidence that Reagan delivered this speech to a room full of conservative evangelicals. Reagan expected that they would willingly accept his assertions and it again gave him a chance to remind his constituency that he still thought religion was foundational to morality and securing human rights. Quoting Matthew 22:21, he remarked that "[w]hat this injunction teaches us is that the individual cannot be entirely subordinate to the state, that there exists a whole other realm, an almost mysterious realm of individual thought and action which is sacred and which is totally beyond and outside of state control."[139] "This idea," the president said, "has been central to the development of human rights."[140] Reagan consistently indicated in his public rhetoric that he believed human rights and freedom were inseparable from religion. As previously mentioned, the Carter administration's broad definition of human rights ultimately gave Reagan and other presidents the freedom to assimilate their own version of human rights into their foreign policies. While many argued that human rights development is rooted in secularization, Reagan argued that human rights development was rooted in religion and in the belief in the existence of a god. This was a provocative view of morality as it left no room for the existence of morality or the development of human rights outside of religion. This assertion would have been highly offensive to anyone who did not adhere to the same Judeo-Christian worldview as Reagan. However, it does explain why Reagan so readily adopted the Kirkpatrick Doctrine. While totalitarian regimes rejected any concept of God, autocratic regimes still worshiped traditional Gods. This provided an opportunity for morality to grow in the authoritarian regimes where in the totalitarian regimes; there was no hope of morality.

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[139] Ronald Reagan, "Remarks at a Conference on Religious Liberty, April 16, 1985," *The American Presidency Project* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=38486

[21] "…Then he said to them, 'Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.'" English Standard Version.

[140] Ibid.

Reagan went on to say that his revulsion to the Soviet Union stemmed from the fact that they implemented a communist form of government in which "the ruling party would claim for itself the attributes which religious faith ascribes to God alone, and the state would be the final arbiter of…truth… justice and morality."[141] Reagan utilized the examples of Karl Marx calling religion "an opiate of the masses," and of Vladimir Lenin stating that religion and communism were incompatible in practice and theory. This was the crux of the Cold War for Reagan. Referring to the quotes from Marx and Lenin, as well as his own maxim that religion had been central to the development of freedom and human rights, Reagan said that "[a]ll of this illustrates a truth that, I believe, must be understood. Atheism is not an incidental element of communism, not just part of the package; it is the package."[142] Reagan was yet again calling attention to the inseparable nature of communist ideology and atheism as being the fundamental reason for the evil nature of the ideology and the underlying issue of the Cold War.

Less than a month later, Reagan traveled to Hambach in the Federal Republic of Germany. Reagan called on the Germans to recognize that Europe, "divided by concrete walls, by electrified barbed wire, and by mined and manicured fields, killing fields," was "a living portrait of the most compelling truth of our time: The future belongs to the free. You are living in the springtime of your lives. The world needs your idealism, your courage, and your good works."[143] Reagan identified West Germany, the federal republic that stood in stark contrast to Soviet-controlled East Germany, as a reminder and agent of hope for all of Europe. Reagan argued that "[t]he cause of German unity is bound up with the cause of democracy. As

[141] Ibid.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Ronald Reagan, "Remarks to Citizens in Hambach, Federal Republic of Germany, May 6, 1985," *The American Presidency Project* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=38595

Chancellor Kohl said in his state of the nation address last February, 'Europe is divided because part of Europe is not free; Germany is divided because part of Germany is not free.'" Reagan portrayed West Germany as an island of hope in a sea of oppression. The president argued that it was vitally important for Germans to understand the nature of totalitarianism saying that such an understanding "will be worth as much to us as any weapons system in preserving peace. Realism is the beginning of wisdom, and where there's wisdom and courage, there will be safety and security, and they will be yours." Understanding the nature of the Soviet system, the foundational ideology of the Soviet Union, was not only pragmatic; it was key to preserving peace and ensuring liberty. It was equally important for Germans to recognize the origins of freedom. Reagan asked rhetorically "What is at the heart of freedom?" "In the answer," he said,

> lies the deepest hope for the future of mankind and the reason there can be no walls around those who are determined to be free. Each of us, each of you, is made in the most enduring, powerful image of Western civilization. We're made in the image of God, the image of God, the Creator.[144]

In a secular setting, Reagan explicitly connected the understanding and belief that people are made in the image of God to the existence and perpetuation of freedom. Reagan argued that "This," the understanding that people were made in the image of God "is our power, and this our freedom. This is our future."

The trip ultimately turned out to be disastrous on account of Reagan's visit to the Bitburg cemetery, which was the resting place of 49 soldiers of the Waffen SS. The visit was intended to be a show of reconciliation, but it only bred resentment and showed that the wounds inflicted on Europe and the U.S. had not yet been healed. *New York Times* journalist Hedrick Smith explained that "Mr. Reagan's major mission on this trip had been to rally the West out of what he calls 'Europessimism' and 'Europaralysis' and to make Western Europe more alert to the

[144] Ibid.

dangers of weakness toward 'an ever more powerful Soviet Union.'"[145] While Reagan's remarks had revived some proposals for easing tensions with the Soviet Union, "Reagan's tone toward the Soviet Union…was surprisingly cool and challenging." Smith found this surprising given Reagan's recent attempts to schedule a summit with Gorbachev. Reagan effectively "taunted the Kremlin with the vision of a united Europe."

In October 1985, as Reagan and Gorbachev's first summit in Geneva drew close, hardline Soviet officials grew increasingly perturbed by Reagan's constant "God talk."[146] Aleksandr Bovin wrote in *Izvestia* (a newspaper that expressed the views of Soviet officials) that he was "afraid that the President feels strongly tempted to play the role of emissary of the forces of good and of light embarking on a theological argument with the forces of evil and of darkness."[147] He was not far from the mark. Soviet officials genuinely believed that questions of religious freedom and domestic human rights issues had no place for discussion in the East-West relationship. By the fall of 1985, Reagan's renewed crusade for democracy was in full swing. He announced in his 1985 State of the Union Address that the U.S. "stands by all our democratic allies. And we must not break faith with those who are risking their lives—on every continent, from Afghanistan to Nicaragua—to defy Soviet-supported aggression and secure rights which have been ours from birth."[148] Reagan cited the Sandinista dictatorship in Nicaragua, which he argued had "full Cuban-Soviet bloc support" as an example of a country worthy of U.S. support. He argued the Sandinista dictatorship "not only persecutes its people, the church, and denies a free press, but arms and provides bases for Communist terrorists attacking neighboring states." He concluded that "[s]upport for freedom fighters is self-defense and totally consistent with the

[145] Hedrick Smith, "Reagan Trip: No Triumphs," *The New York Times,* May 9, 1985.
[146] The summit meetings will be discussed at length in Chapter 2.
[147] Paul Kengor, *God and Ronald Reagan* (New York, New York: HarperCollins, 2004), 288.
[148] Ronald Reagan, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union, February 6, 1985," *The American Presidency Project* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=38069

OAS and U.N. Charters. It is essential that the Congress continue all facets of our assistance to Central America. I want to work with you to support the democratic forces whose struggle is tied to our own security."[149] In addition to support for "freedom-fighters," Reagan continually pointed to places like West Germany as symbols of hope and of the growth of democracy and the weakening of the Soviet bloc.

Gorbachev and Reagan closed 1985 by sending televised New Year's greetings to the people in the other country. Former Ambassador to the Soviet Union Jack Matlock recalls the American people were occupied with other things and did not pay much attention to Gorbachev's message but that the "Soviet citizens were less blasé."[150] Reagan appeared to the Soviet people on their television screens saying that as the year drew to a close, he wanted share with them his "hopes for the New Year, hopes for peace, prosperity, and good will that the American and Soviet people share."[151] The president told the Soviets that America's democratic system was "founded on the belief in the sanctity of human life and the rights of the individual—rights such as freedom of speech, of assembly of movement, and of worship."[152] As if such concepts were not foreign enough to the Soviet people, Reagan went on to say that "[i]t is a sacred truth to us that every individual is a unique creation of God, with his or her own special talents, abilities, hopes, and dreams. Respect for all people is essential to peace."[153] In a country where atheism was a cornerstone of the government's ideology, it is safe to assume that this was not a concept the Russians were familiar with. Matlock recalls that the image of Reagan on Russians'

[149] Ibid. Reagan's policy towards Nicaragua and the shortcomings with the Reagan Doctrine will be discussed more fully in Chapter 2 and the Conclusion.
[150] Jack Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended* (New York, New York: Random House, 2004), 174.
[151] Ronald Reagan, "New Year's Message of President Reagan and Soviet General Secretary Gorbachev, January 1, 1986," *The American Presidency Project* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=36367
[152] Ibid.
[153] Ibid.

television screens was a "revelation."[154] Reagan "radiated goodwill and an interest not just in peace, but in the welfare of Soviet people."[155] This was an important moment for Reagan and Gorbachev in gaining the trust of the Soviet and American people. The men did not have fangs and horns, as citizens of both countries may have imagined, but rather seemed interested in improved East-West relations.

In his December 1986 Human Rights Day proclamation, Reagan identified the Soviet Union as one of the main violators of human rights. He cited examples of repression of Catholics in Lithuania and Ukraine, Jews who were being denied the right to emigrate, the Red Army's brutal repression of the people of Afghanistan, the imprisoning Berlin wall, and the imposed martial law in Poland, which cost many people their lives. He reminded people again that he believed "[p]eace and respect for human rights are inseparable. History demonstrates that there can be no genuine peace without respect for human rights." Furthermore, he argued that a government that did not ensure the rights of its own citizens posed a tremendous "threat to their neighbors as well." The denial of human rights was not just an issue for those in the Soviet bloc, it was an issue for the whole world. Peace did not mean just the absence of distrust or doing away with the threat of nuclear war; peace was inherently intertwined with the moral issue of human rights, which Reagan believed the Soviets had grossly violated. He argued that "each of us is created with moral dignity, that every individual is endowed by nature and nature's God with inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Any ideology that denied this fundamental truth and consequently denied human rights was immoral in Reagan's eyes.[156]

[154] Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 176.
[155] Ibid.
[156] Ronald Reagan, "Proclamation 5589 – Dec. 10, 1986," *U.S. Government Printing Office* http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/STATUTE-101/pdf/STATUTE-101-Pg2053.pdf

In October 1986, Reagan and Gorbachev met for their second summit meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland. The summit meeting fell apart over Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative and was initially seen as a failure.[157] Gorbachev wanted Reagan to kill the program and Reagan flatly refused; both sides left feeling frustrated and unaccomplished. To make his discontentment clear, and to avoid another public relations nightmare, Gorbachev refused to continue the practice of televised New Year's greetings. Reagan sent a warm radio message to the Soviets anyway via the Voice of America. After expressing his regret that the Soviet government had prevented him from addressing the Soviet people on television and briefly speaking of the recent summit meeting and discussions on nuclear arms, he told the Soviets that "The American people are deeply concerned with the fate of individual people, wherever they might be throughout the world. We believe that God gave sacred rights to every man, woman, and child on Earth." In case there was any confusion regarding what "rights" he was specifically referring to, Reagan clarified that he meant rights '"to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness'—rights that include the right to speak and worship freely and the right of each of us to build a better future for ourselves and our families." But Reagan was not content to merely connect people's individual rights to the existence of God and man being made in his image, he also reminded the Soviets that "respect for those rights, for the freedom and dignity of individuals, is also the bedrock on which any true and enduring peace between our countries must be built."[158] The point that Reagan was making was that for the Soviets and the United States to build a foundation of mutual trust, and cooperation, things that had been serious issues at Reykjavik, it was essential for the Soviets to not only take human rights issues seriously, but to grant civil liberties and

[157] SDI, also known as "Star Wars," was Reagan's 1983 program intended to develop a sophisticated anti-ballistic missile system in order to prevent missile attacks from other countries, especially the Soviet Union.
[158] Reagan, "Proclamation 5589 – Dec. 10, 1986."

religious freedom to their people. As he had said previously, "Weapons don't build trust, mistrust builds weapons."[159]

The Soviets worked hard to jam the airwaves at the VOA listening posts in Moscow, Leningrad, Helsinki, and Vienna. Despite this, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that Reagan's radio address "could still be heard in receptions that ranged from fair to poor."[160] The editorial reported that White House spokesman Peter Roussel said that "[t]he jamming…'speaks volumes about the Soviet system…the free exchange of ideas is the most basic human right. The jamming of this broadcast is a disservice to the Soviet people.'"[161] Not only was it a disservice to the Soviet people, it was a clear indication that the Soviets were concerned about the effect Reagan's words might have on Soviet citizens. Not only had Reagan been undermining Soviet ideology in his public rhetoric, he was now doing it on Soviet radio waves. These public statements arguably hurt the U.S.-Soviet relationship a great deal. However, they also demonstrated to Soviet leaders that Reagan was unwilling to relent on his view of the Cold War as spiritual struggle and of the centrality of greater reforms in human rights issues in the Soviet Union to the continued improvement of East-West relations.

On June 12, 1987, Reagan delivered his now famous speech in Berlin concerning the oppressive wall that split the German city literally in half. Although Reagan's speech was not one of lament, he was careful to point out that "As long as this gate is closed, as long as this scar of a wall is permitted to stand, it is not the German question alone that remains open, but the question of freedom for all mankind."[162] To Reagan, the Berlin Wall was a physical representation of the evil of the communist system, yet it was not a successful system that it

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[159] Ibid.
[160] "Superpowers Trade Holiday Talks," *Chicago Tribune*, January 1, 1987.
[161] Ibid.
[162] Ronald Reagan, "Remarks on East-West Relations at the Brandenburg Gate in West Berlin, June 12, 1987," *American Presidency Project* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=34390

represented, but a failing one. Recalling the words of former Soviet leader Nikita Krushchev, Reagan reminded his audience that

> In the 1950s, Khrushchev predicted: "We will bury you." But in the West today, we see a free world that has achieved a level of prosperity and well-being unprecedented in all human history. In the Communist world, we see failure, technological backwardness, declining standards of health, even want of the most basic kind—too little food. Even today, the Soviet Union still cannot feed itself. After these four decades, then, there stands before the entire world one great and inescapable conclusion: Freedom leads to prosperity. Freedom replaces the ancient hatreds among the nations with comity and peace. Freedom is the victor.[163]

This is a speech worth quoting at length because it so clearly showcases Reagan's argument concerning the failures and immorality of communism and in the triumphs and morality of the democratic system. Reagan argued that ultimately it was democracy that was to bury communism, not the other way around. To him, the Berlin Wall served as a stark reminder of the cruelties of communist system. And so, directly challenging Gorbachev, Reagan said "General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization: Come here to this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!"[164] Reagan closed his speech by telling his audience that "[t]he totalitarian world produces backwardness because it does such violence to the spirit, thwarting the human impulse to create, to enjoy, to worship. The totalitarian world finds even symbols of love and of worship an affront."[165] Reagan argued once again that democracy would restore the human spirit to its full strength and potential because, by virtue of its Judeo-Christian roots, it secured for people the freedoms they were created to enjoy.

[163] Ibid.
[164] Ibid.
[165] Ibid.

"President Reagan sought today to undercut Europe's perception of Mikhail S. Gorbachev as a leader of peace, bluntly challenging the Soviet leader to tear down the Berlin wall," wrote Gerald Boyd in his special to the *New York Times*.[166] By calling for the destruction of the Berlin Wall and by identifying it as "a metaphor for ideological and economic differences separating East and West," the Soviets charged in *Tass* (the official news agency of the Soviets) that Reagan "had given an 'openly provocative, war-mongering speech' reminiscent of the cold war."[167] While Gorbachev had instituted his policies of perestroika and glasnost in 1986, Reagan was calling into question the genuine nature of these policies asking if the represented "profound changes," or "token changes."[168] A *Chicago Tribune* article reflected that Reagan's speech at the Berlin Wall was an example of what Reagan did best, the president's speech "was a kind of international pep rally – a rousing reminder of why the West is different from the East and why the western allies must keep it that way."[169] In his memoir, Reagan wrote, "Standing so near the Berlin Wall, seeing it in substance as well as for what it symbolized, I felt anger well up in me, and I am sure this anger was reflected in my voice when I said those words [tear down this wall]."[170]

On December 10, 1987, following Reagan and Gorbachev's Washington Summit where they signed the monumental INF Treaty, Reagan did not hesitate to speak of the significance of the treaty in overtly religious terms. Before a nationwide audience, Reagan was careful to point out that he did not view the Cold War as primarily an arms struggle, but that arms control issues had proved to be a hindrance to the two countries being able to discuss the real issues at hand:

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[166] Gerald M. Boyd, "Raze Berlin Wall, Reagan Urges Soviet," *The New York Times*, June 13, 1987.
[167] Ibid.
[168] Glasnost was a policy instituted by Gorbachev that called for increased openness and transparency in government institutions and activities in the Soviet Union. Perestroika was the accompanying political reform movement within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.
[169] "A Talk about Freedom at the Wall," *Chicago Tribune*, June 15, 1987.
[170] Reagan, *An American Life*, 683.

morality and human rights. "Let me explain this with a saying I've often repeated," Reagan said, "Nations do not distrust each other because they're armed; they are armed because they distrust each other."[171] He argued that "just as real peace means the presence of freedom and justice as well as the absence of war, so, too, summits must be discussions not just about arms but about the fundamental differences that cause nations to be armed." Arms control was of grave importance, but he consistently portrayed armed hostility as the result of the ideological issues that were the root cause of the Cold War. Ultimately, Reagan said it was essential for summits to be about more than arms control issues; the summit agenda had to be "one that dealt not only with arms reductions but also people-to-people contacts between our nations and, most important, the issues of human rights."[172] Adopting such an agenda had allowed Reagan to address not just arms control issues, but also "fundamental problems such as Soviet expansionism, human rights violations, as well as our own moral opposition to the ideology that justifies such practices."[173]

Even after signing one of the most important arms reduction treaties in history, Reagan still insisted that the fundamental issue of the Cold War was a moral one. Reagan said that the cry that had echoed down through the centuries was "a cry for peace, for a world of love and understanding."[174] He spoke of the hope to be found in heeding these words, and of the spiritual significance he thought the cry held as he identified it as the same cry for freedom and peace spoken by the "Nazarene carpenter . . . standing at the Sea of Galilee, the carpenter whose birth into the poverty of a stable we celebrate –it is these words that we remember as… we reflect on

[171] Ronald Reagan, "Address to the Nation on the Soviet-United States Summit Meeting, December 10, 1987," *The American Presidency Project* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=33806
[172] Ibid.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Ibid.

the events of this week here in Washington."[175] For Reagan, morality, peace, and freedom, all found their basis in religion. Regardless of whether or not people agreed or disagreed with what he identified as the origin of peace, freedom, and morality, this proved to be a particularly important speech in the study of Reagan's rhetoric because it showed the president on prime-time television, after signing arguably the most important arms reduction treaty in history, calling on the American people to remember the words of Jesus Christ and to connect them to the ground-breaking Washington Summit that had taken place earlier that week.

There are several possible reasons why Reagan chose to use Biblical imagery, specifically the person of Jesus Christ, to highlight the significance of the treaty and the summit. The first possible reason is that this was the Christmas season, and he hoped that a Biblical story would resonate with American citizens as they prepared for Christmas. It is also possible that Reagan used Jesus Christ as an illustration because even non-religious people might see him as an apt example of a moral teacher and advocate for peace. Another possibility is that Reagan used an example of Jesus Christ because he saw it as a logical continuation of the moral rhetoric he had utilized throughout the speech. It was likely a combination of all three, however given the consistency of Reagan's moral and religious rhetoric, the president probably saw this speech as another opportunity to communicate to Americans his perception of the Cold War. By using moral and religious language and Biblical imagery, Reagan was painting a picture of the Cold War, America, the Soviet Union, and the role of the U.S. in the East-West conflict.

Public reactions focused less on Reagan's comments on the summit and more on the signing of the INF Treaty. Pundits' interpretations of the summit were mixed. *Chicago Tribune* journalist William Safire called Reagan's assertion that "In the past, Soviet leaders have openly

[175] Ibid.

expressed their acceptance of the Marxism theory of the one-world communist state…He [Gorbachev] is the first and only leader who has never affirmed that" an "overnight abandonment of realism," and an indication that "Reagan has slipped his strategic moorings."[176] Others viewed the summit more favorably. *New York Times* journalist Anthony Lewis, who had long called for arms reductions, viewed the summit as a success. Lewis wrote that Reagan deserved "great credit for seizing the opportunity, and those of us who have criticized him should be the first to say so."[177] He wrote that Reagan "has accomplished more in the I.N.F. treaty than enthusiastic advocates of arms control dared hope. He has understood the realities better than the sophisticated strategic planners." What exactly was the reality that Reagan had recognized and others had missed? Lewis argued that "President Reagan understood the central truth that Mikhail Gorbachev saw the need for change."[178] Lewis's assertion that Reagan had the ability to recognize that Gorbachev was open to change explains why Reagan's second term Soviet rhetoric increasing steered away from criticism of the Kremlin yet maintained its overtly moral and religious tone and continued to portray the Cold War as a spiritual conflict. Shultz Wrote in his memoir that the Washington Summit was a sign that "[t]he Soviets were admitting that the Brezhnev doctrine was dead; the Reagan Doctrine was driving spikes into that coffin."[179]

Following the historic Washington Summit, Reagan traveled to Moscow in May 1988 for another summit. Gorbachev was hoping to use this summit as an opportunity for the leaders to agree on the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty. However Reagan was interested in pushing human rights issues. On May 3, 1988, as he prepared to leave for the Moscow Summit, Reagan

[176] William Safire, "Gorbachev's Agenda, Reagan's Turnabout," *Chicago Tribune*, December 15, 1987.
[177] Anthony Lewis, "What is the Reality?" *The New York Times,* December 10, 1987.
[178] Ibid.
[179] George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York, New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1993), 1003.

held a press conference in the White House with four Russian religious dissidents. In this press conference, Reagan signaled that he intended to make his trip to Moscow a human rights crusade with special emphasis on religious freedom. Addressing the four dissidents, Reagan said, "I promise that the witness of faith that you have brought here today will not be confined within these four walls, or forgotten when this meeting is ended. I will carry it in my heart when I travel to the Soviet Union at the end of this month."[180] Reagan spoke of the progress he saw in the Soviet Union concerning religious freedom, saying that "the presence of these four men here today is testimony to the fact that our witness here in the West can have an impact." Other signs that Reagan found encouraging were "[s]ome Soviet dissidents have been allowed to emigrate. Some churches are allowed to organize and file for recognition, and recently the Soviets have said they will allow a printing of language Bibles. These are encouraging signs, and we welcome them."[181] Challenging the speculation that religion in the Soviet Union would die with the older generations, Reagan said that the few churches that had been allowed to reopen were still full of the older generations as well as "the younger generation, longing to satisfy the need, the hunger, that no manmade institution in any society can ever fulfill." "[I]t is not surprising," Reagan said, "that revolutions devoted to reshaping man as if he were so much clay deny one of the most basic teachings of Judeo-Christian belief: that after God shaped Adam from dust, he breathed into him the divine principle of life."[182] Quoting *Dr. Zhivago*, Reagan argued that "'life is never a material, a substance to be molded'" rather it was something God breathed into man. In essence, Reagan was arguing that for the state to deny its citizens religious freedom was to deny them the very source of life. Calling to mind the biblical story of Moses leading the Jewish

[180] Ronald Reagan, "Remarks at a White House Briefing on Religious Freedom in the Soviet Union, May 3, 1988," *The American Presidency Project* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=35782
[181] Ibid.
[182] Ibid.

exodus from Egypt, and the Christian persecution in early pagan Rome, Reagan said that he prayed that the coming millennium would mean religious freedom for all in the Soviet bloc and he suggested to his audience that as they pray, they should use the words of Psalm 22, "In Thee our fathers trusted; they trusted, and Thou didst deliver them. To Thee they cried out and were delivered; in Thee they trusted and were not disappointed." Reagan closed by telling his audience about a letter he had recently received from a woman that contained a story of a young Russian soldier in a shell hole in World War II. Knowing that his unit was about to advance, the young man looked up to the stars acknowledged that although he had been taught his whole life that there was no God, he had been wrong to believe there was no God and now believed that one existed. Reagan told his audience that the letter said that the soldier "looked up at the heavens and spoke so sincerely and said, 'Maybe before the night is over I'll be coming to You. And I hope You will forgive what I believed for so long, the foolishness, because I know now there is a God.'" That soldier's prayer was found on his body after he was killed in the coming engagement. Reagan wondered aloud, "I thought sometimes of taking it to Moscow with me—maybe the General Secretary might like to read it."[183] As Reagan traveled to Moscow, he did indeed take the letter with him and read it to Gorbachev during one of their private meetings.

Reagan traveled to the Soviet Union for the Moscow Summit on May 29. Upon arriving in Moscow, Reagan and Gorbachev both made opening remarks. Reagan closed his with his signature, "God bless you."[184] A president closing his statement in the United States by saying "God bless you" was nothing out of the ordinary, but in Moscow, the phrase rang foreign, and even offensive. Top Russian interpreter Igor Korchilov writes in his book *Translating History*

[183] Ibid.
[184] Ronald Reagan, "Remarks at the Opening Ceremony of the Soviet-United States Summit Meeting in Moscow, May 29, 1988," *The American Presidency Project* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=35892

(which is based off his journals he kept while working with Gorbachev from 1987-1990) that Reagan's "God bless you" "sounded to the ears of some of the Soviet officials present almost like a blasphemy in the Kremlin. Many of them made wry faces."[185] But Reagan's simple phrase represented more than different customs or worldviews. With his simple remark, Korchilov suggested, "[t]he heretofore impregnable edifice of Communist atheism was being assaulted before their [the Kremlin's] very eyes by a man who had made his name as a hard-line anticommunist."[186] To the politburo, the phrase was more than offensive; it was a public attack on their worldview and system of government.

Before Reagan traveled to Moscow, he had made it clear that he intended to meet with and speak to Soviet dissidents. Soviet officials responded to this plan by saying that "a planned Presidential meeting with Soviet dissidents would be an unwelcome breach of superpower protocol…[And that] it is hardly aimed at improving mutual understanding."[187] Soviet security officials in Leningrad warned two advocates of Jewish rights, both of whom had been invited to meet with Reagan in Moscow, that "they should not attempt to travel to the capital…'They were warned they would live to regret it if they went to the Reagan meeting."[188] Despite the harsh warning, Reagan went through with the meeting and public address. He delivered his remarks to the Soviet dissidents at Spaso House in Moscow on May 30. Reagan focused his remarks on the centrality of human rights and religious freedom issues to East-West relations. Most of what Reagan conveyed in his speech was nothing that he had not said before. But towards the end, Reagan deviated from speaking as a diplomat and told his audience "I would like to speak to you

[185] Igor Korchilov, *Translating History: Thirty Years on the Front Lines of Diplomacy with a Top Russian Interpreter* (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 155.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Felicity Barringer, "Soviet Warns Reagan about Seeing Dissidents," *The New York Times,* May 27, 1988.
[188] Ibid.

not as a head of government but as a man, a fellow human being." Reagan said that while he had come to Moscow hoping to encourage those who suffered religious persecution, he already realized that he was the one being encouraged because "[w]hile we [the U.S.] press for human rights through diplomatic channels, you press with your very lives, day in, day out, year after year, risking your jobs, your homes, your all." Deviating entirely from his script, Reagan took an opportunity to challenge Soviet atheism by sharing that whenever he met "an atheist, I am tempted to invite him to the greatest gourmet dinner that one could ever serve and, when we finished eating that magnificent dinner, to ask him if he believes there's a cook. Thank you all, and God bless you."[189] Reagan's speech was broadcasted to a live television audience. Korchilov recalls that while "the American president's visit to the monastery was officially viewed as an irritation, his unprecedented meeting with the Soviet dissidents and refuseniks later in the day at the Spaso House was perceived as positively anti-Soviet."[190] One *New York Times* article reported "[t]he initial response [of official Soviet press] has been to play down Mr. Reagan's message in the hope that it will go away."[191] Upon leaving Reagan's meeting with the Soviet dissidents, Vadim Biryukov, the diplomatic correspondent for *Tass* remarked that "the patience with Mr. Reagan's behavior was wearing thin. 'We knew that this was happening…We knew your President had this weak point. We knew he'd like to have this kind of show…we feel it's getting a little bit out of proportion." [192]

[189] Ibid.
[190] Korchilov, *Translating History*, 162.
[191] Bill Kellers, "For Soviet Journalists, Finding the Right Angle was Never this Rough," *The New York Times*, May 31, 1988.
[192] Ibid.

New York Times journalist Steven Roberts wrote that Reagan had traveled to Moscow "determined to press human rights issues and encourage greater change in Soviet life."[193] he reported that White House aides said the president "clearly thinks of himself as a missionary, spreading the gospel of Western-style democracy at a time when he has special access to the Soviet people." By "sermonizing," Reagan ran a high risk of slowing the very transformations he sought to encourage. However "the risk of damaging what he is working for has not deterred Mr. Reagan from forcefully raising the human rights issue at every opportunity."[194] While human rights issues and religious freedom were important to Reagan, he was also under pressure from conservative constituents and organized groups in Europe to make such values as freedom of religion and emigration a basic part of American foreign policy. This surely influenced his heavy emphasis of those issues throughout the Moscow summit. By making human rights and freedom of religion paramount issues in the summit, Roberts wrote that Marlin Fitzwater, Reagan's chief spokesman, said Reagan wanted "the Russians to know that he appreciates the advances they have made so far, but he also wants to 'keep the pressure on' and encourages even greater reforms." His aides conceded that while Reagan did not have a "particularly complex philosophy of sophisticated foreign policy," they found that "[h]e believes very firmly in a few simple principles, and his missionary work for human rights and the American way taps into his most basic values."[195] Roberts explained that Reagan knew "that he might never again have so much access to Soviet TV, and he came [to Moscow] determined to make the most of it. All of his events outside the Kremlin – visiting the monastery, meeting the dissidents…are designed to reinforce the words of his message with visual images."

[193] Steven Roberts, "A Mighty Russian Pulpit for Reagan. News Analysis One Danger: That American 'Sermonizing' Could Foster a Backlash," *The New York Times*, May 31, 1988.
[194] Ibid.
[195] Ibid.

On May 31, Reagan delivered a speech at Moscow State University. He emphasized the hopes he had for the future and spoke of the progress he saw all around him in technology and economics. He also spoke at length of the first amendment freedoms Americans were guaranteed and of the importance of understanding that their rights were derived from their Creator. "Liberty," Reagan argued "is not earned but a gift from God."[196] Reagan focused on painting a picture for the crowd at Moscow of what it looked like to live in a society based on the premise that civil freedoms and individual liberties found their origin in God. He said that in reality democracy was less a system of government than it was "a system to keep government limited, unintrusive; a system of constraints on power to keep politics and government secondary to the important things in life, the true sources of value found only in family and faith."[197] In contrast to the atheistic Soviet government which had violently and swiftly sought to silence and eradicate religion in its borders, Reagan told the students at Moscow State University that America's system of government flourished to this day because it functioned as secondary in American society. In Reagan's view of America, the government did not dictate religion, family, or societal norms, rather religion and family dictated the direction of the government. Reagan did not have to use religious language to communicate to his audience that he was seeing great progress in the world and in the Soviet Union. He did not need to use religious language to speak of his hope for greater reforms and increased first amendment liberties in the Soviet Union; and yet he did. When his speech and answer and question session were over, Reagan was greeted with a standing ovation and wild applause. After watching the speech, Korchilov concluded that "[t]he

[196] Ronald Reagan, "Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session With the Students and Faculty at Moscow State University, May 31, 1988," *The American Presidency Project* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=35897
[197] Ibid.

words he said may have been his speechwriter's, but the emotion with which he said them was definitely his own."[198]

Preston argues that Reagan believed that "the easing of restrictions on religion in the Soviet Union would create the conditions for peaceful internal revolution – and perhaps even an end to the Cold War."[199] Reflecting specifically on Reagan's speech to Soviet dissidents and more broadly on his visit to Moscow, Preston writes that Reagan believed that "[o]nly with faith could the political and economic freedom promised by glasnost and perestroika flourish."[200] Reagan had focused his entire trip to Moscow on promoting the idea that religion, political and economic freedom, and individual rights were all inseparably connected. Preston argues that while this was a moving message, "it was also an example of Reagan's idealistic synthesis that deftly blended the promotion of ideals with the soothing, conciliatory tones of détente – albeit strictly on American terms."[201]

On October 1, 1988, Reagan delivered a speech at Georgetown University for its Bicentennial Convocation. October 1, 1988 also marked the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Munich pact. After he had signed the pact, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain had returned to Britain declaring that he had brought "'peace in our time.'"[202] Eleven months later, Nazi Germany invaded Poland and hurled the country into a nightmare Reagan said "from which is has yet to awake."[203] And yet somehow Europe had begun to slowly recover. In the same way, Reagan said, the millions of people who still lived "under the yoke of communism" had "proved

[198] Korchilov, *Translating History*, 174.
[199] Preston, *Sword of the Spirit*, 599.
[200] Ibid., 600.
[201] Ibid.
[202] Ronald Reagan, "Remarks at Georgetown University's Bicentennial Convocation, October 1, 1988," *The American Presidency Project* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=34945
[203] Ibid.

that the human spirit cannot be consumed either" for the spirit of freedom that was in every person could not kept down. Freedom, Reagan observed, "is the first principle of society," yet "freedom cannot exist alone."[204] Tailoring his address to Georgetown students, faculty, and staff, Reagan pointed to the University's theme of "learning, faith, and freedom" for their Bicentennial, as "apt"; for "[e]ach reinforces the others, each makes the others possible." Freedom, when unaccompanied by faith and learning, allowed for the horrors of "Weimar Germany and the decadence of imperial Rome; human behavior untempered by a sense of moral, spiritual, or intellectual limits." Reagan argued that America had been prosperous only because she was "guided by all three: learning, faith, and freedom." Quoting Alexis de Tocqueville, Reagan stated "'Despotism may govern without faith, but liberty cannot." Reagan observed that he saw signs that suggested that the oppressive totalitarian governments of the twentieth century were nearing their end. Signs that "the rulers who enslave and victimize the people of the Earth are on the ideological defensive…To save themselves, those rulers are beginning to cast their eyes toward the democratic societies they used to revile."[205] Communism and other totalitarian governments were failing in Reagan's eyes because they had ignored and denied the very things that were fundamental to human nature and to society.

During the final month of his presidency, Reagan delivered a speech to the American Enterprise Institute in which he reaffirmed his opinions on communism. Having met with Gorbachev and Vice President George Bush earlier that day in New York for Gorbachev's announcement on unilateral arms cuts, Reagan said that their discussion had been "positive and

[204] Ibid.
[205] Ibid.

encouraging."[206] They had discussed human rights, improved East-West relations, progress in arms control, and resolutions in regional conflicts. Reagan said he thought both he and Gorbachev "expressed satisfaction in what we've achieved in recent years."[207] But they "also recognized that fundamental differences between our countries remain in many areas and that determined efforts by both sides will be necessary in the months and years ahead to overcome such differences." Reagan communicated that there were reasons to be confident that East-West relations would continue to improve in the years to come, but that the ideological differences between the democratic United States and the communist Soviet Union could never be overlooked if relations were going to continue to improve. Reagan argued that the truth still remained that the ideological differences were the root and cause of the Cold War and the key to continuing to improve East-West relations. Speaking of his partnership with the American Enterprise Institute, Reagan remarked that they "came to Washington together in 1981, both as anti-Communists and as unapologetic defenders and promoters of a strong and vibrant America." And while Reagan's prosperous and even friendly relationship with Gorbachev as well at his optimism for continued improved East-West relation may have suggested that the president had softened his views on communism, he silenced those interpretations of his relationship with Gorbachev by saying "I'm proud to say I'm still an anti-Communist. And I continue to be dedicated to the idea that we must trumpet our beliefs and advance our American ideals to all the peoples of the world until the towers of the tyrants crumble to dust." What exactly where these "American ideals" that Reagan said he intended to continue to spread? They were "that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Reagan looked back on his eight years as

[206] Ronald Reagan, "Remarks to the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research," *The American Presidency Project* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=35239
[207] Ibid.

president and forward to the changing world and claimed that through the rapid decline and reform of the Soviet Union that the world was now seeing meant that tyranny had lost and freedom had won.

Likewise, in his farewell address to the nation on January 11, 1989, Reagan reflected on the previous eight years and looked forward to a future marked by growing peace and freedom. He reminded the United States that he believed that "man is not free unless government is limited," and that "[n]othing is less free than pure communism."[208] He told a story about when he and Nancy visited the Soviet Union for the Moscow summit recalling that they "decided to break off from the entourage one afternoon to visit the shops on Arbat Street."[209] He told his audience that although their shopping trip was impromptu, "every Russian there immediately recognized us and called out our names and reached for our hands. We were just about swept away by the warmth." But within seconds, their joy at being so warmly welcomed was quickly checked as a

> KGB detail pushed their way toward us and began pushing and shoving the people in the crowd. It was an interesting moment. It reminded me that while the man on the street in the Soviet Union yearns for peace, the government is Communist. And those who run it are Communist, and that means we and they view such issues as freedom and human rights very differently.[210]

Reagan's words suggest that he had viewed the brief interaction with the Russian people as an indication that while all people longed for freedom and peace, communism always had and always would deny them their desires and their God given rights to civil liberties and religious freedom.

[208] Ronald Reagan, "Farewell Address to the Nation, January 11, 1989," *The American Presidency Project* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29650
[209] Ibid.
[210] Ibid.

Reagan spoke favorably of Gorbachev throughout the speech saying that as a result of Gorbachev's internal democratic reforms, the U.S.S.R.'s withdrawal from Afghanistan, and the prisoners Gorbachev had freed, he believed the changes in East-West relations and the reforms in the Soviet Union were there to stay. "My view is that President Gorbachev is different from previous Soviet leaders," Reagan said. Above all else, he said he wanted

> the new closeness [between America and the USSR] to continue… And it will, as long as we make it clear that we will continue to act in a certain way as long as they continue to act in a helpful manner. If and when they don't, at first pull your punches. If they persist, pull the plug. It's still trust but verify. It's still play, but cut the cards.[211]

Even in the midst of dramatically improved East-West relations and unprecedented reforms in the Soviet Union, Reagan remained openly wary of the underlying communist ideology of the Soviet Union and asked the American people to remember that that was still the fundamental issue of the conflict, the key to global freedom, and to a truly peaceful relationship with Russia.

Americans had mixed opinions about Reagan's time as president. *New York Times* journalist Julie Johnson argued that the Reagan presidency had been one "in which images and symbols often have taken precedence over substance."[212] Others criticized Reagan for the deficit he had amassed while in office. A *Chicago Tribune* editorial praised Reagan saying that it would "always be morning in Ronald Reagan's America, even as the sun is setting on his years in the White House."[213] "America will and should sing his praises," the editorial continued. It argued that "one of the real measures of Ronald Reagan and his career as a leader of this nation and the Western alliance is the esteem in which he has come to be held by his partners, not to mention

[211] Ibid.
[212] Julie Johnson, "The Reagan Campaign Magic: He Isn't Running, but He's Winning," *The New York Times*, November 3, 1988.
[213] "For the Gipper, It's Always Morning." *Chicago Tribune*, November 21, 1988.

such rivals as Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev."[214] Journalist Bobbie Schacter fired back at the *Chicago Tribune's* praise of Reagan writing that he had "never understood the 'Teflon' quality of Ronald Reagan. Why he should have been immune to the ravages of deficit spending, rampant misconduct in his administration and absurd adherence to economic principles that have led to the creation of the largest population of poor people remains a mystery." [215]

Despite varying opinions over Reagan's presidency, he was aptly nicknamed the "Great Communicator." Even if Reagan had chosen style over substance, he was deft at using moral and religious rhetoric to rally the American people to the cause of anti-communism and to view the Cold War as a spiritual struggle. Throughout both his terms in office, Reagan consistently drew attention to what he believed was the evil, atheistic communist ideology of the Soviet Union and to remind people that the conflict they were facing was a battle between the enslavement of totalitarianism and the freedom of democracy. He encouraged the United States and even the world to view the Cold War as a fundamentally religious and moral conflict that stemmed from the inherently evil nature of the communist system that replaced the authority of God with the authority of the State. If nothing else, Reagan was consistent in his portrayal of the Cold War as a moral and spiritual battle. In his public rhetoric, Reagan made human rights and religious freedom the paramount issues of the Cold War and fundamental to the improvement of East-West relations. Reagan concludes in his memoirs that "[d]emocracy triumphed in the cold war because it was a battle of values."[216]

[214] Ibid.
[215] Bobbie Schacter, "Blinded By Sun," *Chicago Tribune,* December 5, 1988.
[216] Reagan, *An American Life*, 715.

Chapter Two

Transcending Communism: Morality and Religion in Ronald Reagan's Soviet Policy and its Connections to His Soviet Rhetoric, 1981-1989

This chapter will focus on the policies of the Reagan administration concerning the Soviet Union and U.S.-Soviet relations. It will investigate the consistency, or the lack thereof, of the connection between what Reagan and his administration said they were doing and what they actually did. This chapter will contrast Reagan's rhetoric with Reagan's Soviet foreign policy and his interactions with Soviet leaders in order to determine what effect his public language had on his Soviet policies. It asks: Was his Soviet policy the result more of principle or pragmatism – or both at different times? Did Reagan prefer to stand by his words whatever the cost to his foreign policy, or did he seek pragmatic solutions to foreign policy problems no matter the cost to his principles? Was his moral and religious rhetoric and his portrayal of the Cold War as an ideological struggle only reserved for his public speeches or was his rhetoric reflected in his personal correspondences and interaction with Soviet leaders?

This chapter argues that although there were occasions for compromise, by and large, Reagan's Soviet foreign policy and the ways in which he approached and interacted with the Soviet Union and Soviet leaders throughout his two terms in office reflected and were consistent with his rhetoric. Reagan's Soviet policies and interactions with Soviet leaders reflected his

argument that questions of religion and morality were at the heart of the Cold War and East-West relations. This chapter will show that Reagan's private rhetoric in summit meetings and letters with the Soviet Union reflected and echoed his public rhetoric. Throughout his two terms in office (1981-1988), Reagan pressured the Soviets privately and publically on issues of morality, religion, and individual freedom.

With the Soviets' refusal to withdraw from Afghanistan and Reagan's harsh rhetoric, Cold War tensions were rekindled from 1980 to 1981. Tensions were high and the fear of nuclear war was real. On March 6, 1981, less than six weeks after Reagan was inaugurated, he received a letter from Leonid Brezhnev, the General Secretary of the Soviet Union. Brezhnev's letter typified the Kremlin's usual combination of brash criticism alongside the broaching of bilateral areas of conflict. Reagan's response to Brezhnev's letter established important elements of his foreign policy and it marked the opening of Reagan's correspondence with the U.S.S.R. Brezhnev's letter to Reagan addressed what he saw as "the most vital problems" in the international situation.[217] His comments and policies, Brezhnev wrote, were intended "to ensure for present and future generations the most basic right of each person – the right to life."[218] In his nine page letter, Brezhnev wrote of the significance of the Warsaw Pact and NATO in the United States' and the U.S.S.R.'s attitude towards the strategic military balance. He asserted that "[t]he Soviet Union has not sought, and does not seek military superiority."[219] He also warned Reagan that the Soviet Union would not "permit such superiority to be established over us. Such attempts, as well as attempts to talk to us from a position of strength, are absolutely futile." He readily acknowledged the threat of nuclear war and wrote that the Soviet Union was "prepared to

[217] Leonid Brezhnev, Ronald Reagan, "March 7th, 1981: Brezhnev to Reagan," *The Reagan Files* http://www.thereaganfiles.com/19810306.pdf
[218] Ibid.
[219] Ibid.

act, hand in hand with all countries and above all with the United States, in decisive struggle against this threat." Brezhnev assured Reagan that the Soviet Union was highly in favor of dialogue between the two super-powers, pointing specifically to the importance of a summit meeting between the two nations. Brezhnev also argued for a qualitative and quantitative freeze of nuclear weapons.

Shortly after receiving this letter, Reagan was critically wounded by a would-be assassin's bullet. This attempt on his life significantly delayed his response to Brezhnev. But when he returned to the White House he drafted a personal letter. Secretary of State Alexander Haig objected that the letter could convey the wrong signal to Brezhnev as it coincided with the lifting of the grain embargo.[220] At Haig's direction, the State Department drafted a replacement letter that emphasized that the lifting of the grain embargo did not denote U.S. approval of Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. However Reagan insisted on sending his personal appeal too, so on April 24, 1981, both letters were sent to Brezhnev.

Throughout his personal letter to Brezhnev, Reagan framed the issues Brezhnev had raised in terms of human rights issues and morality, or immorality, as Reagan alluded to, in the case of the communist Soviet government. Reagan argued that the Soviet people desired "the dignity of having some control over their individual destiny."[221] Reagan defined this as the freedom to "work at the craft or trade of their own choosing and to be fairly rewarded" and the freedom "to raise their families in peace without harming anyone or suffering harm themselves."[222] "Government exists for their convenience," Reagan reminded Brezhnev, "not the

[220] In response to the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the Carter Administration imposed a grain embargo in 1980 that banned the export of technology and grain to the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union occupied Afghanistan until 1989.
[221] Ibid.
[222] Ibid.

other way around." Reagan questioned the fundamental quality of life for Soviet citizens asking if they would "be better off or even aware that the Soviet Union has imposed a government of its own choice on the people of Afghanistan?" Reagan maintained that there was "absolutely no substance to charges that the United State is guilty of imperialism or attempts to impose its will on other countries by use of force." It was the government of the Soviet Union which had imposed its will on its people and other countries. Although the letter drafted by the State Department carefully addressed each topic brought up in Brezhnev's letter, Reagan's personal letter focused on human rights issues and the lack of personal freedom in the Soviet Union. He assured Brezhnev that he was willing and eager to engage in dialogue and wrote that he had lifted the grain embargo with the hopes of contributing "to creating the circumstances which will lead to the meaningful and constructive dialogue which will assist us in fulfilling our joint obligation of finding lasting peace."[223]

Jack Matlock writes that "Reagan's personal letter was a genuine attempt to reach out, but by then it was beyond Brezhnev's capacity to respond positively."[224] The general secretary was 75 years old and his health was rapidly declining. Both of these factors played a significant role in Brezhnev and Reagan's relationship. Brezhnev's response to Reagan's letter was "a stiff, staff-directed rejection of everything Reagan had written."[225] Reagan's letter demonstrated that he was interested in doing more than reducing nuclear arms arsenals or promoting a better U.S.-Soviet relationship; he was interested in addressing freedom and justice for Soviet citizens which he perceived as moral issues, and appropriate for U.S.-Soviet relations. In the same way that Reagan had drawn public attention in his first press conference as president to the expansionist

[223] Ibid.
[224] Jack F. Matlock, Jr., *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 21.
[225] Ibid.

and immoral nature of the Soviet Union, he was now addressing Brezhnev from the same stance and alerting general secretary of his belief that arms control discussions alone would not be enough to improve East-West relations.

These letters also marked the beginning of what came to be trademarks of Reagan's Soviet relations: personal correspondence and meetings that echoed his public rhetoric. That is, Reagan did not just spout religious and moral rhetoric to the American public, and he did not just couch the Cold War and East -West relations in moral and religious terms when there were crowds of people to listen. He also did it in personal letters and private meetings with Soviet officials. Reagan publicly and privately challenged Soviet leaders to liberalize their society and to implement democratic reforms. These letters also mark the beginning of Reagan's assertion that Soviet internal issues were an important part of his discussions with the Soviet Union as well as a focus of his foreign policy. Historian, diplomat, advisor, and father of the doctrine of "Containment" George Kennan argued that "there are no internationally accepted standards of morality to which the U.S. government could appeal if it wished to act in the name of moral principles."[226] Because of this, United States officials were incapable of being "perfect judges of their [other countries] wrongs. They are, for the governments in question, matters of internal affairs."[227] Discounting moral concerns to U.S. foreign policy, Kennan was arguing against Reagan's attempts to discuss Soviet internal affairs. These were inappropriate for discussion in Kennan's opinion because they did not directly affect United States interest. In the same way the United States had traditionally been opposed to accepting outside criticism of internal affairs and

[226] George F. Kennan, "Morality and Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* (Winter 1985/86) http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/40521/george-f-kennan/morality-and-foreign-policy
Containment was based on the belief that the main element of any U.S. policy towards the Soviet Union must be based on that of long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Soviet expansive tendencies. To achieve this, the United States needed to counter Soviet pressure against the free institutes of the Western world.
[227] Ibid.

had deemed it unacceptable for international relations, so too were the issues of other countries' internal affairs off the table for American foreign policy. Any attempt to intervene in the internal affairs of a foreign country by ascribing a moral quality to a country's internal behaviors could "be formally defensible only if the practices against which they are directed are seriously injurious to our interests, rather than just our sensibilities." Kennan's view of what qualified as appropriate topics of discussion for international relations represented the traditional American view. It also represented the Soviet view. Reagan, however, made internal Soviet issues not only foremost in his public rhetoric and private correspondences and interactions with Soviet leaders, he readily ascribed moral qualities derived from his Judeo-Christian worldview to internal Soviet issues. Furthermore, Matlock argues that from the beginning of his time in office, "Reagan's goal was to shift the U.S. strategy from reacting to challenges and limiting damage to a concerted effort to change Soviet behavior."[228]

Reagan and Brezhnev continued to exchange letters until October 20, 1982, less than a month before Brezhnev's death. American officials conducted detailed discussions with Soviet officials in Moscow, Washington, and Geneva to reduce tensions between the two countries. In these meetings, American officials primarily focused on complaints about Soviet actions or on evidence of Soviet treaty violations. Matlock writes that "[w]e felt we had to impress upon the Soviet government that its continued support of violence outside its borders was not consistent with improved relations."[229] In his memoir, Secretary of State Alexander Haig explains that

[228] Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 5.
[229] Ibid., 22.

"[w]e wanted to identify questions on which the U.S. and the Soviets could accommodate their interests in ways that advanced peace and social justice."[230]

In 1981, Reagan initiated an increase in the U.S. defense budget and a military build-up. Matlock recalls that this combination led many Americans to blame "the United States for what they saw as a 'renewed Cold War' and a new spiral in the arms race."[231] *Christian Science Monitor* journalist Elizabeth Pond wrote in June 1981 that "from the Kennedy through the Carter administrations the United States had more or less adhered to a concept of 'mutual assured destruction."[232] Mutual assured destruction, or MAD, was a Cold War doctrine of military strategy and a national security policy which held that if two or more opposing sides in possession of nuclear weapons engaged in the use of these weapons, both the attacker and defender would face complete annihilation. Historically, Pond argued, "[n]o sane leader, even if he had double or triple the other side's nuclear weapons, would think it a 'victory' to wipe out 100 million of the opponents' population at the cost of losing 33 or 50 million of his own."[233] Therefore, when it came to an arms build-up, "a little deterrence went a long way, and excessive 'overkill' was to be avoided as making the other side nervous." In Bond's opinion, this pragmatism and the reduced tension encouraged by détente flew out the window when the "hard-lined Reagan was elected" and "the nuclear angst and moral anguish of the 1950s" was revived.[234]

Reagan's military build-up was part of his policy of peace through strength. Historian Melvyn Leffler argues that "Reagan's most fundamental axiom on national security was that the

[230] Alexander M. Haig, Jr., *Caveat: Realism, Reagan and Foreign Policy* (New York, New York: Macmillan, 1984), 95-96.
[231] Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 32.
[232] Elizabeth Bond, "The State of the Alliance: The Missile-Watch," *The Christian Science Monitor*, June 19, 1981.
[233] Ibid.
[234] Ibid.

United States must negotiate from strength."[235] The reason Reagan advocated so strongly for that was because he believed the Soviets "respected 'only strength.'"[236] Reagan argued that the United States had essentially been negotiating with its hands tied behind its back. He claimed that "[b]y restoring America's military credibility, by pursuing peace at the negotiating table wherever both sides are willing to sit down in good faith, and by regaining the respect of America's allies and adversaries alike, we have strengthened our country's position as a force for peace and progress in the world."[237] In Reagan's opinion, what he viewed as a unilateral disarmament of the American military in the 1970s had provided little incentive for the Kremlin to negotiate in good faith. "Reagan's confidence in the superior appeal of Western values," Leffler writes, "meant that he welcomed peaceful competition with the Kremlin."[238] He argued that the 1970s military cuts had hindered the country he viewed as a "city upon a hill" and as the "last best hope on earth" from claiming its proper place in the world and ultimately kept it from being a global force for peace and freedom. Reagan's military buildup was fundamentally rooted in his belief that America was a nation chosen by God to spread democracy and religious freedom throughout the world.

Nixon and Brezhnev had unknowingly complicated summitry by initiating the tradition of U.S.-Soviet summit meetings being largely about signing pre-negotiated agreements. Embracing Kennan's containment policy, Nixon focused on preventing the spread of communism and the growth of the Soviet bloc rather than on attempting to effect changes in Soviet philosophy because as Kennan argued, unless Soviet internal affairs threatened U.S.

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[235] Melvyn P. Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War* (New York, New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 346.
[236] Ibid.
[237] Ronald Reagan, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress Reporting on the State of the Union, January 26, 1982," *The American Presidency Project* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=42687
[238] Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind*, 341.

interests, they were not appropriate topics for U.S.-Soviet summits. Both the Soviet and the U.S. public had been conditioned to think that the only successful meeting was one where an agreement was signed. Matlock recalls that "it was an easy step from this idea to a conviction that agreements were impossible without summit meetings, and – by extension – if there were no agreements, it was because the U.S. and Soviet leaders were not meeting each other."[239] Ultimately, Matlock argues, "[n]either the American president nor the Soviet general secretary wanted to go into a meeting that would be considered a failure."[240] Yet if they held a summit meeting that did not produce a major treaty, the public would perceive the summit as a failure. Neither Reagan nor Brezhnev was interested in a summit meeting that would not allow them to get to know each other and discuss policy differences and ways to reduce disagreements between the two nations. Matlock maintains that ultimately, summit meetings did not provide a barometer for U.S.- Soviet relations. In his mind, it would have been unwise in 1981 to have a summit meeting where Reagan and Brezhnev got to know each other and did not sign any formal agreements than it would be to delay meeting until they both knew there could be a positive outcome. This, in addition to Brezhnev's failing health, prevented the general secretary and the president from formally meeting in 1981 and 1982.

As the chances of a summit meeting appeared slim, as arms control negotiations were delayed (due to the U.S. and the Soviet Union not trusting each other), as the arms build-up hit its stride, and as Reagan's forceful rhetoric continued, public apprehension about Reagan's foreign policy grew. In 1977, the Soviet Union began replacing missiles with single nuclear warheads deployed against NATO targets with a new mobile nuclear missile with three independently targeted warheads. NATO called it the SS-20. This system had much greater

[239] Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 35.
[240] Ibid.

range and accuracy and could strike the capitals of European NATO countries in four or five minutes. The SS-20s changed the nuclear balance in Europe. The danger was not just that the Soviet Union was replacing warhead for warhead, they were actively replacing warheads with a significantly larger number of the more capable weapon. European NATO countries grew increasingly concerned and pressed the United States to help them deal with what they perceived as a new Soviet threat. The result was a decision made by NATO in 1979 to deploy a new generation of U.S. missiles in Europe unless an agreement could be reached with the U.S.S.R. to reduce the threat posed by the SS-20s. This was known as the "dual-track" decision. The initial American proposal was fairly simple: if the U.S.S.R. removed the SS-20s, then the U.S. would not deploy Pershing IIs and GLCMs in Europe. Known as a "zero/zero proposal" (a.k.a. "zero-option"), this would create a balance in weapons on both sides. Matlock writes that the question for Reagan "was not whether or not the Soviets would accept the proposal, but whether it would solve the decoupling dilemma, reduce weaponry, and be fair. It met all these criteria and he endorsed it."[241] However, Reagan did not consider this a take-it-or-leave-it proposition. As Secretary of State Alexander Haig told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in November, the United States sought "a verifiable agreement that would achieve significant reductions on both sides, leading to equal ceilings at the lowest possible levels – levels which ideally could be zero."[242] It was not unreasonable for the public in both Europe and the United States to view these as dangerous policies. Public concern over potential nuclear war grew with the introduction of the "double-track" decision.

Reagan's public rhetoric suggested that he had no intention of using military force to deter the Soviets or to end the Cold War. For example, Reagan stated in November 1981, "There

[241] Ibid., 40.
[242] Ibid., 40-41.

is no reason why people in any part of the world should have to live in permanent fear of war or its specter. . . . I believe the time is right to move forward on arms control and the resolution of critical regional disputes at the conference table."[243] He also asserted that the accusation that the U.S. would fight a nuclear war with the Soviet Union at Europe's was "'an outright deception.'"[244] Nonetheless, both U.S. and European citizens worried that maybe Reagan did not mean what he said. *New York Times* journalist Bernard Gwertzman wrote it was not just Americans who were filled with fear as a result of Reagan's rhetoric; people's concern in Western Europe, specifically West Germany, Britain, and the Netherlands had been "fanned by Mr. Reagan's own tough statements toward the Russians." While Reagan sought to reassure Americans and Western Europeans that he and his administration did not seek a nuclear war, he said that be believed that the Soviet leaders' military doctrine "was based on the theory that 'a nuclear war is possible and they believe it is winnable.'"[245] Despite Brezhnev's statement that he was willing to sign a "no first use" pledge with the United States that stated the Soviet Union would not be the first to use nuclear weapons, Reagan was not convinced. Although it may have been a show of good faith to sign a "no first use" pledge, Reagan was unwilling to do so because he did not trust the Soviet leader's word. His public rhetoric suggests that not only did Reagan believe the Soviets were bent on world domination; he also believed that they were fundamentally deceptive, though this did little to stem the fears of many ordinary people. While *Tass*, the official Soviet news agency, warned that Reagan and the "United States would like Western Europe to face all the risks of a thermonuclear catastrophe," Reagan assured the Soviet

[243] Ronald Reagan, "Remarks to Members of the National Press Club on Arms Reduction and Nuclear Weapons, November 18, 1981," *The American Presidency Project* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=43264
[244] Bernard Gwertzman, "Reagan Clarifies His Statement on Nuclear War," *The New York Times*, October 22, 1981.
[245] Ibid.

Union that he would not permit "'these gross distortions" to go unchallenged.[246] He maintained that American policy regarding conflict in Europe and nuclear war "'has not changed for 20 years.'" He argued that the Soviets suggesting otherwise was an example of their willingness to blatantly lie and distort the truth. He maintained that "'[o]ur strategy remains as it has been, one of flexible response: maintaining an assured military capability to deter the use of force - conventional or nuclear - by the Warsaw Pact at the lowest possible level.'"[247]

It is worth considering whether Reagan would have signed a pledge with the Soviet Union on arms control without addressing and rectifying the ideological differences between the two nations if he believed it would have been helpful. He did not in fact sign a pledge in this early stage of his presidency, which suggests that he did not see it in and of itself as a solution to the problem of the Cold War. There was still a profound lack of trust between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, and neither side believed the other would actually honor a pledge. Additionally, after reductions in the 1970s, the United States was still trying to rebuild its armed forces to match that of the Soviet Union. Without comparable military and arms strength to the Soviet Union, the U.S. would be unable to effectively challenge the Soviet Union. The Reagan administration was deeply concerned about the increasing Soviet activity in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Angola, Syria, Ethiopia, the Caribbean, and Central America. Secretary of State George Shultz called the growing Soviet influence "alarming."[248] Central American insurgents remained a serious issue in the Reagan administration throughout the 1980s. There was a genuine fear in the White House of the Soviets consolidating a communist regime in the mainland of the Americas and thus preoccupying the U.S. and keeping their attention away from

[246] Ibid.
[247] Ibid.
[248] George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York, New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1993), 285.

Soviet challenges across the pond. Shultz recalls that "the Soviets knew full well that Central America and the Caribbean was the region where the American press and American public opinion were the most sensitive to the possibility of 'another Vietnam.' Trying to forge policy was like walking through a swamp."[249] Although observers saw little connection between indigenous insurgencies in Central America and Moscow's interests or behavior, the Reagan administration believed that these things were conjoined.

Leonid Brezhnev died on November 10, 1982. He was succeeded by former head of the KGB Yuri Andropov. Vice-President George Bush and Shultz attended Brezhnev's funeral, after which they met with Andropov. Shultz recalls in his memoirs that the meeting primarily consisted of Andropov "blaming the United States for the sorry state of the relations."[250] This meeting was not about improving East West relations; it was about Andropov making it clear that established Soviet policies would continue, there would be no change. Shultz recalls that "[w]ithout ever using the words 'human rights,' Andropov made it clear that no one should tell the Soviets how to run their internal affairs…He made no mention of a summit."[251] Andropov spoke with precision and force. Although he could not be sure, Shultz wondered if Andropov was "constructing a mousetrap." He watched Andropov closely and concluded that not only did he project immense intelligence and energy, but he was also "a powerhouse…[and] as head of the KGB for so long, must have a capacity for brutality as well as for skill in propaganda."[252] Although appearing even sicklier than Brezhnev had, Shultz noted that Andropov would prove to be a formidable adversary.

[249] Ibid., 285-286.
[250] Ibid.,126.
[251] Ibid.
[252] Ibid.

The beginning of 1983 saw the inception of the Reagan Administration's four part agenda concerning the Soviet Union: human rights, arms control, regional issues, and bilateral relations. The goal of this four-part agenda was to encourage enhanced civil liberties in the Soviet bloc, increased political openness in the Soviet Union, to reduce weaponry on both sides, and to disengage from armed conflicts in third world countries. The very fact that half of Reagan's agenda was focused on encouraging internal reforms in the Soviet Union speaks to the interconnectedness of his moral and religious rhetoric and his foreign policy. In his rhetoric, Reagan continually blasted the Soviet Union for human rights violations, lack of religious freedom, and the lack of civil liberties for their citizens. When Reagan spoke of these things, he was comparing them to the freedoms Americans enjoyed because Reagan believed democracies, especially the United States, were the standard all other governments were measured by. While Leffler's argument that Reagan believed in the superior appeal of Western values to those in the Soviet bloc is correct, it ultimately falls short of conveying the true esteem Reagan had for Western values. Reagan argued that Western values were not just superior in their appeal but in their *nature.* Reagan argued in October 1982 that the "struggle in the world today for the hearts and minds of mankind is based on one simple question: Is man born to be free, or slave?"[253] In his rhetoric, Reagan portrayed the Cold War as a fight not just for State sovereignty or superpower status, but as a fight for human minds and hearts, for *beliefs*. Reagan argued that freedom came from the embrace of God, or at least the option to embrace God, and that slavery came from man's rejection of God. To many, this was an over simplistic, romanticized view of the Cold War that imposed Western values on the rest of the world. But Reagan argued that it was the truth. Reagan sought to encourage changes towards what he identified as the moral

[253] Ronald Reagan, "Radio Address to the Nation on Solidarity and United States Relations With Poland, October 9, 1982," *The American Presidency Project* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=43110

standard for the world: American democracy which was founded on Judeo-Christian values. Foreign relations scholar Kenneth Thompson has argued that "[e]very discussion of ethics and politics or ethics and foreign policy comes down in the end to a debate over transcendent versus a relativistic ethic."[254] People like theologian and ethicist Reinhold Niebuhr and George Kennan, and many American pundits argued that the Cold War and East-West relations were not as black and white as Reagan portrayed them. They argued that like the United States, Moscow acted as a self-interested nation-state and not as a moral agent. However, Reagan wholeheartedly embraced the concept of a transcendent ethic and viewed the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. as acting as moral agents. Of course Reagan's ability to produce change in the U.S.S.R. was limited. The best that Reagan could do was to try to pressure the Soviets to implement domestic reforms and to attempt to convince them that increasing personal liberty worked in the best interest of the U.S.S.R.[255] Ultimately, changes would have to come from within the Politburo.

At the beginning of Reagan's third year as president, he had not had a lengthy session with an important leader from a communist country. The president was an experienced negotiator, a skill he had acquired as president of the Screen Actors Guild, and he was eager to have a chance to sit down at the negotiating table with the U.S.S.R.[256] To his delight, the opportunity came early in 1983. In February, Reagan and Shultz met with Soviet ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin during a meeting at the White House originally scheduled for just Dobrynin and Shultz. This was the first of Reagan's meetings with high-level Soviet officials. In the meeting, which lasted nearly two hours, Reagan carried the conversation. He focused on Soviet persecution of a group of Russian Pentecostal Christians who had taken refuge in the U.S.

[254] Kenneth W. Thompson, *Morality and Foreign Policy* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 130.
[255] This is discussed at greater length in Chapter 2.
[256] Shultz. *Turmoil and Triumph*, 164.

embassy in Moscow five years earlier and had been living there ever since. The Christians wanted to continue to practice their religious beliefs and to emigrate from the Soviet Union, but their government had denied both requests. Shultz recalls in his memoir that Reagan "clearly had thought about the meeting a great deal."[257] He writes that Reagan engaged Dobrynin impressively on all the issues and proved to be very capable in arguing the United States position on START, on INF, Afghanistan, and Poland. Reagan also "spoke with genuine feeling and eloquence on the subject of human rights, divided families, Soviet Jewry, and refuseniks.[258] He also talked with sincere intensity about the Pentecostals."[259] Reagan assured Dobrynin that if he could do something about the Pentecostals or other human rights issues, "we will simply be delighted and will not embarrass you by undue publicity, by claims of credit for ourselves, or by 'crowing.'"[260] They struck a deal and the Pentecostals were allowed to emigrate, and Reagan kept his word not to publicize the event. From this personal encounter and negotiation, the Soviets learned two things about Reagan: he was serious about addressing human rights issues, and he was a man of his word. Both were crucial for future summit meetings. That summer, a second group of Pentecostals was permitted to leave. Reagan wrote in his memoir that

> In the overall scheme of U.S. Soviet Relations, allowing a handful of Christian believers to leave the Soviet Union was a small event. But in the context of the times, I thought it was a hope-giving development and the first time the Soviets had responded to us with a deed instead of words. [261]

[257] Ibid., 165.
[258] "Refusenik" was a Russian term of individuals, typically, but not exclusively Soviet Jews, who were denied permission to emigrate abroad by Soviet authorities and other countries in the Soviet bloc. "Soviet Jewry" was an international human rights campaign that advocated for the rights of Jews in the Soviet Union to emigrate.
[259] Ibid.
[260] Ibid.
[261] Ronald Reagan, *An American Life* (New York, New York: Threshold Editions, 1990), 572-573.

In the wake of his "Evil Empire Speech" and the media's reaction to it, this was a particularly significant event. [262] While the media was portraying Reagan as a warmonger and as someone who would not hesitate to push the button on nuclear weapons, Reagan was privately negotiating with the Soviets for improved human rights in the U.S.S.R.[263] Even if just as a demonstration of good faith, this negotiation and extension of religious liberty to the persecuted Russian believers stands as Reagan's first agreement with the Soviets and displays a clear connection to Reagan's public rhetoric. Not only did Reagan publically say that human rights were a fundamental issue in the Cold War and East-West relations, he also made them a primary issue in his interactions with the Soviet Union.

Reagan sent Andropov a letter on June 17, 1983 congratulating him on his election as chairman. Reagan wrote that as Andropov assumed his new duties, he hoped that together they could find ways to "promote peace by reducing the levels of armaments and moving toward the elimination of force and threats of force in settling international disputes."[264] He assured Andropov that he would have his full cooperation "in moving towards these goals on a basis of equality, reciprocity, and respect for the rights and interests of all."[265] Andropov responded promptly with a brief note thanking Reagan for congratulating him and assuring him of the "unbending commitment of the Soviet leadership and the people of the Soviet Union to the cause of peace, the elimination of the nuclear threat, and the development of relations based on mutual

[262] This was a speech Reagan delivered on March 8, 1983 to the National Association of Evangelicals where he used the term "evil empire" to describe the Soviet Union. It further perpetuated Reagan's image as a warmonger and focused primarily on moral values and how issues of morality were often the causes of political disagreements.
[263] Anthony Lewis, "Onward, Christian Soldiers," *New York Times*, March 10, 1983; "Reverend Reagan," *New Republic*, April 4, 1983, 7-9; Richard Cohen, "Convictions," *The Washington Post*, May 26, 1983.
[264] Ronald Reagan, Yuri Andropov, "June 17, 1983: Reagan to Andropov," *The Reagan Files* http://www.thereaganfiles.com/19830617.pdf
[265] Ibid.

benefit and equality with all nations."[266] Given the fact that Reagan and Andropov had, in the span of a few months, resolved a sensitive issue that had dragged on for almost five years, it is likely that either Andropov, or others in the Kremlin, wanted an improvement in East-West relations. Andropov seemed more competent than Brezhnev, and Matlock recalls that Andropov seemed to have "a more objective view of the Soviet Union's malaise than Brezhnev."[267] Matlock wrote that Reagan "obviously wanted to move ahead and create conditions…for a meeting with Andropov."[268]

Although there was much debate in the Reagan Administration over what exactly a summit meeting would look like, Reagan wanted to move in that direction. Until a consensus could be reached on the logistics and content of a summit meeting, Reagan and his administration worked throughout the summer of 1983 towards creating favorable conditions for a summit. The president had approved initiatives on several bilateral issues which included upgrading the hot line and negotiating a new long-term agreement that would increase rather than limit trade in agricultural products. However, Reagan's hopes for a summit were quickly dashed when on September 1 the Soviet air force shot down a Korean civilian airliner (KAL007) killing 269 people, including 61 U.S. citizens. Rather than acknowledging and taking responsibility for the tragedy, the Soviets refused to accept responsibility and accused the United States of causing the tragedy by using the plane to spy. *New York Times* journalist Serge Schmemann reported that the Soviet Union "accused the White House of waging a 'worldwide, rabid anti-Soviet campaign' over the incident."[269] Even in the wake of KAL007, Reagan still

[266] Yuri Andropov, Ronald Reagan, "Andropov to Reagan, June 22, 1983," *The Reagan Files* http://www.thereaganfiles.com/19830622.pdf
[267] Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 51.
[268] Ibid., 65.
[269] Serge Schmeann, "Moscow Steps Up Attack on U.S. Over Downing of Korean Airliner: Moscow Steps Up Its Attack on U.S. Over Korean Plane," *The New York Times*, September 4, 1983.

signaled that he intended to pursue a summit. Washington Post journalist Lou Cannon points out that it "is notable…that even the downing of KAL 007 did not discourage Reagan in his view that U.S. – Soviet negotiations were necessary and desirable."[270] As eager and determined as Reagan might have been, a summit meeting at this time was just not in the cards. One of the main reasons for this was the failed INF negotiations at the end of 1983. Following several rejections of arms agreement proposals by Soviet leaders, the German Bundestag voted on November 22 to approve the deployment of U.S. Pershing II missiles in Europe. On November 24, Andropov announced that the Soviet Union was withdrawing from arms control negotiations with the United States. As the fear of nuclear war increased, U.S.-Soviet relations seemed to have reached a new low. Even if political conditions had been more favorable, given Andropov's rapidly failing health, a summit meeting did not and probably never would have happened.

On February 9, 1984, Andropov died and Konstantin Chernenko was named the new Soviet leader. 1984 was an election year in the United States, and how Reagan handled the Soviet Union would be important for his campaign. Not only would Reagan have to be mindful of how the public would perceive his interaction with and rhetoric concerning the Soviet Union, but he would also have to readjust to interacting with a new Soviet leader. Although Reagan's forceful rhetoric genuinely bothered some Americans, his public rhetoric concerning the Soviet Union and communism did not change, though he did publically reach out to the Soviet Union and encourage dialogue on several occasions, e.g. his "Ivan and Anya" speech. [271] Some,

[270] Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2000), 666.
[271] Reagan's January 16, 1984 "Ivan and Anya" speech was his olive branch to the Soviet Union. In this speech, Reagan spoke of the necessity of economic recovery and the rebuilding of American defenses to securing peace in East-West relations. The chance of war was greatly reduced if the Soviet Union was convinced that an attack on the United States or one of her allies would cost them dearly. Reagan argued that America was the strongest she had been since the mid-sixties, and that the deterrence she presented in the form of economic and military strength made the world a more peaceful place. Reagan also publically reached out to the Soviet Union saying that deterrence was not the end of U.S. policy, but that the U.S. intended to continue to pursue dialogue with the Soviet Union that

particularly the political right, became confused by Reagan's harsh rhetoric and seemingly soft actions. Reagan openly and unapologetically condemned the Soviets for their denial of human rights and their rejection of God, yet he favored direct engagement rather than hard power. For Reagan, engagement entailed summit meetings, public rhetoric, letters, agreements, and pledges.[272] Through these, Reagan was not so much working to force the Soviet leaders to do something as he was attempting to convince them that the things he was advocating (increased personal liberty, arms reduction, religious freedom, etc.) were in the Soviet Union's best interest. An example of hard power was Reagan's decision to support the Contras in Nicaragua by supplying financial support, or his decision to sell weapons to Iran while Iran and Iraq were at war in 1985.[273]

Because Reagan primarily advocated a diplomatic approach to East-West relations, neoconservatives and Reagan's anticommunist supporters often accused him of being weak and appeasing the Soviets. In May 1984, journalist and author Walter Goodman discussed the neoconservatives' reactions to foreign policy trends. Goodman wrote that at the conference for the Committee for the Free World the previous weekend, the neoconservatives, who described themselves as "'pro-American and hawkish," addressed the issues of "liberal bias in the media" which prevented "people from getting an accurate picture of what is happening."[274] Ben J.

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promoted peace in the troubled regions of the world, reduce the level of arms, and built a constructive working relationship between the U.S. and U.S.S.R. by focusing on their common interests.

[272] As noted in the previous chapter, the Reagan Doctrine became much more of a concrete administration strategy beginning in 1985 after Gorbachev became general secretary.

[273] The insurgent Contra's cause in Nicaragua was particularly important to Reagan. The Contras in Nicaragua fought the Cuban-backed (communist) Sandinistas. Reagan called the Contras "the moral equivalent of our Founding Fathers" in a March 19, 1987 Press Conference (http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=33991). Reagan's decision to sell arms to Iran is known as the Iran-Contra Affair. In an attempt to secure freedom for seven Americans who were being help hostage by Iranian terrorists in Lebanon, Reagan sold weapons to the Iranian military. In doing so, he violated the embargo and broke on of his major campaign promises to never deal with terrorists. It was the biggest scandal of his presidency.

[274] Walter Goodman, "Neoconservatives Assess Political Trends and Foreign Policy," *The New York Times*, May 14, 1984.

Wattenberg, a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and co-editor of Public Opinion argued in his panel at the conference that public opinion polls showed that "most Americans were 'extremely patriotic' and 'tough-minded' about dealing with the Soviet Union. Only the 'elites,' he said, are not in accord with this spirit."[275] Wattenberg also argued that "'the Democratic and Republican parties are both moving to the center." The panelist who seemed to capture the mood of the audience best, though, was former Ambassador to Yugoslavia Laurence H. Silberman, who urged the "Republican Party to shake off its fears of being charged with 'McCarthyism' and appeal to voters on the ground that Soviet leaders would rather have Walter F. Mondale as President than Ronald Reagan." He also argued that "bipartisanship in foreign policy comes about after you beat the other side into submission."[276] Norman Podhoretz, a *New York Times* writer and publisher, who is known as one of the godfathers of the anti-Soviet, pro-defense, pro-Israel neoconservative movement, argued in June 1984 that "[t]he point is not that Mr. Reagan's foreign policy is indistinguishable from Mr. Carter's. It is rather that Mr. Reagan has been almost as cautious as Mr. Carter in the use of force."[277] Recalling Reagan's forceful language from his "evil empire" speech, Podhoretz maintained that the most important thing Reagan could do regarding East-West relations was to alert "public opinion to the truth about the Soviet Union: It *is* an evil empire and it does threaten to bully and blackmail the West into political subordination."[278] Podhoretz did not disagree with Reagan over the danger posed by the Soviet Union, indeed he maintained that "[i]nsisting on that truth…has been Ronald Reagan's most significant achievement as President." But if Reagan's insistence on the evilness of the empire had been his greatest accomplishment, his greatest failure, Podhoretz argued, was his

[275] Ibid.
[276] Ibid.
[277] Norman Podhoretz, "Reagan, Man of Peace," *The New York Times*, June 13, 1984.
[278] Ibid.

unwillingness "to act adequately on it." In light of his military build-up and open contempt for communism, American conservatives fully expected Reagan to forcefully demand Soviet cooperation. Ultimately, the comments of Podhoretz and others beg the question: what, exactly, did they want Reagan to do? It seems that they were against any sign of closer East-West relations.

Like many Americans, Podhoretz was deeply troubled over what he saw as increased timidity in Reagan. Podhoretz disagreed with Reagan on what was the best way to fight the Cold War. He was calling for hard power in American foreign policy and for Reagan to approach the Soviets with force, not engagement or compromise. Like Reagan, Podhoretz and the neoconservatives were challenging the "peaceful coexistence" premise of détente, which they argued ceded all advantages to the U.S.S.R. Reagan did not disagree with Podhoretz and the neoconservatives that détente was not the answer to the East-West conflict. While détente was intended to ensure a peaceful coexistence between the communist Soviet Union and the democratic United State, Reagan hoped to encourage change in Soviet philosophy and formulated his foreign policy with this in mind. Reagan wanted a peaceful coexistence with the Russians, he did not want a peaceful coexistence with communism. However, Podhoretz and the neoconservatives had a different opinion than Reagan as to what steps needed to be taken to rectify the problem of the détente philosophy and foreign policy approach. Reagan's goal was to achieve not just a peaceful coexistence with U.S.S.R that would prevent a nuclear war, nor was it to force them into submission. Reagan hoped to see the injustices of a communist system replaced with individual liberty and first amendment rights for the oppressed. As he said in a 1981 speech on the proposed Strategic Arms Reduction Talks, "The American concept of peace goes well beyond the absence of war. We foresee a flowering of economic growth and individual

liberty in a world at peace."[279] Peace meant increased individual liberty and democracy, not just an icy coexistence (which was how Reagan perceived détente). To this end, Reagan utilized a combination of private diplomacy and tough public talk. And while he thought it vitally important to approach the Soviet Union from a position of strength, it was for the purpose of leveling the playing field and restoring America to her rightful place in the global balance of power, not to ignite a war. This is important because it is consistent with him identifying the Cold War as a spiritual battle. Reagan, of course, did not have the power to change the worldview of any Soviet leader any more than they had the power to change his worldview. Yet Reagan continued to publically and privately pressure the Soviet leaders for change, a strategy that was widely viewed as foolish and naïve.

When Konstantin Chernenko became the new leader of the Soviet Union, Reagan sent him a letter offering his condolences on Andropov's death. After his hopes of a summit had been dashed in 1983, Reagan was eager to move towards a summit with Chernenko, under the right political conditions, of course, as quickly as possible. He wrote in his letter to Chernenko that Andropov had written to him on January 28 that the Soviet Union was concerned for world peace and that they were willing to pursue a dialogue with the United States that was aimed at addressing some of the problems in East-West relations. Reagan wrote to Chernenko that he "believed that this dialogue is so important that we should proceed with it as soon as your government is ready to do so."[280] Specifically referring to his January 16 address to the United States and other nations on the state of U.S.-Soviet relations, Reagan reminded Chernenko that their differing political beliefs should not deter their efforts aimed at strengthening peace and

[279] Ronald Reagan, "Remarks to Members of the National Press Club on Arms Reduction and Nuclear Weapons, November 18, 1981," *The American Presidency Project* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=43264
[280] Ronald Reagan, Konstantin Chernenko, "Reagan to Chernenko, February 11, 1984," *The Reagan Files* http://www.thereaganfiles.com/19840211.pdf

working towards a more productive relationship. In fact, the presence of nuclear weapons and their differing ideologies demanded that they work to a more peaceful relationship to the end of preventing war and securing human rights. Reagan argued, "Differences in our political beliefs in our perspectives on international problems should not be an obstacle to efforts aimed at strengthening peace and building a productive working relationship. Indeed, in the nuclear age, they make such efforts indispensible."[281]

Reagan was eager to address the underlying spiritual and ideological causes of the Cold War, but he wanted to address them without the threat of nuclear war. He wanted to assure his fellow Americans and the rest of the world that force and nuclear weapons would not be used to solve the conflict they were now facing. The fact that Reagan was able to see the practical and even moral need for immediately reducing and eventually eliminating nuclear weapons does not minimize the fact that he viewed the Cold War as an ideological and spiritual struggle. Indeed, Reagan argued that this threat of physical war had grown out of the spiritual and ideological struggle that was the Cold War. Reagan spent almost his entire letter encouraging Chernenko towards discussing the reduction of strategic arms. The president was pragmatic in the sense that he understood that nuclear weapons were a primary issue of the Cold War and a threat to humanity, he saw them as immoral and envisioned a world where they would no longer exist. He was serious about addressing the things that had caused tension in East-West relations – nuclear weapons and ideological differences included.

Chernenko's response was a little discouraging for the president. The general secretary wrote that he wanted to establish "a clear understanding from the very beginning on the central

[281] Ibid.

matters of the relations between the USSR and the USA."[282] While arguing that the Soviet Union was not seeking a confrontation with the U.S. and that he believed it was impossible to "begin to correct the present abnormal, and let's face it, dangerous situation, and to speak seriously of constructive moves, if there is a continuation of attempts to upset the balance of forces and to gain military advantages to the detriment of the other side."[283] Furthermore, Chernenko wrote that the Kremlin believed it was impossible "to carry on business in total abstraction from the objective differences which exist between a socialist country and a capitalist country." He wrote that "our morality does not accept much of what is endemic to the capitalist society and what we consider unfair to people. Nevertheless, we do not introduce these problems into the sphere of interstate relationship."[284] Chernenko wanted the Soviet internal policies and human rights issues off the negotiating table and told Reagan "we believe it is wrong and even dangerous to subordinate our relations to ideological differences."[285] Clearly Reagan's rhetoric was getting under his skin. While Reagan wanted to deal with the ideas he argued had led to the existence of nuclear weapons, the tense East-West relationship, and ultimately the Cold War, Chernenko would not accept ideological criticism in the relationship. It is worth noting that the "we do not introduce these problems into our relationship" mentality was common for Soviet leaders. The Soviet side saw talk of "human rights" as not only rehashed East/West ideological sniping, but also as completely irrelevant to bilateral relations. Many American politicians also viewed internal issues as being off the table for bilateral relations. Clearly, Reagan did not share that point of view. In his memoirs, Reagan wrote that "[d]espite the rebuff from Moscow, I still felt

[282] Konstantin Chernenko, Ronald Reagan, "Chernenko to Reagan, February 23, 1984," *The Reagan Files* http://www.thereaganfiles.com/19840223.pdf
[283] Ibid.
[284] Ibid.
[285] Ibid.

the time had come to explore holding a summit conference with Chernenko."[286] Reagan never believed that ideological differences should prevent the Soviet Union and the U.S. from meeting. For him, it was exactly the opposite. Their vastly different ideologies demanded that they meet.

Cannon identifies Chernenko as "the last of the reactionary, old guard Soviet leaders." [287] And Reagan later recalled that Chernenko "was cut from the same cloth as Brezhnev and Andropov – a tough old-line Communist addicted to Lenin's secular religion of expansionism and world domination."[288] While the ideology of the Soviet leadership had not changed since Reagan took office, something else had. Reagan wrote that "I felt we could now go to the summit, for the first time in years, from a position of strength."[289] Reagan's military buildup had reached its height, and this gave him increased confidence in the potential success of a summit meeting. While the Soviets may not have been ready to do business with Reagan, Reagan was ready to do business with them.

During the fall of 1984, there were disputes among Reagan's cabinet concerning the best way to approach the Soviets. George Shultz was interested in pursuing talks with the Soviets while Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger favored an even harder line. Reagan wrote that "I didn't disagree with Weinberger that the Russians were an evil force in the world and untrustworthy, but I didn't think that meant we shouldn't talk to them."[290] Despite his willingness to meet with Chernenko, Reagan never got the chance. The general secretary died on March 10, 1985, only four months after Reagan's reelection.

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[286] Reagan, *An American Life*, 593.
[287] Cannon, *President Reagan*, 666.
[288] Ibid., 593-594.
[289] Ibid., 594.
[290] Reagan, *An American Life*, 606.

Given the fact that there were three Soviet leaders in a period of three years, Cannon argues that it was "unlikely that any American president would have made much headway in U.S. Soviet relations."[291] Reagan came under fire for being the first president since Herbert Hoover not to meet with the leader of the Soviet Union. When faced with such challenges, Reagan joked, "How Can I? They keep *dying* on me!"[292] Pundit and political theorist William Bennett argues that Reagan used humor as a weapon, "[h]e knew such quips pointed to the larger truth about the USSR: It was a dying empire…[communism] was sclerotic, ossified. But Reagan knew that even a grizzly bear dying of stomach cancer could be dangerous."[293] There were also accusations after Reagan had been reelected that he "would reverse his policy of seeking accommodation with the Soviet Union…[but] Reagan ordered full speed ahead," Matlock recalls.[294] There had been domestic speculation that Reagan's stated intention to meet with Soviet leaders had been nothing more than a ploy to attract votes during an election year. But Reagan was serious about a summit meeting, and serious about his opinions of East-West relations and the Soviet Union. "He had never considered his speeches and proposals in 1984 an election gimmick," wrote Matlock.[295]

From 1981-1984, there was not much hope for any fundamental change in Soviet policy. When Mikhail Gorbachev succeeded Chernenko, for the first time there was hope for change. This of course did not become apparent overnight, the Soviet leaders still would need time to realize how dysfunctional the communist system was, but Gorbachev represented a new generation of Soviet leaders. There was no instant fundamental change in Soviet policy when

[291] Cannon, *President Reagan*, 258-259.
[292] William J. Bennett, *America: The Last Best Hope, Volume 1: From the Age of Discovery to a World at War* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2007), 505.
[293] Ibid.
[294] Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev,* 103.
[295] Ibid.

Gorbachev came to power. Matlock recalls that the "Soviet government wished to negotiate primarily on arms control, ignoring most other issues apart from trade and technical cooperation."[296] According to Reagan, the only hope of ending the Cold War was to encourage a more open political system in the Soviet Union. Matlock writes that when Gorbachev came to power, the Soviet leaders were only beginning to come to grips with Reagan, but the president "had prepared for Gorbachev."[297]

Reagan decided against attending Chernenko's funeral and sent Vice-President Bush and Shultz in his place with a letter inviting Gorbachev to a summit in Washington. Although Gorbachev was hesitant to accept Reagan's invitation to a Washington summit, he was much more open to dialogue than previous Soviet leaders. Gorbachev wrote in his response to Reagan that he thought "the relations between them [the U.S. and the U.S.S.R] are of decisive importance for the situation in the world in general."[298] Like Reagan, Gorbachev also wrote that although he recognized that "[o]ur countries are different by their social systems, by the ideologies dominant in them," he believed that "this should not be a reason for animosity." [299]

Although his letter indicated that he was willing to talk, Reagan was not initially totally convinced that Gorbachev would be different. Reagan wrote in his diary five weeks after Gorbachev became general secretary that in his recent meeting with Soviet officials, Ambassador to the Soviet Union Art Hartman, "confirms what I believe, that Gorbachev will be as tough as

[296] Ibid., 104.
[297] Ibid., 105.
[298] Mikhail Gorbachev, Ronald Reagan, "Gorbachev to Reagan: March 24, 1985," *The Reagan Files* http://www.thereaganfiles.com/19850324.pdf
[299] Ibid.

any of their leaders. If he wasn't a confirmed ideologue, he never would have been chosen by the Politburo."[300]

Matlock encouraged Reagan in early 1985 to develop proposals that would encourage Soviet restraint abroad and reform at home. Reagan agreed this was necessary. 1985 saw the inception of the "Reagan Doctrine." This was the Reagan administration's attempt to encourage Soviet restraint by supporting anti-communist revolutionaries in the Third World. Reagan called these anti-communist revolutionaries "freedom fighters" and likened them to the American founding fathers.[301] Cannon argues that Reagan viewed foreign policy challenges through "World War II eyes, and he had learned his generation's lesson that unwillingness to prepare for war invites aggression."[302] While this gave way to a "picture of a golden, patriotic past," Reagan's view of foreign policy (especially his Central American policy), was "filtered through the dark, distorting lens of Vietnam."[303] While "avoiding another Vietnam" was a powerful imperative that shaped public debate and official thinking about foreign policy in the aftermath of the conflict, there was sharp disagreement about what had gone wrong in Southeast Asia. Historian Chester Pach argues that Reagan's interpretation of "avoiding another Vietnam" meant recognizing the moral courage of Americans who fought in Vietnam, and to never again ask young men to fight and die in a war that the government would not let them win. The most obvious possibility for "another Vietnam" during Reagan's presidency was Central America. Pach writes that "Reagan understood that avoiding 'another Vietnam' meant securing public

[300] Reagan, *An American Life*, 614-615.
[301] Ronald Reagan, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union, February 6, 1985," *The American Presidency Project* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=38069
[302] Cannon, *President Reagan*, 289.
[303] Ibid.

support for any commitment of ground forces."[304] Despite his efforts to secure public support, historian Michael Schaller argues that nothing Reagan "did in his eight years as president tarnished his reputation or called into question his judgment as seriously as did his decision to sell weapons to Iran as part of a scheme both to ransom U.S. hostages in Beirut and to fund anticommunist fighters in Central America."[305] Schaller asserts that while the Sandinistas were great human rights abusers, their abuses "hardly matched the brutality inflicted on civilians by pro-United States regimes in nearby El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras."[306] Because he viewed the Cold War in such a narrow binary, Reagan was often blind to the suffering in pro-Western authoritarian regimes. He had convinced himself, and sought to convince others, that nothing else in the modern world compared to the evils embodied in the communist Soviet Union.

As Reagan grew more and more anxious to meet with Gorbachev, he considered traveling to Moscow for the summit – anything to ensure that a summit meeting would actually happen with this Soviet leader. Gorbachev was unenthusiastic about meeting in Washington, and Shultz, who was concerned that the opportunity for a summit meeting would slip away all together, urged Reagan to meet Gorbachev in Geneva. On July 1, 1985, the date and place were set and Reagan and Gorbachev agreed to meet for a summit in Geneva in November 1985.

Edmund Morris, Reagan's official biographer, writes that Reagan "became obsessed with the notion that an 'underground religion' was rising like a water table beneath the surface of Soviet society."[307] Despite Soviet leaders' efforts to eradicate religion from the Soviet Union,

[304] Chester J. Pach, Jr., "Sticking to His Guns: Reagan and National Security," in *The Reagan Presidency,* ed. W. Elliot Brownlee et al. (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2003), 98.
[305] Michael Schaller, *Ronald Reagan* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 74.
[306] Ibid. This is discussed further in the Conclusion.
[307] Edmund Morris, *A Memoir of Ronald Reagan: Dutch* (New York, New York: Random House, Inc. 1999), 519.

Reagan believed that the Russian people's faith remained. He even asked his National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane if he thought Gorbachev might be a closet Christian. Of course love of Lenin and Christianity do not normally go hand in hand. However, Reagan's belief that there was a sort of spiritual revival occurring in Russia was one of the reasons he publically and privately pressured the Soviets about moral and religious issues. He argued that the Soviet government was denying their citizens something they desperately wanted, and something to which they had an inherent right: the freedom to openly practice their chosen religion. As the lines from *Izvestia* in the previous chapter show, the Soviets were perturbed by Reagan's constant "God talk." While a significant portion of Reagan's summit meetings with Gorbachev were devoted to the discussion of the prevention of nuclear war and arms reduction, Reagan also made discussions of the centrality of human rights issues and religion to East-West relations and the Cold War prominent in summit meetings. Former Deputy Secretary of Defense, National Security Advisor, and Secretary of State Frank Carlucci later stated that "Reagan was very attentive throughout the negotiations" in the summit meetings, especially "when it came to human rights or religion."[308] At the November 1985 Geneva Summit, the Reagan administration identified the protection of human rights as one of the four components of the U.S. agenda for the summit. Unfortunately, Gorbachev was not as willing to discuss humanitarian issues as Reagan was. In fact Gorbachev sidestepped or flat out ignored the discussion almost every time Reagan brought it up in their meetings.[309]

Overall, Gorbachev was interested in discussing solutions while Reagan was interested in discussing causes. In Geneva, Reagan emphasized that "if the two sides are to get down to the

[308] Frank Carlucci, Interview with Stephen Knott, Philip Zelikow, Don Oberdorfer. Tape Recording for the Miller Center of Public Affairs Presidential Oral History Project. August 28, 2001, Charlottesville, Virginia.
[309] Ronald Reagan, Mikhail Gorbachev, "Geneva Summit Transcript," *The Reagan Files* http://www.thereaganfiles.com/the-summits.html

business of reducing the mountains of weapons, then both must get at the cause of the distrust which had led to the building of weapons." During the third private meeting between Gorbachev and Reagan on November 20, Reagan told Gorbachev that he wanted to talk with him about "a subject which he knew that the Soviet side considered to be interference in its internal affairs…[While not wanting] to interfere in the internal affairs of the Soviet Union, but he did want to speak with Gorbachev about human rights." Reagan referred to the 1983 case of the Pentecostals who had been living in the basement of the U.S. embassy and had been forbidden to leave the U.S.S.R. He reminded Gorbachev that he had been true to his word and had not publically claimed credit for the fact that the Christians had been allowed to emigrate and that once they were, negotiation on a grain agreement had moved forward smoothly. Reagan told Gorbachev that he was seeking the same type of exchange in their current negotiations. "It would make it easier for us," Reagan told Gorbachev, "to do the type of things that we could do together if [I] were not constantly reminded about the restrictions imposed on the Soviet people, the refusal to permit them to practice their religion, etc." Gorbachev completely evaded the issue of religious freedom. Instead, he responded to Reagan's statement by focusing on the example of people being allowed to emigrate from the U.S.S.R. He emphasized that "within the past five years restrictions had been placed only on ten of [the] 420 to 450 people [who had tried to emigrate]. But these restrictions were Soviet regulation, and the Soviet side asked that they be respected." Reagan, in turn, told Gorbachev that there were restrictions in the Soviet Union on people's rights to practice their religions, "e.g. Jews were not permitted to teach Hebrew." Reagan also told Gorbachev that he had a list of many more than ten people who had not been allowed to emigrate. He even cited an example of a young man in the Soviet Union who was a

piano player and had been denied permission to emigrate and consequently, his career had been destroyed.

In his meetings with Soviet leaders, Reagan often brought up specific people who had been denied religious freedom or other basic human rights. And if he was not the American representative in the meeting, he would frequently send the American representative, most commonly Shultz, with lists of people who had been denied what he considered to be basic human rights. He would tell Shultz to communicate to Soviet leaders that their people should be allowed to emigrate and that their fundamental rights should be respected. Carlucci later stated that Reagan would "pull out these lists of people who'd been arrested. Every time George [Shultz] went to Moscow. I don't know where he got them, but he'd keep the names. He'd follow human rights activities very closely."[310]

Reagan had set a precedent when he negotiated with Dobrynin about the emigration of the Pentecostals and the grain agreement between the Soviet Union and the U.S. By making the success of the negotiation dependent on the Soviet Union's willingness to take human rights issues seriously and by following through with his side of the agreement not to crow and to establish a firm grain agreement, Reagan had demonstrated that he was a man of his word and that he took human rights issues seriously. Reagan advocated for increased religious freedom and civil liberties. However his top concern was religious freedom. Advocating for Soviets citizens' rights was arguably a secular pursuit (although Reagan spiritualized it), but emphasizing the significance of religious freedom (and freedom of conscience) was quite different. Reagan was eager to negotiate and discuss all aspects of East-West relations, but they were never divorced

[310] Carlucci, Interview with Stephen Knott, Philip Zelikow, Don Oberdorfer.

from issues of human rights and religious freedom. What Reagan preached in public he practiced in private.

In 1985, Soviet policies were relatively unchanged from the Brezhnev era. Gorbachev recalls in his memoirs that "[a]t first, as the general secretary…I spoke of our country's unchanging foreign policy course, stating that there was no need to change it."[311] Despite the fact that the Soviets did not seem willing to change their domestic and foreign policies, Reagan made a point both publically and privately to pressure them to do so, especially when it came to religious freedom and other basic human rights issues.

On November 28, just a week after returning from Geneva, Reagan sent a letter to Gorbachev in an attempt to continue to promote friendly relations. Just a few days after Reagan wrote his letter, Shultz proposed that Gorbachev come to Washington in June 1986 for another summit meeting. Gorbachev stonewalled Reagan. It took him over a month to respond to Reagan's letter and he mentioned nothing about a meeting date. Ultimately he communicated that he believed trust was a fundamental issue in East-West relations. Reagan agreed. However each leader had a different opinion on what it meant to build trust. Gorbachev wanted signs that Reagan would halt the arms race, while Reagan wanted signs that Gorbachev would change Soviet attitudes and domestic practices.

Despite the fact that Reagan and Gorbachev faced significant differences and disagreements in their correspondences, they agreed that they both wanted peace for their countries and the world. To that end, they agreed to meet in Reykjavik, Iceland, for a second summit meeting in October 1986. During their first private meeting, Reagan and Gorbachev

[311] Mikhail Gorbachev, *On My Country and the World* (New York, New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 177-179.

agreed that some of the main issues that needed to be addressed over the next couple of days included INF (intermediate-range nuclear missiles), the ABM treaty, space weapons, and nuclear testing. Gorbachev added that "regional issues, humanitarian issues, and bilateral issues" could be addressed in the afternoon session after their discussion of strategic arms reductions. Reagan picked up on Gorbachev's mention of humanitarian issues and retorted that they needed to do more than "touch upon" these issues. The president reiterated that if they were to make any progress in arms reductions and East-West relations, it was essential that progress was made on human rights issues. Reagan told Gorbachev that human rights "will not be the subject of official agreements between us. However, it has a great influence on how far we can go in cooperation with the Soviet Union… human rights, and specifically questions of exit from the Soviet Union [emigration], are ever present in appeals to me."[312] Gorbachev brushed this assertion off and continued to suggest that they proceed with their evaluation of the situation since the Geneva summit. But Reagan was unwilling to let the issues of human rights go undiscussed. He continued to explain to Gorbachev why it was an essential topic of discussion and while Gorbachev listened for a while he was visibly impatient. He interrupted Reagan to say, "We'll talk about human rights later."[313] But Reagan continued explaining the centrality of human rights to political agreements. Gorbachev was visibly annoyed. He told Reagan, "I want to bring your attention to the view of the Politburo and myself personally of the Reykjavik meeting in the context of the situation in the world and the condition of Soviet-American relations.'"[314] This exchange demonstrates once again that the leaders carried different assumptions about what was appropriate for bilateral consultation. Gorbachev and his advisers sincerely wondered why the

[312] "International Affairs: Transcript of Reagan-Gorbachev Summit in Reykjavik," *The National Security Archive*. http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document10.pdf
[313] Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev,* 218.
[314] Ibid., 218-219.

internal affairs of the U.S.S.R. interested the Americans. They likely considered this a Pandora's box whose logical end was everyone interfering in everyone's affairs. It is also likely that Soviet officials understood that if they liberalized domestically, there would be no going back. Reagan understood this, too. This exchange also demonstrates that Reagan viewed the internal affairs of the Soviet Union as a crucial issue, the one on which all the others depended.

The majority of the Reykjavik summit was devoted to the ABM Treaty, INF, and Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative. Overall, the summit was incredibly frustrating for both sides. Reagan and Gorbachev's negotiations were heated and they were not ultimately able to reach any agreements that made both sides happy. Cannon writes that "Reagan and Gorbachev had taken each other's measures in their Reykjavik weekend, and neither was in doubt where the other stood. Both were stubborn men."[315] Ultimately, the summit fell apart over disagreement on SDI. Reagan learned that Gorbachev would not allow deep reduction in Soviet arms unless SDI was restrained. And Gorbachev learned that Reagan would not permit SDI to be limited to the laboratory in return for nuclear arms reductions. It is important to note that by opposing SDI and requesting that it be confined to the laboratory, Gorbachev was not just trying to be difficult. He, and other Soviet officials, genuinely saw SDI as an offensive and not a defensive weapon as Reagan often argued it was. Schaller explains that the Soviet strategists never thought SDI would be effective, they were afraid "that it might work as a backup if the United States launched a preemptive strike that knocked out most Soviet missiles before their launch."[316] In that case, even a faulty defense would easily be able to pick off the few retaliatory missiles the Soviets would fire. SDI was a program that not only showcased each side's tremendous fear of nuclear war, it also showcased the deep mistrust between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. The most

[315] Cannon, *President Reagan,* 692.
[316] Schaller, *Ronald Reagan,* 71.

encouraging thing to come out of the summit meeting was that the door had not yet been closed on an INF treaty.

Thompson argues that a politician's view of the world that rightly considers the threefold relation of man with himself, the communities in which he lives, and an overarching moral and political order will produce a foreign policy that "involves men seeking justice and order through methods designed to balance the good and evil in society by checks and balances and various forms of the separations of powers."[317] Reagan's view of the Cold War and East-West relations fit neatly into this description. Through the Reagan Doctrine, SDI, and working towards arms reductions, Reagan was seeking (what he defined as) justice and order in the world. The Reagan Doctrine was directed at countering the evil of communist expansion with the good of encouraging the establishment of democratic governments and supporting "freedom fighters" who sought to rid their countries of leftist insurgents. SDI and arms agreements also sought to balance good and evil through checks and balances by constructing verifiable agreements and a defense system that could derail a nuclear attack.

Geopolitical analyst, author, and senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security Robert Kaplan argues that "the United States, like any nation—but especially because it is a great power—simply has interests that do not always cohere with its values. That is tragic, but it is a tragedy that has to be embraced and accepted."[318] He asserts that American foreign policy cannot be merely defined by the mantras "Never Again!" and the "Responsibility to Protect," but rather that the U.S. has a duty to protect its own interests and that sometime, those interests override values. This means that "the United States, as the dominant power in the Western

[317] Thompson, *Morality and Foreign Policy,* 141.
[318] Robert D. Kaplan, "The Tragedy of U.S. Foreign Policy," *The National Interest*, August 1, 2013 http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/the-tragedy-us-foreign-policy-8810?page=show

Hemisphere, must always prevent any other power from becoming equally dominant in the Eastern Hemisphere…It must also seek to protect both treaty and de facto allies." Kaplan writes that while these interests are not necessarily contradictory to human rights, they simply do not operate in the same category. Throughout history, seeking to adjust the balance of power in one's favor has been "an amoral enterprise pursued by both liberal an illiberal powers."[319] By this definition, Reagan's, and the Kremlin's, attempts to gain military or moral superiority, as well as their attempts to globally expand their governments, would have been amoral practices and policies. While Kaplan may be correct in defining these as "amoral," Reagan had a different interpretation. He sought constantly to provide moral justifications and motives for his domestic and foreign policy. Reeves writes that "[w]hile no one ever called Reagan an intellectual…he did see the world in terms of ideas."[320] Because he saw the world in terms of ideas, moral and immoral ones, Reagan's foreign policy was aimed at protecting and encouraging good and challenging evil (as he defined it). Leffler writes that at this point in East-West relations, "Reagan's aim was to sustain the pressure, to make the Kremlin blink first, and to set forth his own prerequisites for any agreement. He believed he was negotiating from strength; they, from weakness."[321]

Looking back, Matlock writes that "[i]t was good that the meeting did not reach the understanding on arms reduction that Gorbachev had proposed and to which Reagan had come close to agreeing." Despite the tensions that arose in the meeting, "the Reykjavik summit marked a psychological turning point" in East-West relations.[322] While no arms agreement was reached, Reagan and Gorbachev in principle agreed on the need to reduce their nuclear arsenals. Over the

[319] Ibid.
[320] Reeves, *President Reagan*, xii.
[321] Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind*, 392.
[322] Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev,* 249.

next couple of months, Gorbachev dropped his instance that SDI be linked to any arms control agreement.

1987 would be marked by one of the most historic arms treaties in history. Throughout the first half of 1987, the Reagan administration and the Politburo worked to reach some type of arms agreement concerning INF. As a result of these efforts, Gorbachev agreed to come to Washington on December 7 to meet with Reagan and sign the INF Treaty. 1987 marked a turning point in U.S. Soviet negotiations. Matlock writes that "Americans no longer had to insist that human rights or actions to lift the Iron Curtain had a place on the agenda."[323] For the first time ever, the Soviets and the Americans agreed on what the problems were. They still disagreed on how to solve those problems, but nonetheless, the fact that the Soviets now organized their discussions in the same way that Americans did had a dramatic effect on East-West relations. Matlock writes that the "fundamental aim of diplomacy is to convince the other fellow that what you want him to do is what he needs to do."[324] Author and syndicated columnist Richard Reeves argues that the ability to do so was one of Reagan's many talents.[325] At this point, what was most important to the Reagan administration was that Gorbachev came to understand that what Reagan advocated in negotiations and correspondences fit Soviet needs. Soviet foreign policy advisor Anatoly Chernyaev later remarked that

> Our policy did not change until Gorbachev understood that there would be no improvement and no serious arms control until we admitted and accepted human rights, free emigration, until glasnost became freedom of speech, until our society and the process of perestroika changed deeply.[326]

[323] Ibid., 268.
[324] Ibid., 269.
[325] Richard Reeves, *President Reagan: The Triumph of Imagination* (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), xiii.
[326] Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev,* 251.

While the Reykjavik summit appeared to be a psychological turning point only in retrospect, the Washington summit was seen as an immediate success. In Washington, Reagan and Gorbachev spent more time in public than they did in private meetings. While their private meetings were limited compared to the previous two meetings, they were some of the most successful. This is not to say that the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. saw eye to eye on every issue, but progress had clearly been made since their heated meeting at Reykjavik.

The INF Treaty, negotiated by Shultz and Shevardnadze in the previous months, required the elimination of ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges of between 500 and 5,500 kilometers, their launches and support structures and support equipment within three years after the treaty was signed. Over the next three years, the United States would destroy 859 missiles and the Soviet Union would destroy 1,836 missiles. But the treaty's significance transcended numbers. While roughly only four percent of the countries' arsenals were destroyed, it was the first U.S.-Soviet treaty to provide for the destruction of nuclear weapons and on-site monitoring by the two nations.

Although the Cold War continued, the private meetings revealed that Gorbachev was beginning to make improvements in human rights issues and was attempting to take steps towards greater democratization in the U.S.S.R. There was no evidence that Soviet internal reforms grew from American demands, but the Reagan administration was greatly encouraged by these reforms. Reagan commented that "the U.S. side welcomed moves toward democratization in the Soviet Union, toward Glasnost."[327] Gorbachev assured Reagan that "he would continue to fight conservatism [that is, those who opposed his reforms]. He would

[327] Ronald Reagan, Mikhail Gorbachev, "Transcript of the Washington Summit," *The Reagan Files* http://www.thereaganfiles.com/washington-summit-transcrip.pdf

continue to fight those who sought to shackle people in dogma."[328] Reagan made jokes throughout their meetings intended to demonstrate that while the Soviet Union thought they were moving towards democratization, the fact still remained that the Russian people had very little freedom. Gorbachev was consistently frustrated with what he considered Reagan's narrow worldview. Gorbachev had implemented the most sweeping changes in his nation since the 1930s. Given this, and that Reagan had never set foot in Russia, Gorbachev had a right to feel insulted by Reagan. He perceived Reagan as being unable to grasp what was going on. Reagan, on the other hand, still perceived these changed as merely the beginning of the democratic reforms he hoped to ultimately see in the Soviet Union. Although Gorbachev's acknowledgement of human rights issues and stated intention to right them was a positive sign to the Americans, Reagan still closed the meeting saying "[w]e have listened to the wisdom of an old Russian maxim…the maxim is *doverey, no proverey* – trust, but verify."[329]

The lasting significance of the Washington Summit is found in what it represented. While the treaty served both the political needs of the U.S. and Soviet Union, those in the defense and security industry, Pentagon advisors and neoconservatives opposed it. However, this summit had given Reagan a chance to turn the tables "on skeptics who had predicted that he was risking war by challenging the Soviet Union to change its policies."[330] It is absolutely true that Reagan cannot be given full credit for the shift seen in Soviet policy and actions; Gorbachev formulated perestroika and glasnost almost entirely because of domestic concerns. Moreover, a good deal of pressure came from Western European nations, the UK, the European Community, etc. But Reagan deserves some credit. Reagan's public and private pressure on the Soviet Union and

[328] Ibid.
[329] Ibid., 696.
[330] Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev,* 276.

Gorbachev had had an effect. The president had effectively demonstrated to the Soviets that not only would it be near impossible to move forward in improving relations without improvement in human rights issues, but that it was also ultimately in the best interest of the Soviet Union to introduce reforms that would increase basic human rights. Shultz writes that at Reykjavik, the Reagan administration had "achieved the breakthrough of establishing human rights as a legitimate topic for our agenda [with the Soviet Union.]"[331] However, Minister of Foreign Affairs Eduard Shevardnadze had made it clear to Shultz that the Soviet Union would make domestic changes that were sensible from their standpoint, not in response to United States' pressure or "to please you."[332] In response, Shultz approached Shevardnadze with an argument that he not only thought was true, but that he thought the Soviets could also agree on. Shultz argued that

> the economic progress the Soviets sought from what they called 'radical reforms' could not be achieved unless the Soviet system is changed sharply, in ways that stimulate the creativity and drive of individuals. In the information age, success will come to societies that are open and decentralized and provide lots of room for individual initiative.[333]

Furthermore, Shultz asserted, the gap between nations that adapted to the information age and those who refused too would continue to widen. If the Soviet Union wanted to keep pace with more open societies, they would have to lift many of the restrains on information flow, economic opportunities, and consumer choices and to increase Soviet citizens' autonomy. Shultz told Shevardnadze, "[y]ou believe that human rights consist of jobs, housing, health care, and economic benefits. The only way your society is going to be able to fulfill those rights is to permit your people a greater degree of what *we* regard as human rights: freedom of speech,

[331] Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 887.
[332] Ibid., 888.
[333] Ibid.

movement, expression, and personal choice." In Washington, with the signing of the INF Treaty, Matlock writes that "Gorbachev removed what he had told the Politburo was a 'pistol aimed at our head' and proved that he could do business with Ronald Reagan, despite the latter's hatred of the Soviet system."[334]

Even before the meeting in Washington, Gorbachev had agreed to receive Reagan in Moscow in 1988, another sign of improving relations. By the beginning of that year, domestic reform had become Gorbachev's primary concern. He had attempted to bolster the economy and was going after some of the most corrupt officials in the Communist Party. And on February 8, 1988, Gorbachev finally made a public pledge to leave Afghanistan. But as shown in the previous chapter, Gorbachev's reforms did not cause Reagan to reduce his moral and religious rhetoric. Actually, it caused him to increase it. Reagan could see the changes being made (i.e. an increase in the number of people the Soviet Union was allowing to emigrate), or at least the attempts at changes being made, and this convinced him that what he and his administration had been doing was working, that his public and private pressure of the Soviet Union was working.

As shown in the previous chapter, in Reagan's press conference with the four religious dissidents on May 3, just weeks before he would leave for Moscow, he told his audience that this trip would be a human rights crusade. As Air Force One landed in Moscow on May 29, 1988, it was evident that the Soviet handlers took pride in the events that were to come. Reagan and Gorbachev's initial private meeting opened with remarks from Gorbachev. When it was Reagan's turn to talk, he immediately raised the issue of religious freedom in Russia. Reagan "asked Gorbachev what if he ruled that religious freedom was part of the people's rights, that people of any religion – whether Islam with its mosque, the Jewish faith, Protestants or the

[334] Ibid.

Ukrainian church – could go to the church of their choice."[335] Gorbachev stated clearly that the "Soviets said that all were free to believe or not believe in God."[336] However, Reagan said that he was advocating for more than that, he was arguing for freedom, meaning that "the government had nothing to do with it," that they could neither affirm nor discourage religious activity. Using the United States as an example, Reagan argued that true religious freedom meant that government could not interfere in any way. Whether or not Gorbachev wanted to speak about religious freedom (he always seemed a little aggravated when Reagan brought up the subject) Reagan relentlessly pressed the Soviet leaders on issues of religious freedom throughout his visit to Moscow. As demonstrated in the speeches cited in the previous chapter, Reagan took every available opportunity to advocate for religious freedom during his trip to the U.S.S.R.

On the evening of May 31, Reagan hosted a state dinner as Spaso House. Reagan and Gorbachev each gave a toast. In his toast, Reagan spoke of the pleasant spring weather, of Nancy Reagan's trip to Leningrad, and that while he and Gorbachev would continue to differ profoundly on issues of great importance, he believed they had made progress and that they had committed their nations to "continuing to work together, agreeing that silence must never again be permitted to fall between us."[337] What was the reason that both countries had decided it was essential to continue to always meet and to never again let silence fall between them? "I believe," Reagan said "[it is because] we both hear the same voice, the same overwhelming imperative. What that voice says can be expressed in many ways."[338] Reagan could have very easily left his definition of "the voice" in this vague state. Instead, he chose to turn his audience's

[335] Ronald Reagan, Mikhail Gorbachev, "Moscow Summit Transcript," *The Reagan Files* http://www.thereaganfiles.com/the-summits.html
[336] Ibid.
[337] Ronald Reagan, "Toasts at a State Dinner Hosted by the President at Spaso House in Moscow, May 31, 1988," *The American Presidency Project* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=35898
[338] Ibid.

attention back to religion, specifically Christianity. Reagan explained that he had a definition of "the voice" in Pasternak's poem "The Garden of Gethsemane" which recounted Jesus Christ's arrest. Reagan went on to read the poem:

"There appeared—no one knew from where—a crowd of slaves and a rabble of knaves, with lights and swords and, leading them, Judas with a traitor's kiss on his lips.
Peter repulsed the ruffians with his sword and cut off the ear of one of them. But he heard: 'You cannot decide a dispute with weapons; put your sword in its place, O man.'"[339]

"That's the voice," Reagan said, "'Put your sword in its place, O man.' That is the imperative, the command. And so, we will work together that we might forever keep our swords at our sides."[340] Reagan did not need a biblical illustration to talk about putting away weapons or working for peace, but he chose to use one. Whether or not others agreed with the president, and whether or not he was right to present the Cold War with these terms and illustrations, the fact remains that that is precisely what he did repeatedly. Even in Moscow, when his rhetoric could potentially deeply offend the Soviets and derail the progress they had made, Reagan spoke openly of the Cold War and East-West relations in moral and religious terms.

Under Gorbachev, openness to freedom of religion in the U.S.S.R. and increased religious practice flourished. Gorbachev was the only Soviet leader who was not vehemently hostile to religion. The general secretary ended seventy years of religious persecution in the Soviet Union, which sparked a religious revival in Russia in the 1990s. There is reason to believe that Reagan's relentless public and private pressure influenced the decisions Soviet leaders made concerning human rights and religious freedom. Gorbachev's first major reforms concerning religious freedom were set in motion in the spring of 1988, and glasnost and perestroika picked up speed when Gorbachev began to realize that without taking human rights issues seriously,

[339] Ibid.
[340] Ibid.

there was little hope of improvement in East-West relations. From 1988 to 1989, 2,000 parishes of the Orthodox Church opened in the Soviet Union. Church leaders were permitted to work in hospitals, appear on television, meet with scholars, run charitable organizations, and even be elected to the Congress of People's Deputies.[341]

Thompson argues that "[p]olitical reason looks not for abstract truths but rather for the means of adding and subtracting, multiplying and dividing true moral denominations viewed not in a mathematical or metaphysical but in a social and political context."[342] This view of policy formulation advocates for an approach that defines morality in relativistic terms. While this is a widely accepted approach, it was one that Reagan by and large, rejected. As a good negotiator, Reagan understood that it was unrealistic to think that he would achieve his ideal vision in domestic of foreign politics. However, that understanding did not prevent him from injecting his rhetoric and his foreign policy with a metaphysical morality. Kennan argued that "Democracy, as Americans understand it, is not necessarily the future of all mankind, nor is it the duty of the U.S. government to assure that it becomes that."[343] While Kennan is correct in this assertion, Reagan's worldview relegated democracy to that of the supreme form of government by which all other governments were measured.[344] Communism being the antithesis of democracy, Reagan dedicated himself to not only restoring America's strength and her status as "a city upon a hill," but also to exposing and exploiting the weaknesses of Soviet communism in an effort to realize democratic reforms, increased civil liberties, and increased religious freedom in the Soviet Union.

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[341] Hedrick Smith, *The New Russians* (New York, New York: Random House, 1990), 395-396.
[342] Thompson, *Morality and Foreign Policy*, 141.
[343] Kennan, "Morality and Foreign Policy."
[344] Ronald Reagan, "Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session With the Students and Faculty at Moscow State University, May 31, 1988," *The American Presidency Project* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=35897

On November 9, 1989, two years after Reagan's famous Brandenburg Gate speech, his challenge to Gorbachev and those living in the Soviet bloc to tear down the wall was met. Citizens of Soviet controlled East Germany took matters into their own hands and began to destroy the wall that had symbolized the separation between communism and democracy and the oppression they had suffered for decades. Although Reagan was no longer president, ABC's news anchor Sam Donaldson conducted a live interview with him from Reagan's California Ranch. Celebrating the fall of the Berlin Wall, Reagan told Donaldson, "I think the people have seen that Communism has had its chance and it doesn't work."[345]

Just a few months after the fall of the Berlin Wall, in March 1989, Soviet citizens were allowed to vote in a nationwide election for the first time. In April of the same year, the newly elected President Gorbachev announced that the Soviet Union would become a democracy. Several months later, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania also abandoned communism for democracy. On December 25, 1991, Gorbachev dissolved the Soviet Union. The Cold War was over.

Ultimately, neither Reagan nor Gorbachev alone was responsible for increased human rights and religious freedom in the Soviet Union. Both men needed each other. Historian John Lewis Gaddis writes that upon Gorbachev's election, the Soviet Union had for the first time since the beginning of the Cold War, "a ruler who did not seem sinister, boorish, unresponsive, senile – or dangerous. Gorbachev was 'intelligent, well-educated, dynamic, honest, with ideas and imagination."[346] Gorbachev's personality worked well with Reagan's optimism, disarming manner, humor, and convictions. Additionally, both men sincerely wanted to improve East-West

[345] "Ronald Reagan Celebrates Fall of Berlin Wall, November 9, 1989," YouTube.com http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tyfqx24O3k4
[346] Gaddis, *The Cold War*, 229.

relations, establish peace, and work towards the elimination of nuclear arms. The men grew to not only respect each other but also cultivated a genuine friendship that endured past their time in office. The convergence of these two at the right moment in history brought about changes in East-West relations and reforms in the U.S.S.R. that no other leaders had been able to accomplish.

Conclusion

In *For the Record: From Wall Street to Washington*, Ronald Reagan's former chief of staff Donald Regan argues that Reagan's "public rhetoric of confrontation and the private signals of conciliation toward the Soviets" had the ultimate goal of "one day sitting down at the negotiating table with the leader of the USSR."[347] Anthony Dolan, Reagan's former speechwriter argues that in his most abrasive speeches, Reagan intentionally pushed "a new, intensely controversial approach to the Soviet-American dialogue and mutual relations: candor as part of a strategy to exploit the psychological vulnerabilities of totalitarianism and weaken its intransigence."[348] Dolan recalls that Reagan had a firm grasp on the potential dangers of such forceful language and would even occasionally omit "seething" words from the speech drafts Dolan gave him.[349] Although Reagan was often accused of being cavalier with his rhetoric, those who knew him best argue that Reagan carefully and intentionally chose his public words. He often had a hand in the phrasing of his speeches, and, when possible, he sought to insert his own ideas into policy statements and speeches, even when his counselors advised against doing so. What Reagan communicated publically, he sought to act on through his policies. In his public rhetoric, Reagan was communicating a vision of the world, a philosophy, and what he argued were foundational truths about people, God, and government. The president tried to convince people, both

[347] Donald T. Regan, *For the Record: From Wall Street to Washington* (New york, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 294.
[348] Anthony R. Dolan, "Premeditated Prose: Reagan's Evil Empire," *The American Enterprise*, March/April 1993, 24-26.
[349] Ibid.

publically and privately, that the world was the way it was because of ideas, good ones and bad ones, and that if they wanted their world to change, they had to begin to look at the world in new ways. Indeed this was the basic principle on which Reagan ran his 1980 campaign against Jimmy Carter.

Overall, Reagan's Soviet policy and interactions with Soviet officials were consistent with his moral and religious rhetoric. He pressured the Soviets publically and privately on the issues of morality, increased civil liberties, and religious freedom. However, as previously noted, there were some discrepancies, most significantly the Reagan administration's Nicaraguan and El Salvadoran policies. While the Reagan administration's Nicaraguan and El Salvadoran policies met the realist criteria of an acceptable foreign policy, they are not exempt from the razor of Reagan's own criteria for morality. Reagan did think of and present himself as a humanitarian and human rights activist and as someone who was constructing a moral foreign policy. By doing so, he opened himself up to due criticism for his moral lapse in judgment in these areas of his foreign policy. Former U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union George Kennan argued in 1985 that

> while we [the U.S.] are quick to allege that this or that practice in a foreign country is bad and deserves correction, seldom if ever do we seem to occupy ourselves seriously or realistically with the conceivable alternatives. It seems seldom to occur to us that even if a given situation is bad, the alternatives to it might be worse.[350]

Kennan continued that the U.S. often assumed that the consequences of their foreign policies and actions in other countries would be "benign and happy ones." He argued that the United States was failing to take into account the fact that it was not they who would have to deal with the consequences of their foreign policy actions, but the offending government and its people.

[350] George F. Kennan, "Morality and Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, Winter 1985/86 http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/40521/george-f-kennan/morality-and-foreign-policy

Kennan wrote that the U.S. was "demanding, in effect, a species of veto power over those of their practices that we dislike, while denying responsibility for whatever may flow from the acceptance of our demands."[351] Furthermore, he charged that "[p]ractices or policies that arouse our official displeasure in one country are cheerfully condoned or ignored in another. What is bad in the behavior of our opponents is good, or at least acceptable, in the case of our friends. What is unobjectionable to us at one period of our history is seen as offensive in another." While consistent with Reagan's identification of Soviet communism as the greatest threat to the world, the Reagan administration's Nicaraguan and El Salvadoran policies were inconsistent with Reagan's stated pursuit and definition of human rights. Reagan likely justified his aforementioned foreign policy decisions in his mind as being the lesser of two evils and truly necessary to roll back the spread of communism and encourage pro-democratic governments, but this only explains his actions, it does not justify them. For they did genuinely cause pain and suffering for the people of Nicaragua and El Salvador.

In the same way that Reagan's maxim that "Nations don't fear each other because they are armed. They are armed because they fear each other" was at times overly simplistic, his black and white definitions of good and evil, and his emphasis on personal liberty and democratic government, occasionally blinded him to other kinds of suffering. In addition to the aforementioned foreign policy decisions, examples include poverty, crime, and lack of public health, which were endemic in much of the world, and to a lesser degree in the U.S. But it is also important to understand that in the same way that Reagan's aforementioned maxim was at times overly simplistic, his maxim and definitions of good and evil were also at times true and insightful.

[351] Ibid.

It is worth considering that Reagan believed that humanitarian issues in the Third World would be alleviated in the same way they would in the U.S.: implementation of a democratic government (or at least a pro-Western government), economic freedom, personal incentive, and decreased government involvement in people's lives.[352] Reagan argued that it was not the federal government's job to address these issues, but that citizens and state governments could appropriately address them if given the freedom to do so. Reagan primarily advocated for smaller government and greater personal liberty. A hallmark of his time as president was his emphasis on the strength of ordinary people who enjoyed individual liberties. He argued that the key to America's and the world's problems were societies that increased individual liberties for their citizens. As president, Reagan argued that he had reduced government interference in people's lives and then "Americans did the rest."[353] First articulated in his 1964 "A Time for Choosing" speech in support of Barry Goldwater, Reagan's concept of government's role was radically at variance with the conventional politics of the 1980s. Reflected in his assertion in his 1981 Inaugural Address that "government is not the solution to our problem. Government is the problem," Reagan viewed heavy government involvement in people's lives as a hindrance to their abilities to innovate, compete, and produce better lives for themselves and ultimately as an infringement on their God-given first amendment rights.

[352] This is seen in his domestic policy of shifting many social programs away from the federal government to state government. He proposed a $41 billion dollar cut to the inherited Carter budget that would eliminate numerous welfare programs, trim Social Security, and cut back on parts of the federal bureaucracy that regulated business, the environment, and public health. Reagan advocated for reduced federal government involvement in people's lives, believing that "Americans could do the rest." Yet there were limits to the Reagan administration's ability, or real conviction, on this front. The federal budget expanded in the 1980s and the federal debt skyrocketed. Measured in constant dollars, the average family income of the poorest fifth of the population dropped from $5,439 to $4,107. The income of the richest fifth swelled from $62,000 to $69,000. While these were inherited problems with complex causes and Reagan's policies were not responsible for creating them, his refusal to address them seriously made them worse. Schaller, *Reckoning with Reagan*, 55, 90.

[353] Reagan, *An American Life*, pg. 349.

In *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime, Washington Post* journalist Lou Cannon reflects on the first meeting between Carter and the recently elected President Reagan and reports that Carter was astonished by Reagan's apparent lack of interest in the briefing Carter had provided. Cannon argues that the issue was not Reagan's "inability to grasp what Carter had been telling him but a lack of curiosity about anything he deemed irrelevant to his immediate agenda. Carter's interests were so broad that he often seemed to lack focus, even in private conversation. Reagan's range was narrow, but his agenda was compelling."[354] This picture of Reagan and his agenda sheds light on and helps to explain his occasionally over simplistic policies and definitions of good and evil. Reagan also worked with his administration in a way that reinforces Cannon's portrayal of him. Former White House Counsel to the President Peter Wallison argues that Reagan was "more concerned about establishing his core ideas than in maintaining decision-making control over his administration."[355] Reagan delegated authority to those "he trusted to follow his principles" Wallison recalls, "while he focused relentlessly on a few key concepts central to his philosophy."[356] He argues that it was not simply that Reagan "believed strongly" in his ideas about the world.[357] "His commitment," Wallison insists, "went beyond that; unlike his predecessors…he was willing to put his presidency on the line for his convictions, to take enormous political risks because he believed that the cause in which he was acting was the right one." Reagan sought to establish core principles and ideologies and then delegated responsibility, expecting his cabinet members to work out the details and disputes amongst themselves. Unless it was something he was very interested in, Reagan provided policy guidelines and then expected his cabinet members to form policies that were consistent with his

[354] Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2000), 82.
[355] Wallison, *Ronald Reagan,* 16.
[356] Ibid.
[357] Wallison. *Ronald Reagan*, xi.

beliefs. Reagan's first chief of staff James A. Baker III once said of the boss "He treats us all the same, as hired help."[358] Did Reagan's focus on a few "key" concepts as foundational cause him to relegate many other political policies and programs to low priority? Yes. Did this at times mean Reagan viewed the world in overly simplistic terms? Also yes. However, this does not mean that Reagan's ideas, opinions, and view of the world and of what needed to be done were always wrong. His successful relationship with Gorbachev and subsequent decreased tension in the East-West relationship serve as a testimony to his ability to get results in some arenas and to the fact that his opinions and worldview were beneficial in some areas.

In his farewell address to the nation on January 11, 1989, Reagan told America, "I think we have stopped a lot of what needed stopping."[359] He was speaking specifically of the sentiment in the late 1970s and the early 1980s that America was past her prime, that she would never again be as prosperous and have as bright a future as before. However, his belief that this administration had stopped a lot of what needed stopping extended beyond the borders of their country. The president told his audience, "[s]ome pundits said our programs would result in catastrophe. Our views on foreign affairs would cause war…The fact is," Reagan argued, "what they called 'radical' was really 'right.' What they called 'dangerous' was just 'desperately needed.'"[360] This implementation of new ideas and policies and his goal of restoring hope and confidence to the American people are known as the "Reagan Revolution." "Reagan's 'revolution," Wallison argues, "was indisputably a revolution of ideas."[361] Reagan said he hoped America had "once again reminded people that man is not free unless government is limited. There's a clear cause and effect here that is as neat and predictable as a law of physics: As

[358] Ibid.
[359] Ronald Reagan, "Farewell Address to the Nation, January 11, 1989."
[360] Ibid.
[361] Wallison, *Ronald Reagan,* 33.

government expands, liberty contracts."[362] His goal had been to reverse the general malaise that had begun to grip America, to remind her citizens that there was "no limit to what a proud, free people can achieve", and of government's proper role. And looking back at the past eight years, he believed that together, they had accomplished it. Reagan said "I won a nickname, 'The Great Communicator.' But I never thought it was my style or the words I used that made a difference: it was the content. I wasn't a great communicator, but I communicated great things."[363]

Reagan's ideal of renewed hope, strength, and increased freedom was not just something that he envisioned for the United States, it was something he envisioned for mankind, especially those held captive by communism in the Soviet bloc. The president also commented in his farewell address that "[n]othing is less free than pure communism." Despite this fact, the United States had "forged a satisfying new closeness with the Soviet Union." Reagan's answer to people who asked him if this was an unwise or dangerous decision was "no because we're basing our actions not on words but deeds."[364] Reagan argued in his farewell address that the problem with 1970s détente was that it "was based not on actions but promises. They'd promise to treat their own people and the people of the world better. But the gulag was still the gulag, and the state was still expansionist, and they still waged proxy wars in Africa, Asia, and Latin America."[365] The difference in the late 1980s was that Gorbachev had brought some drastic changes and internal democratic reforms in the Soviet Union and that he had begun the withdrawal from Afghanistan. Reagan also remarked that Gorbachev "freed prisoners whose name I've given him every time we've met." For the human rights obsessed Reagan, this was particularly significant. The reason that the world was now seeing a connection between Soviet words and actions was

[362] Ibid.
[363] Ronald Reagan, "Farewell Address to the Nation, January 11, 1989," *The American Presidency Project* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29650
[364] Ibid.
[365] Ibid.

not due solely to the fact that Gorbachev was "different from previous Soviet leaders," it was also due to the fact that Reagan had made it overwhelmingly clear that he would not accept words without actions. He would not sign treaties based only on words and he tirelessly pestered Gorbachev about the human rights issues that he believed were of the utmost importance. "Trust, but verify."

In his public rhetoric, Reagan communicated a vision of the world that was hopeful and invited others to begin to view the world with the same optimism and hope. "What he was doing in his speeches," writes Wallison, "was setting limits in the form of principles."[366] Believing that people, economics, and governments were as they were because of ideas, Reagan connected East-West relations, the American decline (and conversely the prosperity he believed was ahead for America), and ultimately the Cold War to the ideologies and beliefs that he thought were the root causes. Reagan's public and private rhetoric and personal interactions with Soviet leaders functioned as a spotlight on what he perceived as the evils of the Soviet state. Reagan had made the Soviet's the next Nazis, and communism the next fascism. And while it is true that Reagan should not be given full credit for the end of the Cold War and improved East-West relations, it should be said that his strong moral backbone and relentless attempts to improve the United State's relationship with the U.S.S.R. were vital components to the peaceful resolution of the Cold War. Reagan gave simple answers to complex problems and viewed the world in a narrow binary. As discussed, this had both negative and positive effects

Gorbachev should also be given some credit for the end of the Cold War. Gorbachev worked towards improved East-West relations and through glasnost and perestroika, did much to move the Soviet Union towards greater democratization and freedom. Although Gorbachev did

[366] Wallison, *Ronald Reagan,* 264.

not intend to abandon or end the goal of a communist state, he was willing to begin implementing reforms as he came to recognize that the U.S.S.R. was failing. As previously mentioned, Reagan and Gorbachev needed each other. Without Gorbachev's interest in improved East-West relations and his recognition of the necessity of openness, the Cold War would have likely dragged on for many more years. And without Reagan's relentless public and private pressure on the Soviet Union to restore human rights and religious freedom to its people, his determination to address the underlying ideological causes of the Cold War, and his strong desire to improve East-West relations, the Cold War likely would not have ended when it did. Additionally, if both men would not have been committed to peacefully resolving their differences, the world could have been facing, in George Orwell's words, "'peace that is no peace.'"[367]

Historian Melvyn Leffler reflects that the Cold War "is a history of lost opportunities." In light of this, he argues, "we should try to appreciate the courage, imagination, and determination of Gorbachev and Reagan (and Bush) to escape from a dynamic that had imprisoned their predecessors. It was not inevitable for the Cold War to end as it did"[368] He is right. The Cold War did not have to end as peacefully as it did. It is thanks to people like Gorbachev, Reagan, Pope John Paul II, and Great Britain Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher that it did end peacefully. Above all else, Reagan and Gorbachev seized an opportunity to work for the peaceful resolution of their differences and thereby hastened the end of the Cold War. Similarly, historian John Lewis Gaddis argues that "[r]eal power rested, during the final decade of the Cold War, with leaders…whose mastery of *intangibles* – of such qualities as courage, eloquence, imagination,

[367] George Orwell, "You and the Atomic Bomb," *Project Gutenberg Australia* http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks03/0300011h.html#part33
[368] Melvyn P. Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War* (New York, New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 9.

determination, and faith – allowed them to expose disparities between what people believed and the systems under which the Cold War had obliged them to live,"[369] "Reagan," Rossinow writes, "unlike some conservatives, recognized the shape of victory."[370]

[369] John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2005), 196.
[370] Rossinow, *The Reagan Era*, 240.

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