



## **POLICY ROUNDTABLE:**

# **Does Reagan’s Foreign Policy Legacy Live On?**

*Oct. 9, 2018*

### Table of Contents

1. “Introduction: Revisiting Reagan’s Pride of Place in Republican Foreign Policy,” by Evan D. McCormick
2. “Reagan’s Legacy Today: Development Policy and Human Rights,” by Andrew S. Natsios
3. “Principled Realism in the Reagan Administration,” by Gail Yoshitani
4. “The Reagonomics of Nonproliferation in GOP Behavior,” by Jayita Sarkar
5. “O Kings (Presidents?), Show Discernment: Religious Cultural Heritage and Foreign Policy in the Reagan and Trump Eras,” by Brian K. Muzas

## 1. Introduction: Revisiting Reagan's Pride of Place in Republican Foreign Policy

By Evan McCormick

In the nearly thirty years since he departed the White House, Ronald Reagan has been ubiquitous in the spirit and image of the Republican Party. At every turn, the GOP has sought to recapture the energy that Reagan fomented around the conservative ideals of small government and American exceptionalism.

Reagan's vision for America's role in the world has been central to this enduring mythos. Reagan sought to project American strength abroad through military spending, unsparing rhetoric about the deficiencies of communism and the threat it posed to American security, and a commitment to use force — covertly or overtly — in the name of American interests and ideals. To his admirers, it was this strategy that made possible the diplomatic breakthrough in his second term that helped end the Cold War with the Soviet Union.

Though some of his adherents may be loathe to admit it, Reagan's foreign policy was a key referent in Donald Trump's successful 2016 campaign. With a slogan cribbed from Reagan ("Make America Great Again"), Trump promised to reverse the naïve diplomacy and missteps of his predecessors, Democrat and Republican alike, just as the Gipper fashioned a critique of détente policies advanced by both the Carter and Nixon administrations. Much as Trump made straw men out of the Obama administration's Iran nuclear deal ("This deal was a disaster"<sup>1</sup>) and vowed to "cancel" the Paris Climate Accords, Reagan came to office

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<sup>1</sup> "Transcript: Donald Trump Expounds on His Foreign Policy Views," *New York Times*, March 27, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/27/us/politics/donald-trump-transcript.html>.

railing against the 1978 Panama Canal treaties (“fatally flawed”<sup>2</sup>) and vowed to withdraw from the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (“a flawed treaty”<sup>3</sup>). Beyond pillorying particular aspects of the status quo, both politicians fashioned these efforts as part of a broader restoration of America’s standing in the world. For Reagan, it was an attempt to reverse the uncertainty and self-doubt wrought by the Vietnam War; for Trump, a vaguer, but no less powerful, determination to reverse some Americans’ insecurities in the face of globalization by putting “America first.”

Since taking office, however, the Trump administration’s foreign policies have, for the first time, cast the GOP’s idolatry of Reagan into limbo. First, under the America First brand, Trump has deliberately pulled the United States back from its leadership role in the international system, most notably by questioning the value of U.S. participation in NATO. Trump has bemoaned the disparity in financial commitments between the United States and other NATO members and equivocated when given the opportunity to affirm the North Atlantic Treaty’s Article 5, which guarantees mutual defense.<sup>4</sup> Reagan left no such uncertainty, calling NATO “[t]he bedrock of European security,” in one 1983 speech. Portraying the U.S. commitment to NATO as central to U.S. defense against Soviet foreign policy, Reagan lauded it as “not just a military alliance,” but

a voluntary political community of free men and women based on shared principles and a common history. The ties that bind us to our European allies are not the brittle ties of expediency or the weighty shackles of compulsion. They resemble what Abraham Lincoln called the “mystic chords of memory” uniting peoples who share a

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<sup>2</sup> “The Canal Debate,” *Washington Post*, Jan. 24, 1978,

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1978/01/24/the-canal-debate/43b772f5-beab-48ba-bb43-25aa5782302a/?utm\\_term=.674df2354124](https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1978/01/24/the-canal-debate/43b772f5-beab-48ba-bb43-25aa5782302a/?utm_term=.674df2354124).

<sup>3</sup> Hedrick Smith, “Reagan: What Kind of World Leader?” *New York Times*, November 16, 1980.

<sup>4</sup> “Remarks by President Trump at Press Conference After NATO Summit,” The White House, July 12, 2018, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-press-conference-nato-summit-brussels-belgium/>; Rosie Gray, “Trump Declines to Affirm NATO’s Article 5,” *Atlantic*, May 25, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/05/trump-declines-to-affirm-natos-article-5/528129/>.

common vision. So, let there be no doubt on either side of the Atlantic: the freedom and independence of America's allies remain as dear to us as our own.<sup>5</sup>

Second, the Trump administration has repeatedly sworn off any foreign policy based on spreading U.S. values. Although many of Reagan's policies were guided by the logic of national security, he vocally embraced universal liberal democratic ideals as the central thrust of U.S. Cold War foreign policy. "While we must be cautious about forcing the pace of change," Reagan stated in his famous Westminster address in 1982, "we must not hesitate to declare our ultimate objectives and to take concrete actions to move toward them." Those objectives were "to foster the infrastructure of democracy, the system of a free press, unions, political parties, universities, which allows a people to choose their own way to develop their own culture, to reconcile their own differences through peaceful means."<sup>6</sup> Under Reagan, Republicans co-opted the language of human rights, albeit an instrumentalized version that they used to highlight Soviet misdeeds in the international arena while typically remaining silent about the abuses of authoritarian regimes in allied countries.<sup>7</sup> The Trump team has forsaken even that semblance of human rights leverage, however, withdrawing in June 2018 from the United Nations Human Rights Council,<sup>8</sup> while the president has touted his warm relations with dictators in the Philippines,<sup>9</sup> North Korea,<sup>10</sup> and Russia.<sup>11</sup> The Trump administration's strategy of principled realism, set forth

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<sup>5</sup> Ronald Reagan, "Excerpts from Reagan's Speech to Legionnaires," *New York Times*, Feb. 23, 1983, <https://www.nytimes.com/1983/02/23/world/excerpts-from-reagan-s-speech-to-legionnaires.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Ronald Reagan, "Address to Members of the British Parliament," June 8, 1982, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, "The American Presidency Project," <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=42614>.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Ronald Reagan, "Statement on the 44th Session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights," Jan. 30, 1988, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, "The American Presidency Project." <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=36334>.

<sup>8</sup> Colin Dwyer, "U.S. Announces Its Withdrawal From U.N. Human Rights Council," *NPR*, June 19, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/2018/06/19/621435225/u-s-announces-its-withdrawal-from-u-n-s-human-rights-council>.

<sup>9</sup> Noah Bierman, "Trump Praises His 'Great Relationship' with Duterte, Ignores Questions About Human Rights," *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 13, 2017, <http://www.latimes.com/politics/washington/la-na-pol-essential-washington-updates-trump-meeting-with-duterte-praises-1510551368-htmlstory.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Max Greenwood, "Trump Lavishes Kim with Compliments After Historic Summit," *Hill*, June 12, 2018, <http://thehill.com/homenews/administration/391770-trump-lavishes-kim-with-compliments-after-historic-summit>.

<sup>11</sup> "Trump Says Putin Summit 'Even Better' than NATO Meeting," *Reuters*, July 17, 2018,

in the 2017 *National Security Strategy*, places the operative emphasis on realism, a fact that Trump emphasized when he promised, in a presidential address on Afghanistan, that “[w]e are not nation-building again; we are killing terrorists.”<sup>12</sup>

Finally, there is the Trump administration’s nationalistic approach to trade. In 1988, Reagan warned that protectionism was being used as a “cheap form of nationalism, a fig leaf for those unwilling to maintain America’s military strength and who lack the resolve to stand up to real enemies.” Trump, meanwhile, seems to relish the prospect of trade wars, directly contradicting Reagan’s vision that “expansion of the international economy is not a foreign invasion; it is an American triumph, one we worked hard to achieve, and something central to our vision of a peaceful and prosperous world of freedom.”<sup>13</sup> It is worth remembering that NAFTA, the trade deal that Trump has spent the most energy disparaging, was originally proposed by Reagan himself.

And yet, at the same time, there has been enough incoherence in the administration’s policies — and in its relations with congressional Republicans — to suggest a deeper continuity with the Reagan worldview. While the White House distances itself from NATO, for example, officials like Secretary of Defense James Mattis and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo have sought to reassure allies of U.S. commitment to its European alliances.<sup>14</sup> While swearing off nation-building, criticism of Venezuela by Vice President Mike Pence

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<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-nato/trump-says-putin-summit-even-better-than-nato-meeting-idUSKBN1K71PW>.

<sup>12</sup> The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States*, December 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>; “Remarks by President Trump on the Strategy in Afghanistan and South Asia,” The White House, Aug. 21, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-strategy-afghanistan-south-asia/>

<sup>13</sup> Ronald Reagan, “Radio Address to the Nation on the Canadian Elections and Free Trade,” Nov. 26, 1988, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, “The American Presidency Project,” <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=35207>.

<sup>14</sup> “US Commitment to NATO ‘Iron-Clad’: Mattis,” *France24*, Oct. 2, 2018, <https://www.france24.com/en/20181002-us-commitment-nato-iron-clad-mattis>; John Bowden, “Pompeo: NATO ‘More Indispensable than Ever’ in Light of Russia Threat,” *Hill*, April 27, 2018, <https://thehill.com/policy/defense/385211-pompeo-nato-more-indispensable-than-ever-in-light-of-russia-threat>.

and leading Republicans in the Senate make clear that this abandonment of idealism is hardly clear-cut or unanimous in the GOP.<sup>15</sup> And while the president has trumpeted the demise of NAFTA, U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer — who served as Deputy U.S. Trade Representative during the Reagan administration — effectively reinforced the importance of free trade by negotiating a U.S.- Mexico-Canada Agreement that improves upon its predecessor.<sup>16</sup>

What then is to be made of Reagan’s legacy at a time when that legacy is being pulled at by fracturing impulses within the Republican Party and debated anew by scholars?<sup>17</sup> Does the Republican worldview, forged during the age of Reagan, still serve as a map for this administration and its congressional counterparts? If so, are the policies of the Trump administration continuing that legacy, or deviating from it? *Texas National Security Review* has asked four scholars to examine these questions from different perspectives.

Andrew Natsios, former Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, and U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan, also finds salience in Reagan’s legacy in the Republican Party’s approach to development and human rights. Highlighting the way that Reagan linked democracy promotion to development, and greatly expanded humanitarian aid policy, Natsios argues that Reagan came from a tradition of conservative internationalism, with more in common with Woodrow Wilson than Richard Nixon. According to Natsios, Trump’s “warmed over isolationism, protectionism, and aggressive unilateralism” has thrown Reagan’s legacy into flux. Nevertheless, he still argues that the Republican development vision remains strong among members of Congress.

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<sup>15</sup> Alexandra Valencia, “Pence Urges Latin American Countries to Isolate Venezuela,” *Reuters*, June 18, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-politics-pence/pence-urges-latin-america-to-isolate-venezuela-idUSKBN1JO2NO>; “Senate Passes Rubio, Menendez Bill Extending Venezuela Sanctions,” Office of Marco Rubio, April 28, 2016, <https://www.rubio.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/press-releases?ID=C4Do49EC-4DoF-4D23-830C-E18BFC1E6DF3>.

<sup>16</sup> Justin Worland, “Trump’s NAFTA Replacement Largely Maintains the Status Quo on Free Trade,” *Time*, Oct. 1, 2018, <http://time.com/5411444/nafta-trump-deal-usmca/>.

<sup>17</sup> Melvyn P. Leffler, “Ronald Reagan and the Cold War: What Mattered Most?” *Texas National Security Review* 1, no. 3, <http://hdl.handle.net/2152/65636>.

Gail Yoshitani, Professor and Deputy Head of the Department of History at the United States Military Academy at West Point, turns next to the area of national security policy. She finds precedent for Trump's *National Security Strategy*, and its doctrine of "principled realism," in the writings of Reagan's first ambassador to the United Nations, Jeane Kirkpatrick. Kirkpatrick's writings in the years leading up to her appointment critiqued the assumptions regarding American power that underlay détente, and skewered the "vague, abstract universalism" of the "global approach" embodied by the Carter administration. If Kirkpatrick helped give form to the Reagan motto "peace through strength," Yoshitani argues, Republican foreign policymakers are now drawing on similar ideas as they seek to maximize U.S. power in a competitive world.

Jayita Sarkar, Assistant Professor at Boston University's Pardee School of Global Studies, examines the role of the nuclear industry in shaping GOP policy toward nonproliferation dating back to the Eisenhower era. She draws similarities between the dynamics that confronted Reagan in the 1980s — "proliferation risks are high, adversaries are confrontational, and Washington's economic prowess is uncertain" — and those facing Republicans today. According to Sarkar, the crisis currently facing the nuclear industry, together with Trump's disregard for international institutions, puts the traditional GOP "grand strategy" for nonproliferation at risk. She argues that it is unclear whether the Trump administration will be able to do what Reagan did: "walk the fine line between trade and controls, and economics and security."

Brian Muzas, Assistant Professor and Director of the Center for United Nations and Global Governance Studies at Seton Hall University's School of Diplomacy and International Relations, explores the impact of religion on Trump's and Reagan's approaches to major foreign policy crises: Reagan's competition with the Soviet Union and Trump's diplomacy with North Korea. While arguing that religion's influence on the two individual leaders is quite different, Muzas uses the concept of Religious Cultural Heritage (RCH) to explore a more structural dimension of religion in diplomacy. Comparing the impact of RCH on the decision-making of Reagan and Trump — along with the role of RCH in both Soviet and North Korean political cultures — Muzas suggests that attention to RCH questions can "provide unexpected avenues to apply lessons from Reagan's Soviet policies to Trump's North Korean policies."

The multivalent approach in this roundtable reflects at once the enduring importance of Reagan to understanding American conservatism and the shifting judgment of Reagan underway as an increasing number of scholars turn their attention to the Reagan years. The unclear nature of Reagan's legacy owes in part to Reagan's enigmatic nature while in the White House. Policy disagreements in the administration were common, factionalism was bitter, and turnover of key foreign policy officials was frequent. For scholars of the Reagan years, discerning Reagan's guiding hand in policy and process — and determining those achievements and failures that most bear his imprint — remain central tasks. Fresh approaches to national security and international politics that go beyond Cold War frameworks, along with newly available declassified documents, should help scholars to demystify Reagan. In the Republican mind, however, he is likely to be remembered, above all, for placing foreign policy at the service of the political-cultural cause of renewing America's purpose. For this reason, even as Trump steers the Republican party into unfamiliar policy and ideological directions in coming years, the shadow of Reagan is likely only to grow.

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## 2. Reagan's Legacy Today: Development Policy and Human Rights

*By Andrew S. Natsios*

Ronald Reagan remains a controversial, but also enigmatic, figure in American political history among scholars and policymakers alike. For those on the ideological Left, he protected the American plutocratic elite, cut programs for the poor, crusaded against Soviet communism as a zealot, and increased income inequality through his tax cuts. Internationally, they argue, he imposed Reaganite-Thatcherite free market classical economics (also called neo-liberalism) on the developing world through the Washington consensus — economic policy reforms designed by western hemisphere finance ministers in Washington in 1982 to rescue Latin American countries from bankruptcy and default — which forced social service cuts for the poor at home.<sup>18</sup> For those on the ideological Right, Reagan remains the greatest conservative president of the 20th century. He marshalled the resources of the federal government to defend freedom and roll back government's size and scope, defeated Soviet communism, reasserted American power in the world, saved American capitalism (and the developing world) from creeping socialism, and renewed the American dream.<sup>19</sup> These two ideologically-tainted views of the man distort the historical reality of his presidency: Reagan was more complex and yet also more consistent than critics and supporters understood.

This article focuses on one aspect of Reagan's legacy — international development policy and human rights — and the status of that legacy in the Republican party today. I argue that Reagan was a conservative internationalist in the tradition of Woodrow Wilson, rather than

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<sup>18</sup> See Paul Krugman, "The Political Failure of Trickle-Down Economics," *New York Times*, Aug. 20, 2017 <https://krugman.blogs.nytimes.com/2017/08/20/the-political-failure-of-trickle-down-economics/>; Peter Dreier, "Reagan's Real Legacy," *Nation*, Feb. 4, 2011, <https://www.thenation.com/article/reagans-real-legacy/>; Nate Jones and J. Peter Scoblic, "The Week the World Almost Ended," *Slate*, April 13, 2017, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2017/06/able-archer-almost-started-a-nuclear-war-with-russia-in-1983.html>.

<sup>19</sup> See Paul Kengor, *The Crusader: Ronald Reagan and the Fall of Communism* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006); John Fund, "The Triumph of Optimism," *Wall Street Journal*, Sept. 3, 2009; Lee Edwards, "The Reagan Legacy," *Heritage Foundation*, June 3, 2005, <https://www.heritage.org/commentary/the-reagan-legacy>.

a realpolitik president in the mold of Dwight Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles, and later Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger. Newt Gingrich once called Reagan a “Conservative Wilsonian,” an accurate observation. On foreign policy at least, Reagan is the antithesis of Donald Trump — in rhetoric, policy, and budgeting. Traditional foreign policy realists who dominated the Republican Party after World War II argued that moral principle and democratic norms should not drive foreign policy because they would lead the United States into quagmires and other unwinnable battles in an attempt to save the world from a host of evils and ills. Reagan disagreed. He believed if America fought the Cold War solely on the basis of national interest, and devoid of moral purpose and democratic idealism, it would ignore the Eastern Block’s greatest weakness: that it operated without the consent of its own people. The Cold War, Reagan believed, was not only a clash of conflicting national interests, but, even more importantly, of ideas. Ultimately, western democratic ideals were superior to Lenin’s dictatorship of the proletariat, which led to some of the most horrific atrocities of the 20th century.

Reagan’s vision of conservative internationalism, free and open markets, and democracy and human rights has dominated the Republican Party since his presidency. But that has begun to change as Donald Trump makes a 180-degree turn to an odd mixture of warmed-over isolationism, protectionism, and aggressive unilateralism.

### **Reagan’s Approach to Foreign Aid, Human Rights, and Democracy Promotion**

During his tenure in office, Reagan signed budgets that increased foreign aid spending dramatically. Sam Butterfield published one of the few political histories of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the principal federal agency responsible for carrying out the U.S. government’s foreign aid programs. Butterfield reports that, in the first term of the Reagan administration, development assistance increased from \$7 billion in 1980, the final year of the Carter presidency, to \$12 billion in 1985 — a 58 percent increase.

<sup>20</sup> At the same time, the Economic Security Fund — the diplomatically allocated, State Department-controlled foreign aid account dedicated to short-term diplomatic purposes, increased from 50 percent of all aid spending to 65 percent. It then dropped to 50 percent

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<sup>20</sup> Samuel Hale Butterfield, *U.S. Development Aid: An Historic First. Achievements and Failures in the Twentieth Century* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), 199–202.

again during the second term of the Reagan presidency, as Cold War tensions diminished. Reagan raised development assistance to its highest level as a percent of GDP (0.6 percent) in decades, according to the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition, an advocacy group for the 150 Account.<sup>21</sup> In 2015, the percentage was 0.18 percent of GDP.

Thus, arguably the most conservative Republican president since Calvin Coolidge increased foreign aid, at least in his first term, more than any previous Republican president. Certainly, some of this funding increase was used to fight the Soviet Union's influence in the developing world, which had become a Cold War battleground. But all foreign aid programs since their creation have furthered U.S. foreign policy objectives, broadly defined, including the Marshall Plan, so that, in and of itself, does not distinguish Reagan from previous American presidents.

The Reagan administration initiated several new aid programs, one of which was the Development Fund for Africa, with initial funding in 1987 of \$500 million, a precursor of the Millennium Challenge Account of the George W. Bush administration.<sup>22</sup> Both programs sought to reward good performers (as opposed to need-based aid): They distributed aid if the country undertook economic reforms (among other things), governed justly, and treated their people decently. The Reagan administration also introduced democracy and good governance programs into the U.S. foreign aid portfolio by creating the National Endowment for Democracy, the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute, and other initiatives to institutionalize democracy programs, all with federal funding. Funding for these accounts has grown steadily in both the State Department and USAID budgets in every presidency since then. Until the Reagan democracy program, most development was focused on economic growth, transportation and electricity infrastructure, or social service programs in education, clean water, and health.

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<sup>21</sup> "President Reagan on Foreign Assistance," U.S. Global Leadership Coalition, <http://www.usglc.org/media/2017/04/USGLC-President-Reagan-on-Foreign-Assistance.pdf>.

<sup>22</sup> Butterfield, *U.S. Development Aid*, 199–201.

At the inauguration of the National Endowment for Democracy in 1983, Reagan made an important statement about U.S. policy on democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, which is an eloquent summary of his conservative internationalist vision:

...In my lifetime, my adult lifetime, the world has been beset by “-isms”. And we remember one of those -isms that plunged us into a war. And it suddenly dawned on me that we, with this system that so apparently works and is successful, have just assumed that the people would look at it and see that it was the way to go. And then I realized, but all those -isms, they also are missionaries for their cause, and they’re out worldwide trying to sell it. And I just decided that this nation, with its heritage of Yankee traders, we ought to do a little selling of the principles of democracy.

Speaking out for human rights and individual liberty and for the rule of law and the peaceful reconciliation of differences, for democratic values and principles, is good and right. But it’s not just good enough. We must work hard for democracy and freedom, and that means putting our resources — organizations, sweat, and dollars — behind a long-term program.

Well, the hope is now a reality. The National Endowment for Democracy, a private, nonprofit corporation funded by the Congress, will be the centerpiece of this effort. All Americans can be proud of this initiative and the congressional action which made it possible...

This program will not be hidden in shadows. It’ll stand proudly in the spotlight, and that’s where it belongs. We can and should be proud of our message of democracy. Democracies respect individual liberties and human rights. They respect freedom of expression, political participation, and peaceful cooperation. Governments which serve their citizens encourage spiritual and economic vitality. And we will not be shy in offering this message of hope.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ronald Reagan, “Remarks at a White House Ceremony Inaugurating the National Endowment for Democracy,” Dec. 16, 1983, online by John Woolley and Gerhard Peters, “The American Presidency Project,” <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=40874>.

The Reagan administration USAID administrator, M. Peter McPherson (who many career officers regard as the greatest administrator since the agency's founding by John F. Kennedy, in 1961), institutionalized the democracy initiative by quietly creating the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, better known as IFES, as a private institution. Since its establishment in 1987, IFES has become the most prominent and respected international non-governmental organization focused exclusively on providing technical assistance to countries establishing the permanent institutional mechanisms needed to hold free, fair, and transparent elections. McPherson chose to create IFES discretely because he did not wish it to be regarded as a quasi-American government institution. It has since developed a deserved international reputation for integrity and independence, and for non-partisanship in its work.

The Reagan democracy agenda has had another unstudied consequence in international development policy in the 35 years since Reagan gave his celebrated speech. Democracy and governance programs have become a major sector of foreign aid investment by bilateral and multilateral aid agencies. USAID has an Office of Democracy and Governance and the State Department has the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, which together fund hundreds of democracy programs around the world through support for the development of local civil society, think tanks, and research centers. These programs also fund election monitoring to ensure integrity in voting, judicial reform to ensure an independent judiciary and thus the rule of law, the creation of political parties that support democracy, an independent news media, and legislative branches that are better staffed with a stronger capacity to do research and policy analysis. Prior to Reagan's initiative, limited aid dollars were spent on democracy and governance programs. This change has been accompanied by considerable resistance from dictatorships in the developing world, which have opposed adding democracy programs to U.N. agencies, such as the U.N. Development Program and the World Bank. This opposition has been led for several decades by China, and more recently, by Russia.

The most recent scholarship on development has identified the failure of governance as the single most important factor in state failure and state fragility. Democracy was thought to reduce economic growth in poor countries: Samuel Huntington and Joan Nelson argued famously that one-party states are more stable and have higher growth rates than

democracies.<sup>24</sup> However, the more recent work of Steve Radelet and Joseph Siegle, Michael Weinstein, and Morton Halperin, has shown that democracies in poor countries have a better record on economic growth than dictatorships.<sup>25</sup> The Reagan bully pulpit put the prestige and power of the United States government behind democracy and development. Reagan's democracy agenda and its programmatic manifestation programmatically and rhetorically connected his presidency with that of Wilson, rather than the traditional Republican realist school of foreign policy. In his speech before the U.S. Congress on April 2, 1917, Wilson argued that he was bringing America into World War I to "make the world safe for democracy," which may be the most famous summary formulation of Wilsonian idealism. Less than a year later, Wilson presented his 14 points plan for world peace, in an address once again to the U.S. Congress. While his 14 points go well beyond democracy promotion and human rights, his call for self-determination for oppressed people certainly advanced his principle of making the world safe for democracy and is expressed in his proposal to break up the colonial empires in points five through 13.

While Wilson did not propose any democracy and governance aid *programs* per se, he did recruit one of the most celebrated American humanitarian figures of the first three decades of the 20th century, Herbert Hoover, to run a massive food aid program to feed starving Europeans caught in the bloodshed and economic devastation of World War I, a program that saved millions of European lives. Wilson initiated this program days after the U.S. entrance into the war. It was the largest aid program in U.S. history until the Marshall Plan following World War II. Because of his food aid programs during and following the war, Hoover was among the most popular and respected Americans of his generation in Europe, until his humanitarian reputation became a casualty of the Great Depression.

During the great Sahelian drought of the mid-1980s, Reagan asked for a \$1 billion supplemental appropriation for humanitarian assistance for the dozen African countries severely affected by the drought, an initiative very much in keeping with Woodrow Wilson's

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<sup>24</sup> See Samuel Huntington and Joan Nelson, *No Easy Choice: Political Participation in Developing Countries* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976).

<sup>25</sup> Steve Radelet, *Emerging Africa: How 17 Countries Are Leading the Way*, (Washington, D.C.: Center for Global Development Books, 2010); Morton H. Halperin, Joseph T. Siegle, and Michael M. Weinstein, *The Democracy Advantage: How Democracies Promote Prosperity and Peace*, (New York: Routledge, 2005).

food aid programs during World War I.<sup>26</sup> That drought had the most devastating impact in Ethiopia and led to a famine in 1984 and 1985. Because of infighting between USAID and the National Security Council over whether to send food aid to Ethiopia, the U.S. humanitarian response was delayed and between 500,000 and one million Ethiopians died. The dispute was over whether or not to provide aid to people in a country governed by a U.S. Cold War-adversary, in this case Ethiopia, which was a Soviet client-state led by Haile Mariam Mengistu, called the Stalin of Africa for his brutality. After a BBC broadcast described people's suffering during the famine, a political storm erupted in the United States and other western nations. Reagan settled the dispute by siding with USAID and announced at a press briefing what is now known as the Reagan Doctrine of humanitarianism, that "a hungry child knows no politics." Since food aid does not go to governments, but is delivered through neutral U.N. humanitarian agencies, such as the World Food Program and UNICEF, the Red Cross, and international NGOs, to be distributed to people based on need, the assistance would benefit the people, not the abusive government of their country. Reagan's view was that politics should not impede humanitarian programs during disasters.

In 1987, USAID administrator Alan Woods issued what subsequently became known as the Woods Report, advocating a much more aggressive and forthcoming use of U.S. aid resources to support policy reforms aimed at promoting economic growth, which the Reagan administration argued was the best way to reduce poverty. Reagan was a strong advocate of free trade and open markets, as was Wilson (reflected in point three of his 14 points). The massive reduction in poverty in the developing world since 1980 in part is a function of the free trade regime put in place during the Reagan administration. Steve Radelet, who served as USAID's chief economist during the Obama administration, argues in his book, *The Great Surge: The Ascent of the Developing World*, that the opening of western markets (and to a lesser degree foreign aid) since 1980 has led to the largest proportionate reduction in poverty in world history, the highest rates of literacy, and the lowest levels of infant and maternal mortality.<sup>27</sup> Alex de Waal similarly argues in *Mass Starvation: The History and Future of Famine* that the years since 1980 have seen the largest reduction in mass starvation and famine deaths in the past 150 years both because of

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<sup>26</sup> See Butterfield, *U.S. Development Aid*.

<sup>27</sup> Steve Radelet, *The Great Surge: The Ascent of the Developing World*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015).



economic growth stimulated by the reduction of trade barriers and food aid programs run by donor governments.<sup>28</sup>

One of Reagan's other foreign aid initiatives was focused on Central America.<sup>29</sup> This aid program was based on recommendations made by the 1984 Kissinger Commission, which he appointed to review U.S. policy in that troubled region. The Commission proposed an \$8 billion aid program for the region to be spent between 1985 and 1989 to reduce social and economic inequities. Despite the failure of the administration to appropriate all of the proposed funding, USAID initiated a robust aid program in the region. Thus, during his time in the White House, Reagan used foreign aid as an instrument of national power to advance American national security interests, but, at the same time, he also advanced the interests of developing countries, which benefited from the economic assistance, and put in place the U.S. government doctrine of humanitarian neutrality during disaster responses.

### **Reagan's Humanitarian Legacy Today**

Both President Trump's rhetoric and his actions have been an attempt to move the Republican Party (and the country) in the opposite direction of Reagan when it comes to development policy, democracy programs, and human rights. This has put the entire Reagan legacy in doubt, though Republicans in the Congress have resisted Trump's lack of interest in developing countries, his hostility to democracy promotion, and his seeming indifference to human rights.

The Trump administration, in contrast to the Reagan administration, proposed a 28 percent reduction in foreign aid in its first budget, and an even higher cut in its second budget. However, Congress ignored the proposed administration budget cuts and instead appropriated more funding (this includes supplemental funding) than had been spent in the last Obama administration budget. According to the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition, when Sen. Rand Paul proposed a nearly 50 percent cut in foreign aid in 2015, the Senate vote against the amendment was 4-96. In 2017, Paul attempted to fund aid to Hurricane Harvey survivors by proposing a nearly 50 percent cut in foreign aid — he was defeated by a motion

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<sup>28</sup> Alex de Waal, *Mass Starvation: The History and Future of Famine*, (Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2018).

<sup>29</sup> See Butterfield, *U.S. Development Aid*.



to table the amendment in which he garnered 10 votes. Thus the Republican senators themselves appear to be protecting the U.S. foreign aid program from Trump administration cuts.

The Trump administration also contemplated merging USAID and the State Department, which would have effectively ended the U.S. government's long-term development program. The administration only later backed down because of sustained bipartisan opposition in the U.S. Congress and from civil society organizations. Nevertheless, the Trump administration's reputation for being hostile to democracy and human rights did not extend to who the president appointed to lead USAID: Mark Green, who had previously served with distinction as president of the International Republican Institute, a Reagan democracy initiative creation.

While Reagan supported democracy and human rights both in his rhetoric, but, more importantly, in his budgets, Trump has embraced political leaders abroad who have undermined democracy and the rule of law in their countries — including Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Turkey, Vladimir Putin in Russia, and Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines, among others. While Reagan became the greatest champion of free trade among post-World War II presidents — which helped to reduce poverty in developing countries — Trump has become its greatest opponent, initiating open trade wars with both U.S. allies and adversaries alike.

Donald Trump has reconstituted the Republican Party's governing coalition and its political principles, particularly when it comes to foreign affairs (which is where presidents exercise the greatest influence and face the fewest institutional constraints). The robust conservative internationalism that all post-World War II Republican presidents have shared, whether they have been realists or idealists, has been replaced with a hostility to refugee resettlement in the United States, aggressive protectionism on trade, dramatic cuts in foreign assistance, an insensitivity to human rights, and a hostility to democracy promotion. Only time will tell whether these changes in the Republican Party's worldview are permanent or whether they are a historical anomaly driven by a peculiar populist figure. If it's the former, then it constitutes a seismic shift that will put an end to the American-led post-World War II international order.

Radelet argues that the past few decades have been the greatest period for development in world history, a virtual Golden Age of Development.<sup>30</sup> But perhaps more of that credit belongs to Ronald Reagan than many critics have been willing to admit. While it appears the rule- and institution-based world order created by the United States after World War II, and strengthened and sustained by Reagan and later George H.W. Bush, is coming to an end, it is not at all clear what international system will take its place and whether that new system will advance democracy and human rights — or undermine them. America has been historically conflicted on whether and how to interact with the world beyond its borders. Isolationist sentiments have always churned below the surface, and risen to influence policy depending on election results and perceived foreign threats. In a democracy, no foreign policy prescription is ever final. No alliance and no allies are ever permanent. Reagan’s vision of democratic idealism may yet rise again. It all depends on where the voters take the country.

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<sup>30</sup> Radelet, *Great Surge*.

### 3. Principled Realism in the Reagan Administration

*By Gail Yoshitani*

*Champion nations design the world by building world systems that work for them. There are four pillars that support these world systems: a global economic system, a global framework of thought, a global military system, and a global system of rules.<sup>31</sup>*

– Col. Liu Mingfu

In his 2010 work, *The China Dream: Great Power Thinking and Strategic Posture in the Post-American Era*, Col. Liu Mingfu laid out a plan for China to replace the United States as the “champion nation” in the 21st century.<sup>32</sup> Victorious in World War II, the United States served as the architect for the last major revision of the international system, shaping each pillar — economic, thought, military, and rules — to best suit the security and prosperity of America and its allies. Presented with a bipolar world at the time, the United States shaped the four pillars within that context. When a unipolar world emerged at the end of the Cold War, the United States again adapted the pillars accordingly.

Within different contexts, the United States has possessed the requisite power — soft, hard, and smart — to design the international system it desired and to attract or pressure other powers to participate within that system.<sup>33</sup> Today, most agree that the context facing

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<sup>31</sup> Liu Mingfu, *The China Dream: Great Power Thinking and Strategic Posture in the Post-American Era* (New York: Beijing Mediatime Books, 2015), 31.

<sup>32</sup> Liu Mingfu, *The China Dream*. Liu’s book was originally published in 2010 but not translated into English for publication until 2015. For more background and insights regarding Liu’s work, see Jared McKinney, “The China Dream of Liu Mingfu,” *China-U.S. Focus*, Apr. 12, 2016, <https://www.chinausfocus.com/culture-history/the-china-dream-of-liu-mingfu>.

<sup>33</sup> Joseph Nye argues, “Power is the ability to attain the outcomes one wants, and the resources that produce it vary in different contexts.” Joseph Nye, “The Future of American Power: Dominance and Decline in Perspective,” *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 6 (November/December 2010): 2, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20788711>. Also see William Inboden, “What is Power?: A Bold New Design for a Master Metric of National Power,” *National Interest* 5, no. 2 (Nov. 1, 2016), <http://www.the-american-interest.com/2009/11/01/what-is-power/>. In

the United States is that of a multipolar world. The National Intelligence Council's (NIC) *Global Trends: Paradox of Progress* reports that "Between States, the post-Cold War unipolar moment has passed and the post-1945 rules based international order may be fading too."<sup>34</sup> In addition, the Trump administration's *National Security Strategy*, while never using the word "multipolar," describes "a competitive world" and identifies China and Russia as "revisionist powers" that "challenge American power, influence, and interests, attempting to erode American security and prosperity."<sup>35</sup>

Assuming the United States wishes to continue to serve as a "champion nation," how should its leaders reengineer each of the key pillars — economic, thought, military, and rules — so that American interests are well-served in the multipolar world that is unfolding in the 21st century? One answer to that question is found in the Trump administration's *National Security Strategy* which provides strategic prescriptions meant to help the United States grapple with the increasingly multipolar world. This essay will focus on the parallels that exist between the ideas articulated under the banner of "principled realism" in the 2017 *National Security Strategy* and several of the core foreign policy concepts laid out by Jeane J. Kirkpatrick to guide the Reagan administration's foreign policy in the more bipolar 1980s.

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"What is Power?" Inboden writes, "The applicability of power depends on context; if the context changes, so does the value of prior investments in military force, intelligence methods, alliances, and other traditional instruments of power."

<sup>34</sup> National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends: Paradox of Progress*, January 2017, [www.dni.gov/nic/globaltrends](http://www.dni.gov/nic/globaltrends). Traditionally, the National Intelligence Council publishes a *Global Trends* report every four years and specifically times its publication to be after the November presidential election and before the inauguration in January. The intent is to have the report be viewed as nonpartisan as possible. The 2017 report is the sixth in the series of reports that have sought to look 20 years into the future.

<sup>35</sup> *The National Security Strategy of the United States*, The White House, December 2017, 2, 25, 3, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>. By law, presidential administrations are required to provide Congress with a national security strategy that describes national security concerns and plans for dealing with those concerns.

## Realism Redux

At the conclusion of the Cold War, Henry Kissinger wrote *Diplomacy* with the expressed purpose of helping contemporary statesmen make wise decisions during the transition to the multipolar world he saw arising.<sup>36</sup> Kissinger presumed that the United States would attempt to decisively shape the international system in accordance with its own values. He said America could not “change the way it has perceived its role throughout its history, nor should it want to.”<sup>37</sup> As a warning, Kissinger cautioned that “[n]ever before has a new world order had to be assembled from so many different perceptions, or on so global of a scale,”<sup>38</sup> and that, “[f]or America, reconciling differing values and different historical experiences among countries of comparable significance will be a novel experience and a major departure from either the isolation of the last century or the *de facto* hegemony of the Cold War.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 27–28. Kissinger explained the importance of making correct choices early on in the transition period. “In retrospect, all international systems appear to have an inevitable symmetry. Once they are established, it is difficult to imagine how history might have evolved had other choices been made, or indeed whether any other choices had been possible. When an international order first comes into being, many choices may be open to it. But each choice constricts the universe of remaining options. Because complexity inhibits flexibility, early choices are especially crucial. Whether an international order is relatively stable, like the one that emerged from the Congress of Vienna, or highly volatile, like those that emerged from the Peace of Westphalia and the Treaty of Versailles, depends on the degree to which they reconcile what makes the constituent societies feel secure with what they consider just.” Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 26–27.

<sup>37</sup> Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 19.

<sup>38</sup> Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 26. Kissinger explained: “The two international systems that were the most stable – that of the Congress of Vienna and the one dominated by the United States after the Second World War – had the advantage of uniform perceptions. The statesmen at Vienna were aristocrats who saw intangibles in the same way, and agreed on fundamentals; the American leaders who shaped the postwar world emerged from an intellectual tradition of extraordinary coherence and vitality. The order that is now emerging will have to be built by statesmen who represent vastly different cultures.” Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 27.

<sup>39</sup> Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 24. It is worth bearing in mind that Kissinger was an American statesman who is widely associated with adhering to the Realist tradition. His association with the policy of détente discredited him with leaders in the Reagan administration.

Kissinger's optimistic view in the mid-1990s, that leaders could make decisions to impose global order, differs from those in the NIC *Global Trends* report and from the Trump administration's *National Security Strategy*. The NIC report forewarns, "It will be tempting to impose order on this apparent chaos but that ultimately would be too costly in the short term and fail in the long run."<sup>40</sup> The authors of the *National Security Strategy*, rather than assume an overly chaotic world, as the NIC does, instead describe a "competitive world" and advise that the United States promotes a balance of power favorable to the nation, its allies, and its partners.<sup>41</sup> And, in answer to Kissinger's concerns about "reconciling differing values and different historical experiences," the *National Security Strategy* makes two suggestions: first, tailor the U.S. approach by region, and second, limit the role America plays in the formation of a global system of thought.<sup>42</sup>

Regarding the former, the security strategy notes,

The United States must tailor our approaches to different regions of the world to protect U.S. national interests. We require integrated regional strategies that appreciate the nature and magnitude of threats, the intensity of competitions, and the promise of available opportunities, all in the *context* of local political, economic, social, and historic realities.<sup>43</sup>

Regarding the latter, the strategy document explains, "An America First National Security Strategy... is a strategy of *principled realism* that is guided by outcomes, not ideology."<sup>44</sup> Although the tag line, "America First," in capital letters, is striking and not typical of U.S. pronouncements, the authors of the 2017 *National Security Strategy* are not the first realists to provide foreign policy prescriptions for the United States.

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<sup>40</sup> Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 27; National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends*, ix.

<sup>41</sup> *National Security Strategy*, 2, ii.

<sup>42</sup> Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 24; *National Security Strategy*, 45, 1, 4, 37.

<sup>43</sup> Emphasis added. *National Security Strategy*, 45.

<sup>44</sup> Emphasis added. *National Security Strategy*, 1.

## Parallel Visions of America's Role in the World

In 1980, as Ronald Reagan campaigned for the presidency, Americans were introduced to the realism of Kirkpatrick. A life-long Democrat and a professor at Georgetown University, Kirkpatrick came to Reagan's attention through her essay, "Dictatorships and Double Standards," published in *Commentary*.<sup>45</sup> She subsequently served as a foreign policy advisor to Reagan during the campaign and on the president-elect's transition team, and was one of the very first officials that he selected for his Cabinet. Her position as the U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations and her service on the National Security Council ensured Kirkpatrick a place at the table whenever American foreign policy was considered, from January 1981 to April 1985.

The full scope of Kirkpatrick's thinking, taken from her essays and speeches, is reflective of the "principled realism" described in the 2017 *National Security Strategy*. First, Kirkpatrick constructed a case against the theories that underlay the American policy of détente, which had long served as the basis of American East-West policy toward the Soviet Union. She also objected to the theories that motivated the American move toward taking a global approach to international affairs, which served as the basis of American policies in the Third World. Finally, she possessed resolute faith in the American principles of liberal democracy.

### *Doing Away with Détente*

Kirkpatrick believed that "détente," which had been followed by the nation's leaders from the late 1960s until the election in 1980, was not working and needed to be discarded. As evidence, she pointed to the expansion of Soviet power both via its proxies in Latin America and Africa throughout the 1970s, and via direct use of Soviet forces in Afghanistan in 1979. Kirkpatrick explained that détente rested upon several popular theories that had proven to be untrue.

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<sup>45</sup> Robert Nisbet, "Foreword," in Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, *The Reagan Phenomenon - and other Speeches on Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy, 1983), xi.



The first incorrect theory held that “the proliferation of economic and cultural ties and rewards would function as incentives to restrain Soviet expansion” and that “deliberately building networks of relations between the West and the Soviet bloc would lead to the liberalization of the Soviet Union.”<sup>46</sup> The second theory of “weaker is stronger” suggested that “U.S. military superiority constitutes a provocation, which stimulates countermeasures and overreaction.”<sup>47</sup> Lastly, a third theory of “the stimulus-response, frustration-aggression” surmised that, “The Soviet Union behaved aggressively because it was frustrated by a sense of insecurity deriving from its relative weakness...[T]he solution to aggressive behavior...lay in creating a feeling of security by eliminating the impotence.”<sup>48</sup> Kirkpatrick believed that these three theories had gained so much traction because they aligned with rationalism and with “popular conceptions of human psychology and behavior.”<sup>49</sup>

Thus, the 2017 *National Security Strategy*'s attempt to temper U.S. expectations that China will liberalize is not without precedent. The document notes, “For decades, U.S. policy was rooted in the belief that support for China’s rise and for its integration into the post-war international order would liberalize China. Contrary to our hopes, China expanded its

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<sup>46</sup> Jeane Kirkpatrick, “The Reagan Phenomenon and the Liberal Tradition,” in *The Reagan Phenomenon* (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1983), 33, 13.

<sup>47</sup> Jeane Kirkpatrick, “Reagan Reassertion of Western Values,” in *The Reagan Phenomenon* (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1983), 33.

<sup>48</sup> Kirkpatrick, “Reagan Reassertion of Western Values,” in *The Reagan Phenomenon*, 34.

<sup>49</sup> Kirkpatrick, “Reagan Reassertion of Western Values,” in *The Reagan Phenomenon*, 34. She explained rationalism in this way: “Failure to distinguish between the domains of thought and experience, of rhetoric and politics, is, of course, the very essence of rationalism. Rationalism encourages us to believe that anything that can be conceived can be brought into being. The rationalist perversion in modern politics consists in the determined effort to understand and shape people and societies on the basis of inadequate, oversimplified theories of human behavior....Rationalist theories are speculative rather than empirical and historical; rationalist reforms seek to conform human behavior to oversimplified, unrealistic models. Rationalism not only encourages utopianism, but utopianism is a form of rationalism. Utopianism shares the characteristic features of rationalism: both are concerned more with the abstract than the concrete, with the possible than the probable, both are less concerned with people as they are than as they might be (at least as rationalists think they might be).” Jeane Kirkpatrick, “Introduction,” in *Dictatorships and Double Standards: Rationalism and Reason in Politics* (New York: American Enterprise Institute, 1982), 11.



power at the expense of the sovereignty of others.”<sup>50</sup> Such thinking aligns well with the conclusions Kirkpatrick reached regarding the Soviet Union.

Reagan campaigned on a foreign policy strategy entitled “Peace Through Strength.” In 1981, the administration’s answer to the Soviet challenge was to restore the American economy and rebuild the military. Kirkpatrick explains: “The fact that giant increases in defense spending have been undertaken by a president bent on economy should make the message all the clearer” that the United States was determined “to defend its legitimate interests.”<sup>51</sup> The 2017 *National Security Strategy* follows a similar course, with two of its four pillars entitled “Promote American Prosperity” and “Preserve Peace Through Strength.”

### *Curbing the Global Approach*

In addition to her critiques of the premises that underpinned détente, Kirkpatrick also spoke out against America’s pursuit of a “global approach” in the late 1970s. In her essay, “U.S. Security and Latin America,” she provided a detailed critique of the global approach’s ideology, which rested on what she called “a new optimistic theory of historical development” composed of “declining ideological competition, declining nationalism, increased global interdependence, and rising Third World expectations.”<sup>52</sup> In response to those trends, the global approach promoted the U.S. abandonment of the regionally focused Monroe Doctrine, trusting that hemispheric continuity was no longer needed for American security.<sup>53</sup> The United States should assume a “disinterested internationalist spirit” because, “What was good for the world was good for the United States,” and, “Power was to be used to advance moral goals, not strategic or economic ones.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> *National Security Strategy*, 25. Also: “These competitions [with Russia and China] require the United States to rethink the policies of the past two decades – policies based on the assumption that engagement with rivals and their inclusion in international institutions and global commerce would turn them into benign actors and trustworthy partners. For the most part, this premise turned out to be false.” *National Security Strategy*, 3.

<sup>51</sup> Kirkpatrick, “The Reagan Phenomenon and the Liberal Tradition,” 14.

<sup>52</sup> Kirkpatrick, “U.S. Security and Latin America,” 56.

<sup>53</sup> Kirkpatrick, “U.S. Security and Latin America,” 56. Kirkpatrick is quoting from Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Between Two Ages: America’s Role in the Technetronic Era* (New York: The Viking Press, 1970), 288.

<sup>54</sup> Kirkpatrick, “U.S. Security and Latin America,” 58.

Kirkpatrick found this redefinition of national interest troubling and called for the United States to “abandon the globalist approach which denies the realities of culture, character, geography, economics, and history in favor of a vague, abstract universalism.”<sup>55</sup> Such refrains appear again in the Trump administration’s *National Security Strategy* recommendation that the “United States must tailor [its] approaches to different regions of the world to protect U.S. national interests.”<sup>56</sup> Identifying sovereignty rather than universalism as the key component to order and stability, the strategy document explains, “Peace, security, and prosperity depend on strong, sovereign nations that respect their citizens at home and cooperate to advance peace abroad.”<sup>57</sup>

### *Remaining Faithful to the Liberal Democratic Tradition*

Finally, Kirkpatrick and the authors of the *National Security Strategy* share an allegiance to the principles of the American liberal democratic tradition. Both link legitimacy of government to consent, believe men and women possess fundamental individual liberties, and warn that, while American principles are good for the world, foreign policy should not be conceived of as a crusade nor should history be thought of as unfolding in a preordained fashion.

While it was unusual for Kirkpatrick to praise the Carter administration, in her essay, “On the Invocation of Universal Values,” she noted her appreciation for Carter’s emphasis on human rights as a reminder for America and the rest of the world that the “nation’s identity and purposes are deeply involved with the assertion of universal human rights.”<sup>58</sup>

Kirkpatrick was fond of explaining that “there are universal moral rights that men as men (and women as women) are entitled to and that these ought to be respected by governments.”<sup>59</sup> In agreement, the *National Security Strategy* states:

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<sup>55</sup> Kirkpatrick, “U.S. Security and Latin America,” 56.

<sup>56</sup> Emphasis added. *National Security Strategy*, 45.

<sup>57</sup> *National Security Strategy*, 1.

<sup>58</sup> Jeane Kirkpatrick, “On the Invocation of Universal Values,” 91.

<sup>59</sup> Kirkpatrick, “On the Invocation of Universal Values,” 92.

We will continue to champion American values and offer encouragement to those struggling for human dignity in their societies. There can be no moral equivalency between nations that uphold the rule of law, empower women, and respect individual rights and those that brutalize and suppress their people.<sup>60</sup>

Kirkpatrick saw Reagan's 1980 election as a sign of "a returned confidence concerning the relevance of our [America's] basic principles to the contemporary world."<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, her writings suggest that she would agree with the authors of the 2017 strategy document that, "The American way of life cannot be imposed upon others, nor is it the inevitable culmination of progress."<sup>62</sup> For instance, in her "Dictatorships and Double Standards" essay, she explained that the "assumption that one can easily locate and impose democratic alternatives to incumbent autocracies" had been detrimental to American security interests.<sup>63</sup> Kirkpatrick wrote:

No ideas hold greater sway in the mind of educated Americans than the belief that it is possible to democratize governments, anytime, anywhere, under any circumstances... Many of the wisest political scientists of this and previous centuries agree that democratic institutions are especially difficult to establish and maintain — because they depend on complex social, cultural, and economic conditions.<sup>64</sup>

In her essay, "On the Invocation of Universal Values," she also asked, "Why was the President [Carter] 'confident that democracies' examples will be compelling,' when history so clearly establishes that democratic governments are both rare and difficult to establish?"<sup>65</sup> This familiar sentiment is captured in the *National Security Strategy*: "And we prize our national heritage, for the rare and fragile institutions of republican government can only endure if they are sustained by a culture that cherishes those institutions."<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> *National Security Strategy*, 38.

<sup>61</sup> Kirkpatrick, "The Reagan Phenomenon and the Liberal Tradition," 12.

<sup>62</sup> *National Security Strategy*, 1, 4.

<sup>63</sup> Jeane Kirkpatrick, "Dictatorships and Double Standards," 34-35.

<sup>64</sup> Kirkpatrick, "Dictatorships and Double Standards," 30.

<sup>65</sup> Kirkpatrick, "On the Invocation of Universal Values," 92.

<sup>66</sup> *National Security Strategy*, 1.

According to Kirkpatrick, the principles of the liberal tradition were foundational to Reagan and key leaders of his administration. She explained, “The president and many of his principal advisers see themselves as purveyors and defenders of the classical liberal tradition in politics, economics, and society.”<sup>67</sup> Such a dutiful adherence to these principles compelled her to remind audiences that individuals, not forces, shape history. She advised against imagining “events [as] manifestations of deep historical forces,” which could not be controlled, or to presume that “the best any government can do is to serve as a ‘midwife’ to history, helping events to move where they are already headed.”<sup>68</sup> The Trump administration’s strategy document provides similar counsel: “There is no arc of history that ensures that America’s free political and economic system will automatically prevail.”<sup>69</sup>

## Conclusion

When the Cold War ended, the United States followed Kissinger’s urgings and sought ways to decisively shape the international system in accordance with American values. In contrast, Kirkpatrick in the 1990s urged the United States to prepare for a multipolar world by disbanding NATO, pulling most of its forces from Europe, and slashing the defense budget. She believed America lacked the money, will, and wisdom for global dominance and that conversion of the world to America’s political ideology was beyond America’s capacity.<sup>70</sup> For Kirkpatrick, to be a champion nation, the United States must preserve its freedom and well-being, support the spread and vitality of democratic governments consistent with the nation’s resources, and prevent the violent expansionist control of

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<sup>67</sup> Jeane Kirkpatrick, “The Reagan Phenomenon and the Liberal Tradition,” 7–8. Continuing: “In this regard let me mention a fact about the Reagan administration that has generally escaped notice: it is how relatively many academics are present in that administration at relatively high policy-making levels. The presence of intellectuals in politics almost always, I think, constitutes a signal that there is something more ideological self-conscious going on than is usual in American politics. There are more people in the Reagan administration thinking about fundamental questions than our highly pragmatic political tradition usually features.”

<sup>68</sup> Kirkpatrick, “Dictatorships and Double Standards,” 37.

<sup>69</sup> *National Security Strategy*, 37.

<sup>70</sup> Peter Beinart, *The Icarus Syndrome: A History of American Hubris* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2010), 295–96. For the thinkers and ideas who challenged Kirkpatrick see Beinart, 296–311.

major states.<sup>71</sup> Faced with a competitive international system, the 2017 *National Security Strategy* and its “principled realism” parallels Kirkpatrick’s foreign policy pronouncements in the 1980s and her recommendations for a champion nation in a multipolar world.<sup>72</sup>

*\*The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of USMA, the Department of the Army, DOD, or the U.S. Government.*

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## 4. The Reagonomics of Nonproliferation in GOP Behavior

*By Jayita Sarkar*

American nuclear nonproliferation policy is a combination of economic and security imperatives. Since the early Cold War years, the GOP’s policy response to the international threat of nuclear proliferation has been pro-business/pro-market marked by the intrinsic

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<sup>71</sup> Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, *Making War To Keep Peace* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 2. Kirkpatrick asked that this work be published posthumously.

<sup>72</sup> While President Ronald Reagan shared Kirkpatrick’s deep and abiding respect for the principles of the liberal democratic tradition and agreed that the nation’s identity and purpose were deeply involved with the vindication of liberty, he did not share Kirkpatrick’s moral realism.

struggle to strike the right balance between trade and controls. While the Trump administration's nonproliferation policy might seem unique, I argue that it is far from it. In fact, there are more similarities than differences between the current Republican administration and that of Ronald Reagan when it comes to nonproliferation. Although the second decade of the 21st century is comprised of political and economic realities that are distinct from the new Cold War and the stagflation of the Gipper's era, a look back at the Reagan administration's policies may help identify key converging patterns that unite Ronald Reagan with Donald Trump and shed light, at least in part, on the Republican "nuclear" grand strategy. In the era of Trump, however, the balance between trade and controls, and economics and security, is harder to attain since the incentives driving such balance are not abundant.

President Dwight Eisenhower initiated the nonproliferation regime with his 1953 "Atoms for Peace" proposal and the subsequent formation of the International Atomic Energy Agency. This nonproliferation regime, as it expanded with new institutions and mechanisms, such as the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Nuclear Suppliers Group, offered innovative possibilities both in terms of spreading nuclear technologies for economic gains and controlling them for security. Even though the NPT was negotiated by the Johnson administration, when it entered into force in 1970, the Nixon administration was willing to sell reactors in the Middle East as a means to implement a "partial NPT."<sup>73</sup>

The complex matrix of economics and security imperatives that constitutes U.S. nonproliferation policy leaned toward business interests during the GOP years, a trend that continues under the Trump presidency.

Nearly three decades after Ike, the Reagan administration faced a very different international economic and political context. Reagan's public legacy on economics, politics, and diplomacy is well known. The Gipper fought hard the "evil empire" of the Soviet Union, and won the Cold War for Americans. Melvyn Leffler, in a recent essay in the *Texas National Security Review*, calls upon scholars to embrace Reagan's complex legacy — he

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<sup>73</sup> Or Rabinowitz and Jayita Sarkar, "It Isn't Over Until the Fuel Cell Sings': A Reassessment of U.S. and French Pledges of Nuclear Assistance in the 1970s," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 41, no. 1-2 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2017.1328355>.

was a president who “won” the Cold War perhaps but provided little actual direction for his staff and advisors.<sup>74</sup>

During Reagan’s presidency, American capitalism entered a new stage — late 20th century finance capitalism — characterized by consolidation of the financial sector and the rise of institutional investors. The stagflation that plagued the U.S. economy for most of the 1970s was treated through extensive deregulation of the market and massive reduction in government expenditures. The celebration of the free market and faith in its “invisible hand” led to serious restructuring of the industrial landscape in the United States, so much so that, in some quarters, the Reagan years came to be known as the era of mergers.<sup>75</sup> Between 1980 and 1988, 25,000 deals were concluded worth \$2 trillion. And by the end of that period, merger filings had soared to 320 percent of what they had been in fiscal year 1980.

Before entering politics, Ronald Reagan, the actor, spent about a decade as the national spokesperson of General Electric (GE) through the American television series, *General Electric Theater* (1953–62) that was broadcast on CBS radio and television at a time when GE was fast expanding into nuclear reactor technologies.<sup>76</sup> This was the era of the U.S. nuclear industry successfully expanding by selling light water reactors abroad: GE and Westinghouse were the top U.S. firms constructing reactors at home and overseas. During his GE years, the Reagan family house showcased cutting edge GE home appliances, and was meant to push the company slogan, “Live Better Electrically.”<sup>77</sup> Reagan was also GE’s goodwill ambassador, spending several weeks per year on the road touring the company’s myriad facilities scattered throughout the country. He was fiercely pro-business and anti-

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<sup>74</sup> Melvyn Leffler, “Ronald Reagan and the Cold War: What Mattered Most,” *Texas National Security Review* 1, no. 3 (2018), <https://tnsr.org/2018/06/ronald-reagan-and-the-cold-war-what-mattered-most/>

<sup>75</sup> Peter Bahr, “Wave of Mergers, Takeovers is a part of Reagan Legacy,” *Washington Post*, Oct. 30, 1988, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/business/1988/10/30/wave-of-mergers-takeovers-is-a-part-of-reagan-legacy/e90598c2-628d-40fe-b9c6-a621e298671d/>.

<sup>76</sup> Tomas Kellner, “Lights, Electricity, Action: When Ronald Reagan Hosted ‘General Electric Theater,’” *GE Reports*, Feb. 19, 2018, <https://www.ge.com/reports/ronald-reagan-ge/>.

<sup>77</sup> Jacob Weisberg, “The Road to Reagandom,” *Slate*, Jan. 8, 2016, [http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/politics/2016/01/ronald\\_reagan\\_s\\_conservative\\_conversion\\_as\\_spokesman\\_for\\_general\\_electric.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2016/01/ronald_reagan_s_conservative_conversion_as_spokesman_for_general_electric.html).



regulation by the time he became California governor, a position he held for two consecutive terms (1967–75).

As U.S. president, Reagan reduced government spending in a host of areas like public housing and food stamps. However, his administration was a staunch supporter of the nuclear industry. Instead of spending cuts, the Reagan administration increased the budget for nuclear energy by 36 percent to \$1.6 billion in 1981.<sup>78</sup> This was unique because every other Department of Energy program at that time experienced a slash in their budgetary allocation. The U.S. nuclear industry was in dire straits. Between 1977 and 1983, there were no new orders for domestic nuclear power plants, and a large number of existing orders were cancelled. American companies — large corporations like Bechtel as well as smaller and lesser known firms — appealed to the Reagan transition team in late 1980 to help save the industry, and the president and his administration tried to oblige for the better part of the decade.

Reagan inherited a U.S. nuclear industry that had been under such economic duress since the mid-1970s that, by the end of that decade, the United States had lost its monopoly as the supplier of civilian nuclear technologies in the non-Communist world. The global atomic marketplace had new contenders such as the French, the West Germans, and others. The formation of the Nuclear Suppliers Group in 1975 was not merely a response to India's first nuclear explosion the previous year, but was also in reaction to the economic reality of decline in U.S. global market share in nonmilitary nuclear technologies.<sup>79</sup> The Carter administration's heavy-handed policies in favor of nonproliferation hurt the industry further by terminating lucrative programs such as commercial reprocessing. Even before the 1979 accident in Three Mile Island in Pennsylvania, the profitability and cost-effectiveness of the civilian nuclear sector were becoming suspect.

The Reagan administration's efforts to aid the nuclear industry included two main components: promoting pro-business policies at home and opening new markets abroad.

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<sup>78</sup> Mark Hertsgaard, "Nuclear Reaganomics," *New York Times*, Oct. 9, 1981, <https://www.nytimes.com/1981/10/09/opinion/nuclear-reaganomics.html>.

<sup>79</sup> William Burr, "A Scheme of 'Control': The United States and the Origins of the Nuclear Suppliers' Group, 1974–1976," *International History Review* 36, no. 2 (2014), <https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2013.864690>.



First, in terms of pro-business policies, Reagan undertook deregulation of the nuclear industry by easing the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's licensing process and overturning major Carter-era policies. In his statement in October 1981, he announced, "Nuclear power has become entangled in a morass of regulations that do not enhance safety but that do cause extensive licensing delays and economic uncertainty."<sup>80</sup> Hence, he put forward a series of business-friendly measures that included lifting the ban on commercial reprocessing, and encouraging the construction of plutonium-fueled breeder reactors. The Reagan administration even gave the go-ahead on the Clinch River breeder reactor in Tennessee, despite questions over whether the reactor and the technology itself were economically viable.<sup>81</sup>

Second, the Reagan administration sought out new, and perhaps proliferation-risky, markets abroad for the U.S. nuclear industry, namely, the People's Republic of China. In December 1982, the Reagan White House commissioned a study on "U.S. Relations with China and Taiwan," which examined, among other things, "What are the problems in reaching a satisfactory agreement with the Chinese which will advance U.S. non-proliferation goals and at the same time permit the U.S. to sell the PRC nuclear power equipment?" and, "How can we encourage China to join the IAEA?"<sup>82</sup> A little over a month later, Reagan gave the green light for a 123 agreement with Beijing.<sup>83</sup> In October 1983, a CIA report noted that Chinese entry into the IAEA would serve the twin purposes of restraining China as a nuclear exporter (possibly, vis-à-vis Pakistan's nuclear weapons program), as well as opening China up to nuclear cooperation with advanced industrial nations like the

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<sup>80</sup> "Ronald Reagan's Statement Announcing a Series of Policy Initiatives on Nuclear Energy," Oct. 8, 1981, Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=44353>.

<sup>81</sup> Michael Camp, "'Wandering in the Desert': The Clinch River Breeder Reactor Debate in the U.S. Congress, 1972-1983," *Technology and Culture* 59, no. 1 (2018), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/tech.2018.0005>.

<sup>82</sup> National Security Study Directive 12-82, "U.S. Relations with China and Taiwan," Dec. 7, 1982, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/archives/reference/scanned-nssds/nssd12-82.pdf>.

<sup>83</sup> National Security Decision Directive 76, "Peaceful Cooperation with China," Jan. 18, 1983, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/archives/reference/scanned-nsdds/nsdd76.pdf>.

United States.<sup>84</sup> China entered the IAEA in 1984, and in July 1985, Reagan submitted the U.S.-China 123 agreement for congressional approval.<sup>85</sup>

Reagan's approach was not a departure from the pro-market initiatives inaugurated under the Eisenhower administration, but rather a return to them. The Gipper's policies were a strong reaction against the Carter-era controls that hurt the U.S. nuclear industry, not to mention U.S. relations with allies and friends abroad regarding nonproliferation. The policies of the Reagan era, by undoing a host of nonproliferation controls put in place by Jimmy Carter, only solidified the GOP strategy on nonproliferation, namely, that nonproliferation was an important international commitment of the U.S. government — but that it would not come at the expense of U.S. financial interests and those of its nuclear industry.

### **Nonproliferation in the Trump Era**

A closer look at Donald Trump's presidency reveals similar pro-business, pro-market policies in the nuclear domain. The revelation earlier this summer that Trump had directed Secretary of Energy Rick Perry to bail out unprofitable nuclear and coal plants was uncannily similar to the Gipper's call for "efficient utilization of our abundant, economical resources of coal and uranium."<sup>86</sup> The current discussions on whether to build a mixed oxide fuel plant in South Carolina and the Trump administration's early support for it are

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<sup>84</sup> CIA Report GI M-83 10237, "China's Entry Into the IAEA," Oct. 6, 1983, CIA CREST Database, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP85T00287R000600940001-4.pdf>.

<sup>85</sup> The Reagan administration's brief suspension of U.S. membership of the IAEA in September 1982, therefore, was not a reduced commitment to nonproliferation. Instead, it must be understood in the context of the U.S. position on Israel's counterproliferation.

<sup>86</sup> "Statement from the Press Secretary on Fuel-Secure Power Facilities," June 1, 2018, The White House Briefings & Statements, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/statement-press-secretary-fuel-secure-power-facilities/>. See also: Brad Plumer, "Trump Orders a Lifeline for Struggling Coal and Nuclear Plants," *New York Times*, June 1, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/01/climate/trump-coal-nuclear-power.html>.

similarly reminiscent of the Reagan administration's initial backing of the Clinch River breeder reactor project.<sup>87</sup>

The U.S. nuclear industry is worse off now than it was in the Reagan years. Westinghouse Electric's bankruptcy filing in 2017 is a major case in point.<sup>88</sup> While the fate of the U.S. civilian nuclear enterprise remains uncertain, Westinghouse's first next-generation nuclear reactor AP1000 will soon begin producing electricity in Zhejiang, China.<sup>89</sup> New and proliferation-risky markets are being explored as well. Take, for example, the proposed 123 agreement with Saudi Arabia, a country already at odds with its regional rival, Iran, and its nuclear program.<sup>90</sup> With Westinghouse's recent acquisition and reorganization, there are arguably economic incentives to ignore nonproliferation priorities.<sup>91</sup> Saudi Arabia has expressed its desire to keep the uranium enrichment option open — a direct pathway to developing nuclear weapons — in future civilian nuclear cooperation.

If the enrichment option is indeed kept open to “sweeten” the nuclear cooperation agreement for the Saudis, it would stand in opposition to U.S. nonproliferation goals. In that scenario, the Trump administration would have failed to strike the right balance between economics and security, unlike its Republican predecessors. When Nixon offered U.S. power reactors to Israel and Egypt, he and Henry Kissinger hoped the offers could

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<sup>87</sup> Timothy Gardner, “Trump Administration Axes Project to Generate Power from Plutonium,” *Reuters*, May 13, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-plutonium-mox/trump-administration-axes-project-to-generate-power-from-plutonium-idUSKCN1IEoLH>.

<sup>88</sup> Diane Cardwell and Jonathan Soble, “Westinghouse Files for Bankruptcy, in Blow to Nuclear Power,” *New York Times*, Mar. 29, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/29/business/westinghouse-toshiba-nuclear-bankruptcy.html>.

<sup>89</sup> “Westinghouse's Marquee Reactor in China Begins Fuel Loading,” *Bloomberg News*, Apr. 25, 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-04-25/westinghouse-s-marquee-reactor-in-china-begins-fuel-loading>.

<sup>90</sup> “Trump Considers Easing Nuclear Rules for Saudi Project,” *Bloomberg News*, Dec. 12, 2017, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-12-12/trump-is-said-to-consider-easing-nuclear-rules-for-saudi-project>.

<sup>91</sup> Anya Litvak, “Westinghouse Emerges from Bankruptcy with New Owner,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, Aug. 1, 2018, <http://www.post-gazette.com/powersource/companies/2018/08/01/Westinghouse-emerges-from-bankruptcy-with-new-owner/stories/201808010162>.

function as a “partial NPT” in the Middle East.<sup>92</sup> In Reagan’s offer of power reactors to Beijing, the key issue was selling U.S. reactors in a way to both serve the interests of U.S. nuclear industry as well as bind the recipient country (i.e., China) into new nonproliferation controls.

If the Trump administration moves forward with an enrichment-permissive 123 agreement with Saudi Arabia, it would be representative of both the current administration’s disdain for international commitments as well as the unique position of the U.S. nuclear industry. The United States’ transformation from a monopoly nuclear supplier in the Eisenhower years, to one of several suppliers in the Reagan era, to a very weak supplier in contemporary times, has implications for the effectiveness of U.S. nonproliferation policy. From the late 1950s onward, economic clout enabled Washington to push for safeguards on its reactors, luring recipients with generous loan offers. That was harder to do in the 1970s, and became even harder in the 1980s because of the economic downturn. The current situation is even tougher. The economic imperative of selling nuclear facilities abroad is high — after all, it could save the U.S. nuclear industry — while the security imperative of preventing proliferation is low. The current administration’s neglect of international institutions, like the IAEA, and its disdain for U.S. commitments to global governance structures raise doubts whether there might be many nonproliferation accolades to hand out to the contemporary GOP.

Today, three decades since the end of Reagan’s presidency, the United States finds itself in a world similar to that of the 1980s — proliferation risks are high, adversaries are confrontational, and Washington’s economic prowess is uncertain. Uniquely, this time under the Trump presidency, the U.S. nuclear industry is in a crisis that is far more serious than it was under Reagan. The Reagan administration was mostly able to walk the fine line between trade and controls, and economics and security.<sup>93</sup> It is far from certain, however,

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<sup>92</sup> Rabinowitz and Sarkar, “It Isn’t Over Until the Fuel Cell Sings.” See also: Or Rabinowitz, “Signed, Sealed but Never Delivered: Why Israel Did not Receive Nixon’s Promised Nuclear Power Plants,” *International History Review* 40, no. 5 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2018.1436581>.

<sup>93</sup> The Reagan administration’s nonproliferation efforts toward China were closely associated with Beijing’s nuclear weapons assistance to Islamabad — a frontline ally at the time against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

whether the Trump administration can adhere to what has been, up to this point, the GOP's "grand strategy" on nonproliferation. The outcome could unravel the longstanding U.S. position in favor of nuclear nonproliferation.

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## **5. O Kings (Presidents?), Show Discernment: Religious Cultural Heritage and Foreign Policy in the Reagan and Trump Eras**

*By Brian K. Muzas*

There is a rich literature on U.S. presidential religion in general, with many presidential biographies treating the religion of individual presidents specifically. Although these inquiries sometimes connect religious background to presidential outlooks and decision-making, most do not offer rigorous social-scientific analysis of the connection between religion and policy. Nevertheless, even a casual examination of these works indicates that religious cultural heritage (RCH) is a factor in presidential decision-making. Ronald Reagan drew from his religious cultural heritage as a means of expression and used it as a tool for communicating his policy ideas, both domestic as well as foreign. But does religious cultural heritage continue to influence current Republican foreign policy in ways that are similar to those of the Reagan era? Endeavoring to understand how religious cultural heritage influenced Reagan's foreign policy, in particular with regard to the Soviet threat,

may illuminate how the current administration could apply lessons learned from the Reagan era to the national security threats it faces today.

When considering how religious cultural heritage can wield influence on a president's foreign policy, the first thing that comes to mind is the nature of RCH influence upon individual leaders — influence that arises either because of exposure to a religious tradition, adherence to a religious tradition, or both. However, religious cultural heritage can also exert influence at a collective level: Interacting states or peoples may have a common religious history, due either to sharing a religion or adhering to conflicting religions. In both individual and collective cases, religious cultural heritage can provide a vocabulary and framework for expressing and evaluating ideas concerning the best way to live. As a result, both individual and collective decision-making frameworks may show the fingerprints of religious cultural heritage in terms of philosophical anthropology (i.e., the theory of human nature), philosophical ethics (i.e., a theory of good and bad, right and wrong), or philosophy of government (i.e., what governments should and can do well, and what they cannot).

Because current Republican foreign policy is inextricably linked to President Donald Trump, I will begin by making individual-level comparisons between Presidents Reagan and Trump, before going on to compare the role of religion in the major foreign policy crises of the two administrations. First, however, it is important to briefly review the foreign policy doctrines of both men before considering how RCH has manifested in the foreign policies of each president.

### **The Reagan and Trump Doctrines**

The Reagan Doctrine can be summed up as a strategy to overwhelm the Soviet Union so as to diminish its global influence and end the Cold War. To achieve that aim, the Reagan administration pursued policies including continuing a military buildup and providing aid to anti-communist movements throughout Africa, Asia, and Latin America. In short, U.S. policies of containment and détente were superseded by a policy of rolling back the Soviets.

In contrast, the Trump Doctrine has been pithily, if somewhat cheekily, characterized as “No Friends, No Enemies.” Those struck by the seemingly chaotic nature of Trump’s statements and actions have described the emerging Trump Doctrine as “Don’t Follow Doctrine.” Others, explaining how the Obama Doctrine has been superseded, have described the Trump Doctrine as the “[expletive deleted] Obama Doctrine.” These characterizations are consistent with Trump’s first foreign policy speech in April of 2016. In that speech, Trump said, “America is going to be ... a great and reliable ally again,” yet he also said, “The countries we are defending must pay for the cost of this defense, and if not, the U.S. must ... let these countries defend themselves.” Again, Trump said, “We need to be clear-sighted about the groups that will never be anything other than enemies,” and yet added, “The world must know that we do not go abroad in search of enemies, that we are always happy when old enemies become friends and when old friends become allies.”<sup>94</sup>

### Christianity in America

To properly understand the role religious cultural heritage has played in the foreign policies of both Reagan and Trump, it is necessary to understand the different Christian approaches to war and use of force.

Philosophies of anthropology, ethics, and government often come together in important ways when religious traditions grapple with questions of war and force. Concerning such questions, Roland Bainton divided Christian thought on war into the following three categories: crusade, just war, and pacifism.<sup>95</sup> Additionally, Reinhold Niebuhr defined good as “the harmony of the whole on various levels” and evil as “the assertion of some self-interest without regard to the whole.”<sup>96</sup> These definitions parallel the classical and Christian understandings of *bellum* versus *duellum* (recourse to force on public authority for public interest versus recourse to force on private authority for private interest), and

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<sup>94</sup> “Read Donald Trump’s ‘America First’ Foreign Policy Speech,” *Time*, April 27, 2016, <http://time.com/4309786/read-donald-trumps-america-first-foreign-policy-speech/>.

<sup>95</sup> Roland H. Bainton, *Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace: A Historical Survey and Critical Re-Evaluation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960).

<sup>96</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1944), 9.



*caritas* versus *cupiditas* (charity versus selfishness), as explained by James Turner Johnson.<sup>97</sup>

If one adopts Bainton's terminology, Niebuhr's approach to self-interest, and Johnson's definition of Christian charity, a sensible comparison can be made between crusade, just war, and pacifism, and realism, selective engagement, and isolationism. This is supported by the fact that classical Christianity stressed the idea of sovereignty as responsibility for the common good (including the good of those not of one's own political unit), with the common good understood in terms of *tranquillitas ordinis* (the tranquility of order, meaning a well-ordered peace).<sup>98</sup> In terms of propensity to use force, one could characterize realism and crusade as militant, selective engagement and just war as moderate, and isolationism and pacifism as restrained. However, when it comes to interest, the approaches of realism, selective engagement, and isolationism come from self-centered points of view, whereas crusade, just war, and pacifism arise from other-centered points of view. Granted, all six of these categories are ideal types, and there are ranges of predispositions towards the use of force just as there are mixed motivations. Nevertheless, the noted differences afford one way to distinguish the influence of religious cultural heritage from conventional analyses of self-interest, power, and opportunity.

### Reagan and Religious Cultural Heritage

The above big-picture take on Christian thought on war and force can be fleshed out for specific leaders. In the case of Reagan, his RCH experience was varied. His chosen denomination was that of his mother, namely the Christian Church (also known as the Disciples of Christ or DOC). Although the DOC is a mainline Protestant denomination in the Reformed tradition, Reagan often used evangelical language, such as referencing "born again" to express himself both in speaking and in writing. Catholicism was also part of his RCH experience, both because of the Catholic heritage of his father and because of the

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<sup>97</sup> James Turner Johnson, "Just War, As It Was and Is," *First Things* (January 2005), <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2007/01/just-war-as-it-was-and-is-2>.

<sup>98</sup> See Joachim von Elbe, "The Evolution of the Concept of the Just War in International Law," *American Journal of International Law* 33, no. 4 (October 1939): 665-688. The whole article is worth reading, but pages 668 and 669 are particularly relevant to the *tranquillitas ordinis*.



conversion of his first wife to Catholicism (their children were baptized Catholic as well). Overall, Reagan's Christianity was a practical or applied Christianity. Nevertheless, he was capable of maintaining distinctions when using words which could have different meanings in the pulpit and the public square. For example, Reagan's use of the equivocal term "spirit" is strikingly consistent across the speeches he gave during his career: He used the term "renewal" when speaking about American spirit but the term "revival" when talking about religious spirit.<sup>99</sup> Likewise, his general policy of peace through strength and his specific nuclear policies and goals — the Strategic Defense Initiative was defensively oriented, and, in an ideal world, Reagan would have preferred nuclear abolition<sup>100</sup> — fall at an intermediate position between just war and pacifism that might be characterized as just nuclear defense.<sup>101</sup>

The way that Reagan's religious cultural heritage came into play can be seen by exploring how his approach to arms control, arms reduction, and nuclear abolition are instances of Reagan's philosophical ethics, philosophy of government, and philosophical anthropology. Reagan saw the world in terms of universal ideas. Through them, he understood the Soviet Union to be an evil force that must be fought. Reagan did so with a strong military, but he avoided direct provocation in order to foster arms reductions. His approach was consistent across two presidential terms, and religious cultural heritage was a foundation of Reagan's worldview and decision-making, a source of language and expressions when articulating his ideas and policy goals, and a tool to achieve his aims. Although Reagan was perhaps more defensive or restrained in orientation than some of his predecessors (for example, President Harry Truman's decision-making framework proved to be fairly permissive concerning what he considered to be just means for wartime use), Reagan's "quiet

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<sup>99</sup> Paul Kengor, *God and Ronald Reagan: A Spiritual Life* (New York: ReganBooks, 2004), 166. I hypothesize that this consistency could be explained by the 19th-century historical ties between the Disciples of Christ and the Restoration Movement rooted in the Second Great Awakening.

<sup>100</sup> "Reagan's nuclear abolitionism was visionary, even utopian." Paul Lettow, *Ronald Reagan and His Quest to Abolish Nuclear Weapons* (New York: Random House, 2005), xi.

<sup>101</sup> See, for example, James W. Walters, ed., *War No More? Options in Nuclear Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989). Faced with Cold War arms race escalation, this intermediate position between pacifism and just war gave, under the circumstances, provisional moral sanction to nuclear deterrence while holding pacifist ideals.

diplomacy,” with “features of détente,”<sup>102</sup> falls within the just war framework expected of the broad contours of American Christianity.

Because Reagan did not face the same kind of nuclear brinkmanship that some of his predecessors did, it is more profitable to focus on the philosophies of ethics, government, and human nature which underlie just war thought, rather than on the just war framework itself. Reagan’s conception of the Soviet Union expressed his ethics and theory of human nature and implied an other-centered vision of sovereignty as responsibility for the common good, even the good of one’s adversaries. Moreover, Reagan’s approach to peace through strength implicitly differentiated between force and violence, while proportionately and prudently relating ends to means. Finally, Reagan expressed his ideas, which he believed to be universal in scope, not only through secular illustrations and terminology derived from the Enlightenment, but from imagery and literary allusions originating from Christian religious cultural heritage. It is misguided to wonder whether Reagan was a hawk or a dove because those binary categories do not capture the RCH characteristics pertinent to Reagan’s worldview and nuclear decisions.

### **Trump and Religious Cultural Heritage**

It is harder to judge the influence of religious cultural heritage on Trump, both because his presidency is still in progress and because present-day commentary lacks historical distance. Nevertheless, it is possible to say a few words about Trump’s RCH experience and to connect that experience to his attitudes, policies, and worldview. Trump’s father was a Lutheran and his mother was a Presbyterian. His parents were married in the Presbyterian Church, and Trump attended and was confirmed in the First Presbyterian Church of Jamaica, Queens. However, the family began to attend Marble Collegiate Church because of author and minister Norman Vincent Peale. Peale, perhaps most famous for publishing *The Power of Positive Thinking* in 1952, mentored Trump until his death in 1993, and Trump has cited Peale and Peale’s works.<sup>103</sup> More recently, Trump has associated with prosperity

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<sup>102</sup> Ronald Reagan, “Interview with Representatives of Western European Publications,” The American Presidency Project, May 21, 1982, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=42572>.

<sup>103</sup> See, for example, Michael Kranish and Marc Fisher, *Trump Revealed: The Definitive Biography of the 45th President* (New York: Scribner 2016), 81.

theology proponent and Pentecostal televangelist Paula White. It has been claimed that White brought Trump to Christianity,<sup>104</sup> and it is certain that Trump engaged her for private Bible study. White has also hosted him on her television show, and it was White who gave the invocation at Trump's inauguration.

The way that religious cultural heritage manifests itself in Trump's presidency is perhaps less full-featured than in Reagan's case. Nevertheless, the influence of RCH cannot be discounted. Trump would have learned from his mainline Protestant upbringing that work and service go together. Many, although not all, of his policies and guidelines are compatible with traditional Judeo-Christian principles, yet, paradoxically, Trump's worldview seems to encompass patriotic, God-and-country, Judeo-Christian values in a manner that nevertheless disregards certain conventions of language intended to avoid offending or disadvantaging members of particular societal groups. Moreover, Trump has spoken about a God-given right to self-defense.<sup>105</sup> Although the setting of that remark was an address to the National Rifle Association, the December 2017 *National Security Strategy* references both defense and God-given rights in the context of international politics.<sup>106</sup> Add in Trump's stated preference for nuclear abolition and the strategy document's references to peace through strength,<sup>107</sup> and Trump's and Reagan's positions may be closer in certain respects than some realize. As a result, it is possible that select characteristics of mainline, religious cultural heritage may present themselves in the two men's presidencies and policies, including foreign, defense, and nuclear policies. However, I expect that the direct effect of religious cultural heritage will manifest itself less strongly in the Trump

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<sup>104</sup> Samuel Smith, "James Dobson Says Paula White Led Donald Trump to Jesus Christ," *Christian Post*, June 29, 2016, <https://www.christianpost.com/news/james-dobson-says-paula-white-led-donald-trump-to-jesus-christ-165844/>.

<sup>105</sup> Donald J. Trump, "Remarks at the National Rifle Association Leadership Forum in Dallas, Texas," The American Presidency Project, May 4, 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=129655>.

<sup>106</sup> *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, White House, December 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>.

<sup>107</sup> "What would be the ultimate? Let's see. No more nuclear weapons anywhere in the world, no more wars, no more problems, no more conflicts ... That would be my ultimate." Reuters staff, "Trump Says 'Ultimate Deal' with Putin Would Be World Without Nuclear Weapons," *Reuters*, July 12, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nato-summit-trump-nuclear/trump-says-ultimate-deal-with-putin-would-be-world-without-nuclear-weapons-idUSKBN1K21ME?il=0>.

administration's policies than it did in those of the Reagan administration. Whereas Reagan exhibited a vocabulary, conceptual toolbox, and imagination that was suffused with RCH references, in this respect, Trump's expressions, framework, and notions seem impoverished by comparison.

Nevertheless, consider Trump's decision-making framework in light of what he said about the missile strike against Syria in the wake of the Assad regime's use of chemical weapons in April 2017. According to Johnson,

Aquinas' conception of just war places the resort to armed force squarely in the frame of the sovereign's responsibility for the good of the public order. His three conditions necessary for a just resort to force — sovereign authority, just cause, and right intention — correspond directly to the three goods of the political community as defined in Augustinian political theory: order, justice, and peace.<sup>108</sup>

Concerning order, Trump acted on his presidential authority as commander-in-chief. Concerning justice, Trump called the death of the victims "brutal" and continued, "No child of God should ever suffer such horror." Concerning peace, Trump said,

Tonight, I call on all civilized nations to join us in seeking to end the slaughter and bloodshed in Syria, and also to end terrorism of all kinds and all types. We ask for God's wisdom as we face the challenge of our very troubled world. We pray for the lives of the wounded and for the souls of those who have passed. And we hope that as long as America stands for justice, then peace and harmony will, in the end, prevail.<sup>109</sup>

RCH references are clearly included in these quotations which correspond to Augustinian political goods. Thus, while it is convenient to explore RCH influence on Reagan through

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<sup>108</sup> James Turner Johnson, "Just War, As It Was and Is," *First Things* (January 2005), <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2007/01/just-war-as-it-was-and-is-2>.

<sup>109</sup> "What Trump Said About the Missile Strike Against Syria," *Boston Globe*, April 7, 2017, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/news/world/2017/04/06/read-full-text-trump-syria-speech/goi36mkYFMRQy8cJORGL9H/story.html>.

the lenses of government, ethics, and human nature, it is easier to explore such influence on Trump through the different, but related, Augustinian categories of order, justice, and peace.

### Religious Cultural Heritage at the Collective Level: Two Case Studies

As useful as it is to consider how RCH experience at the individual level can affect foreign policy, it is also valuable to think about religious cultural heritage in the context of the interactions between U.S. culture and the culture of America's adversary in a given era. For Reagan, that means examining the shared religious backgrounds of the United States and the Soviet Union. The United States was and is a secular state that makes room for religion. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, was a secular state that did not. Nevertheless, historically, Russia was influenced by Orthodox Christianity. Although there are differences between Western and Eastern Christian thought on war — Western Christianity speaks of just wars and stresses *caritas* or charity (love) while Eastern Christianity speaks of justifiable wars and stresses justice<sup>110</sup> — nevertheless, at some level, there was common RCH currency between the two sides in the Cold War.

At first glance, the current U.S.-North Korean situation in which Trump finds himself appears to be altogether different from Reagan's Soviet dilemma. To begin with, Asian religions such as Korean shamanism, Buddhism, and Confucianism (which was at one time the state religion) are strikingly different from the various sects of Christianity. Moreover, North Korean *juche* ideology now holds important sway in that country. However, there is some evidence to indicate that the two cases are more similar than they first appear.

*Juche* (self-reliance) is a system of ideas and ideals that forms the basis of economic and political theory and policy for North Korea and provides some of the same grist for the mill that RCH does. Statements like “man is the master of his destiny” express a philosophical anthropology.<sup>111</sup> Likewise, historical materialism can provide the basis of philosophical

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<sup>110</sup> Alexander F.C. Webster and Darrell Cole, *The Virtue of War: Reclaiming the Classic Christian Traditions East and West* (Salisbury, MA: Regina Orthodox Press, 2004).

<sup>111</sup> “Juche Ideology,” Democratic People's Republic of Korea: Official webpage of the DPR of Korea, [http://www.korea-dpr.com/juche\\_ideology.html](http://www.korea-dpr.com/juche_ideology.html).

ethics, while socialism, in addition to its economic aspects, can fill out a philosophy of government. Additional concepts like *jaju* (political independence), *jarip* (economic independence or self-sustainability), and *jawi* (defensive self-reliance) flesh out these philosophies in more detail. In addition to these similarities between *juche*- and RCH-influenced philosophies, there is also a literature which characterizes *juche* as a national religion.<sup>112</sup>

Thus, perhaps there is a parallel to the Soviet Union after all. Perhaps the atheist Soviet Marxist-Leninist ideology overlaid upon an Eastern Christian RCH substratum could be compared to the atheist North Korean *juche* ideology overlaid upon an East Asian RCH substratum. A thorough exploration of this parallel could prove useful, if one were to apply the lessons of the Reagan-era foreign policy challenges to those of the Trump era. Indeed, there were legions of Sovietologists during the Cold War who were dedicated to solving the problems that arose in U.S.-Soviet relations. Today, there is a clear need for North Koreanologists to develop comparable expertise to address U.S.-North Korean relations — relations that may be influenced by RCH-like realities including *juche*.

Despite the fact that the Soviet Union was officially atheist, the 1000-year history of Christianity in Russia was important to Reagan's approach to the communist country. In the contest between democracy and communism, having a common RCH made Reagan's language, imagery, and decision-making intelligible to the other side. For the United States and North Korea, however, the differences between Christianity and *juche* influence both the field of play and the players on the field, and I suspect this salient difference in the playing field will limit the direct applicability of Reagan's RCH legacy. Nevertheless, insights gained by exploring the Reagan era could indicate how to avoid certain contemporary

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<sup>112</sup> For example, see Philo Kim, "An Analysis of Religious Forms of Juche Ideology in Comparison with Christianity," *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies* 11, no. 1 (2002): 127-144, <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/Journal/ArticleDetail/NODEo1386o87>. Juche is treated as an "ersatz religion" in Christopher Hale, "Multifunctional Juche: A Study of the Changing Dynamic between Juche and the State Constitution in North Korea," *Korea Journal* (Autumn 2002): 283-308, [https://www.ekoreajournal.net/issue/view\\_pop.htm?Idx=3206](https://www.ekoreajournal.net/issue/view_pop.htm?Idx=3206). Comparisons to Confucianism and shamanism are found in Hyang Jin Jung, "Jucheism as an Apotheosis of the Family: The Case of the Arirang Festival," *Journal of Korean Religions* 4, no. 2 *North Korea and Religion* (October 2013): 93-122, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23943356>.

pitfalls precisely because those pitfalls were not present during the Cold War. Finally, treating *juche* as a state religion may provide unexpected avenues to apply lessons from Reagan's Soviet policies to Trump's North Korean policies.

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