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**Striving for Peace Through Speech: Analyzing the Effect Personal
Diplomacy and Summitry Had on Presidential Communist
Rhetoric, 1984-1986**

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**Striving for Peace Through Speech: Analyzing the Effect Personal Diplomacy
and Summitry Had on Presidential Communist Rhetoric, 1984-1986**

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Abstract:

Globalization has ushered in an unprecedented era of connected national politics, economies, and populations. Strong ties have intertwined the fates of nations and brought about a new era of international cooperation. However, the rise of populist and isolationist movements in the past two decades threatens to change the geopolitical landscape and diplomacy around the globe. As the United States loses its hegemonic role to the quickly growing economy of China, it is imperative that American foreign policy reflects the need for continued cooperation and support. This raises the question of the effectiveness state diplomacy and summitry has in easing tensions between world leaders. Examining the period of summitry between President Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev offers insight into how effective their meetings were in reducing tensions and easing anti-communist rhetoric. President Reagan was the first president in 10 years to meet with a Soviet leader. His Presidency also offers a unique opportunity to compare his first term which hosted no summits with the Soviet, to his second term which saw four meetings between himself and Gorbachev. By observing primary sources detailing Reagan's shift in rhetoric and utilizing existing literature, I compare the Presidential rhetoric regarding the Soviet Union before and after the first two summits in Geneva and Reykjavik with Gorbachev and Reagan. I found that summitry did in fact have an immediate impact on Soviet rhetoric and worked to strengthen the relationship between the two leaders. With the looming international threats of climate change and the conflict in Ukraine, the implications of the effectiveness of personal diplomacy will become imperative in the coming years.

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Introduction

Since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the United States has occupied a position of leadership and power on the world stage. However, with Russia engaged in active conflict with Ukraine, and China's power on the world economic and political stage growing every year, the balance of the world order is becoming unstable and the level of influence the United States has on the world stage is waning.¹ The credibility of the United States is diminishing with the inconsistent foreign policy directions and the sphere of influence among the Global South is once again becoming more divided between the East-West powers.² With the rapidly evolving geopolitical landscape, it is important to unpack and understand the tactics and methodologies used in East-West diplomacy during the most recent period of geopolitical bipolarity: The Cold War.

In this paper I will specifically examine the evolution of Presidential rhetoric in the period from 1981-1986. These years encompass the first term of Ronald Reagan which saw the most hostile anti-communist rhetoric coming out of the White House and the first two years of his second term which hosted the first two of the four summits Ronald Reagan had with the Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev. I will examine the evolution of Presidential rhetoric before and after each summit and examine the evidence to decipher the level of effect personal diplomacy and summitry has on Presidential rhetoric.

In my literature review I evaluate the existing research and schools of thought among leading Reagan and Cold War historians as to why Presidential rhetoric changed during the Reagan presidency. I also lay out the justification in choosing the Geneva and Reykjavik

¹ Cimmino, Jeffrey, "Twenty-First-Century-Diplomacy: Strengthening US Diplomacy for the Challenges of Today and Tomorrow" *Atlantic Council*, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/21st-Century-Diplomacy-PDF.pdf>

² Ibid

Summits as my case studies for this thesis. In my case studies, I draw heavily on personal communications between Soviet and American leaders and presidential speeches and address to chart the evolution of rhetoric. I also utilize a plethora of secondary sources which use the same or closely related sources to provide scholarly backup to my argument.

The act of summitry allowed for the creation of a personal relationship between the two leaders and a mutual understanding of each leader's values and goals for nuclear disarmament. I argue that the personal diplomacy and summitry between Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev was critical in improving relations and dampened the anti-communist rhetoric.

Literature Review

This literature review will posit and describe leading arguments made by scholars as to the reasons why Ronald Reagan changed and eased his Soviet Rhetoric as he entered his second presidential term. One of the arguments laid out by scholars such as James Mann and Henry Maar describe the intense domestic pressures faced by Reagan in the forms of the Freeze Movement, party politics, and ideological discrepancies in his administration. Another argument covered is laid out by historian Beth Fischer. She contends that Reagan's change in rhetoric reflects an earlier shift by the Administration to a conciliatory approach to the Soviet Union at the beginning of 1984. I also lay out the argument of academic Richard Pipes who refutes Raymond Garthoff's thesis that the hard liners in Reagan's administration pro-longed the Cold War. Instead, Pipes argues that these hardliners were instrumental in the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Political Pressures: Reagan

In his book *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan*, James Mann details the domestic pressures and influences surrounding his foreign policy with the Soviet Union. In the first part of the book, Mann argues for the need to adopt a more nuanced understanding of Reagan and his foreign policy. Reagan was not the “caricatures of rightist hagiographers or leftist scorers” that has so often been described.³ Instead, he Reagan consistently sparred against three “separate but overlapping constituencies”⁴ in the conservative party. The first group consisted of the Reagan supporters who had been with him since the beginning of his political career. This included publications such as the *National Review* and went as deep as his own Vice President, George H.W Bush. The second warring faction of the conservative party that Reagan had to operate his diplomacy around were the Washington realists. These were the likes of former President Richard Nixon, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, and former National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft. Realists like these men had pursued détente with the Soviets during the 70s but flipped their position in the mid-1980s and opposed the efforts of nuclear disarmament by Reagan and his Secretary of State, George Schultz.⁵ Finally, the last group that opposed Reagan’s efforts of diplomacy with Gorbachev during his second term was a group of leading American intelligence and defense officials in Reagan’s administration who opposed Reagan and Schultz’s read on Gorbachev. These men defended the idea that Gorbachev was merely another face for the Soviet Union and not someone who the United States could do business with.

³Hershberg, James, “The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan: A History of the End of the Cold War by James Mann” *Political Science Quarterly*, 125: 140-141. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1538-165X.2010.tb01978.x>

⁴ Mann, James, “The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan” *Penguin Group*, New York, 2009, page xvi

⁵ *Ibid*, xvii

Nixon's relationship with Reagan, Mann contests, is essential to understanding Reagan's shift in rhetoric and foreign policy around the Soviet Union. Their respective origins of anti-communist beliefs are especially relevant in this discussion. Mann describes Nixon as having a "static version of American anti-communism."⁶ Nixon had used anti-communism rhetoric as a political tool only used when necessary. He had seized upon it when he was a member of the House Un-American Activities Committee but avoided the topic during his second presidential campaign when it no longer had broad appeal to voters.⁷ Reagan, on the other hand, held anti-communist beliefs that were deeply rooted in his personality and experience. As President of the Screen Actors Guild, he was obsessed with McCarthyism and the influence of Communism on Hollywood.⁸ However, the importance between the static version of anti-communism that Nixon held and the strong personal sentiment against communism that Reagan had was that Reagan's opinion deeply rooted in personal distrust.⁹ It was this fact that Mann argues holds an implication that once a Soviet Leader could "establish that he was straightforward rather than deceitful and was trying to alter the Soviet system" then Reagan would be more willing to conduct business with him than Richard Nixon.¹⁰

It was this divergence that created the conservative realist opposition to Reagan and Schultz's diplomacy. After Reagan's successful re-election in November of 1984, Kissinger made a statement regarding the future of U.S-Soviet relations. He stated that:

⁶ Ibid, 17

⁷ Rzepecka, Marta, "Richard Nixon's Campaign Rhetoric of Anti-Communism: Studies of Presidential Rhetoric" *PJAS* https://journals.theasa.net/images/contributor_uploads/PJAS_vol6_05Rzepecka.pdf

⁸ Fund, John, "How Olivia de Havilland and Ronald Reagan Beat the Hollywood Communists" *The National Review*, August 2nd, 2020. <https://www.nationalreview.com/2020/08/how-olivia-de-havilland-and-ronald-reagan-beat-the-hollywood-communists/>

⁹ Mann, 19

¹⁰ Ibid

“There are no final ‘happy endings’, whatever they might agree on, the United States and the Soviet Union will remain superpowers impinging globally on each other. Ideological hostility will continue. Specific, precise arrangements can, indeed must be made. But they are more likely to ameliorate tensions than to end them.”¹¹

This statement epitomized the Nixonite static view on Soviet-American relations throughout the Cold War. In their minds, there could be no winner since the war was rooted in geopolitics and no side had the military capacity to beat the other. Resulting in a continuous and eternal struggle with no end. However, the Nixon-Reagan conservative split also works to highlight one of the reasons Mann argues helps Reagan ease tensions with Gorbachev. Because this Nixonite view failed to deal with the possibility that the Cold War was a battle of belief systems, in which one might crumble or that it was a struggle of economics, and one might fail.¹²

Similar to the argument laid out by Mann, specialist in international security and the psychology of decision making, Beth Fischer explores in her book, *The Reagan Reversal: Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War*, the argument that Reagan’s advisors impacted his Soviet Rhetoric and stance on the Soviet Union. Upon entering office, Reagan established what he called a “cabinet-style” method of decision making.¹³ This was a hands-off decision-making system that complimented Reagan’s character. Reagan was considered a “big-picture leader who did not enjoy and sometimes did not understand the details of his policies.”¹⁴ The only problem with this combination of factors is it often left advisors with vague and unclear policy directives. They were only told the big picture and often forced to use their own initiative to carry out their

¹¹ Kissinger, Henry, “Reagan Must Seize the Middle Ground” *Los Angeles Times*, November 18th, 1984.

¹² Mann, 35

¹³ Fischer, Beth, “The Reagan Reversal: Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War” *University of Missouri Press*, 3/1/2000, page 71

¹⁴ Pfifner, James P, “The Paradox of President Reagan’s Leadership.” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (2013): 81–100. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43286698>.

directives. Based off this no hands approach, Fischer lays out the argument that cabinet members including Secretary of State George Schultz and National Security Advisor Robert McFarland redirected Soviet foreign policy more to their liking.¹⁵ Both men of these men favored a more conciliatory policy approach to the Soviet Union and this is what they got at the beginning of 1984.¹⁶

Another figure in the Reagan administration who has been proclaimed as highly influential on Reagan's view on the Soviet Union was Caspar "Cap" Weinberger. Caspar Weinberger was Reagan's Secretary of Defense and held strong oppositional views to cooperation with the Soviets. Schultz notes that ahead of his own landmark meeting with the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrei Gromyko in 1984, Weinberger and other cabinet members in Washington warned the president that diplomacy "posed a threat to the crusade against communism."¹⁷ In one instance of extreme opposition, Weinberger sneakily used the Joint Chiefs to block diplomatic avenues Schultz could take in Geneva by narrowing "his authorized running room."¹⁸ Scholars such as Fischer and the Reagan contemporaries such as Schultz point to the role Weinberger and other prominent cabinet members had on the flow of events during Reagan's two terms. Especially once the President started pursuing face to face meetings with Gorbachev.

¹⁵ Fischer, 147

¹⁶ Ibid, 74

¹⁷ Schultz, George P, "Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State" *Charles Scribner's Sons*, 1993, page 159

¹⁸ Ibid, 512

The Freeze Movement

Reagan historian Henry Maar points to a different cause in the shift in Soviet rhetoric coming out of the Reagan administration. Maar points to the grassroots Freeze Movement as the main force which reigned in Reagans harsh Soviet rhetoric which had consumed his first term. In the early 1980s, Randall Forsberg, a defense and disarmament researcher launched the Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign.¹⁹ Forsberg's work was designed to stop the drift to nuclear war through a proposed agreement signed to be signed by the United States and the Soviet Union to stop the testing, production, and deployment of nuclear weapons, which quickly escalated into a mass movement which swept across the United States.²⁰ The Freeze Movement could be seen everywhere and the campaign drew support from "prominent scientists, such as Carl Sagan, and influential statesmen, such as Averell Harriman, while receiving the endorsement of professional organizations of all stripes."²¹ The Freeze Movement dominated popular culture and national discourse. Freeze debates dominated talk shows, radio shows, movies, television, religion, and politics. In government, the U.S Congress, Republicans and Democrats debated a nuclear freeze resolution, with the House of Representatives endorsing it on August 6th, 1982.²² Maar even points to top Reagan officials who privately conceded that the antinuclear backlash was "potentially the most important national security challenge facing the administration."²³

¹⁹ Wittner, S. Lawrence, "The Nuclear Freeze and Its Impact | Arms Control Association," accessed November 28, 2022, https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2010_12/LookingBack.

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Henry Richard Maar III, "Freeze! The Grassroots Movement to Halt the Arms Race and End the Cold War" Cornell University Press, 2021. EBSCOhost, <https://search-ebscohost-com.avoserv2.library.fordham.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=2889430&site=eds-live>

²² Miller, Judith, "House Supports Reagan on Arms, Adopting His Idea of Atom Freeze" *New York Times* August 6th, 1982. <https://www.nytimes.com/1982/08/06/us/house-supports-reagan-on-arms-adopting-his-idea-of-atom-freeze.html>

²³ Maar

Maar argues in his work that one of the reasons the Freeze Movement had so much success in influencing the Reagan administration's Soviet foreign policy was due to its strong connection with The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The Catholic population represented a strong voting bloc that the Reagan administration could not afford to lose if they were to win a second term in 1984. Their presence and active participation in the movements dialogue meant that Reagan and his administration could not ignore or rebait the movement and changed their rhetoric significantly to assuage the public's intense fear of nuclear destruction.²⁴ To achieve this, Reagan reinvented his public image at the end of his first term. He became a champion of "peace, nuclear abolition, and open dialogue with the Soviet Union – a reversal from the Cold Warrior persona he had exemplified up unto this point."²⁵ Maar contests that this was the principal cause driving the Reagan administration's ambition to ease Cold War tensions in the second half of the 1980s.

The Hard Liner Approach

Another leading scholar in the field of Soviet-American relations is Richard Pipes. Pipes was an American academic and a specialist in Russian-Soviet history. In a highly influential review of Raymond Garthoff's *The Great Transition: American-Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War*, he refutes the Garthoff's argument that the hard-liners approach prolonged the Cold War by arousing "deep-seated anxieties" in the Soviets.²⁶ In his book, Garthoff moves away from the arguments pointing to domestic pressures laid out by Maar and the nuanced view of Reagan's hard liner views laid out by Mann and Fischer. Instead, he argues that there were

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Pipes, Richard, "Misinterpreting the Cold War" *Foreign Affairs*, January 1st, 1995.
<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/review-essay/1995-01-01/misinterpreting-cold-war>

three basic approaches to communism which all had distinct foreign policy implications. The first approach is the one Garthoff argues Reagan and the other ideologues belonged to which is the “essentialist” approach. The essentialist assumed that the Soviet Union was a “totalitarian state driven by militant ideology and hence intrinsically expansionist.”²⁷ The expansionists, according to Garthoff, thought that the only way to contain such a nation was through determined confrontation. The other two approaches were the “mechanical” and “interactionist” camps. The mechanical approach believed that the Soviet Union could be managed through a “reward and penalty” system. While the interactionist approach focused instead on solely the East-West battle and saw the conflict itself as the force paving the road.²⁸ Garthoff has some sympathies with thinkers in the last two schools of thought but totally refutes the expansionist, also known as hard-liner, approach to communism.

Pipes argues that Garthoff’s argument fundamentally fails to realize the impact of internal dissent episodes in the Soviet Union such as the Solidarity Movement in Poland. In Garthoff’s book, these dissent episodes are treated as “sideshow” and Pipes argues that this way of thinking “underestimates the weaknesses of communism”²⁹ and fails to recognize the great domestic pressures facing the Soviet Union in the decade leading up to its collapse.

Garthoff, having discarded the explanations in Soviet domestic pressures and U.S hardliners, posits his solution that it was Mikhail Gorbachev. Garthoff asserts that Gorbachev is the main reason why the United States shifted its rhetoric and why the Cold War ended. Pipes is unsatisfied with this answer, as it completely neglects the role of U.S foreign policy and utilizes a version of the great men as leaders’ theory – which has since been abandoned by historians as a

²⁷ Ibid, 2

²⁸ Ibid, 2

²⁹ Ibid, 3

credible idea. U.S policy then becomes a focal point for Pipe's rebuttal. He cites examples such as former CIA director William Casey's efforts to get Saudi Arabia to cut their oil prices, resulting in the crippling the Soviet economy. As well as the Reagan programs such as the Strategic Defense Initiative."³⁰

Pipes concludes in his essay that to understand the reasons for the collapse of the Soviet Union, researchers need to shift their methodologies. He posits that a better understanding can come from "observing the regime's treatment of its citizens and their reactions to this treatment."³¹ He goes on to claim that political science needs to uproot itself from the methodologies present in quantitative fields of study and move more to studying the actual people on the ground.

Case Study Justification and Explanation

The Goal of these case studies is to determine whether summitry, and personal diplomacy, in the 20th century had any effect on Western state leader's rhetoric and view of the Soviet Union. This will be done through a comparative study of Reagan's Soviet Rhetoric before and after his visits with Gorbachev in 1984 and 1986. Along with a close examination of the evidence coming out of the two summits and the personal communiques between the two leaders.

The first study of Reagan and Gorbachev's Geneva Summit is an easy case study which allows for a baseline of anti-communist rhetoric to be established. Since this is the first time these two leaders had met face to face, and Gorbachev's recent assumption of office in the Soviet

³⁰ Ibid, 4

³¹ Ibid, 4

Union, this case study has minimal bias that a pre-existing relationship would bring. This case study is also easy because it comes during Reagan's second presidential term. This allows for a clean separation of rhetorical periods. Finally, the Geneva Summit is a good case study for this paper because it was a short summit between the two leaders, with most of the meeting recorded in memorandum or other official recounts.

The second case study in Reagan and Gorbachev's meeting in Reykjavik is also an easy case study but has different reasons for its classification. During the Reykjavik Summit, the fact that the relationship built between the two leaders in Geneva is in play makes the cause and effect of rhetorical change harder to determine. However, it also allows for the changes in rhetoric to be conducted in a short span of time. The meetings took place less than two years apart. In addition, with the Summits being so monumental in the geopolitical landscape, the outcomes of the Summits were highly examined by a range of sources, allowing for an easy cross examination of evidence. In conclusion, both case studies involve the same key players, allowing for the control of dependent variables (character, previous policy positions, rhetorical analysis) to remain consistent.

Background on U.S – Soviet Relations 1960-1981

The first important date which provides context for the political scene the Reagan administration was entering in 1981 came back in 1962. 1962 saw nuclear tensions arguably come to a peak between the two nuclear powers, the United States, and the Soviet Union, with the Cuban Missile Crisis. As nuclear tensions peaked, leaders turned to arms negotiations as a solution. The most notable arms treaty that came out of this event was the Limited Ban Test

Treaty in 1963.³² However, just as it seemed the world was making some headway against the threat of nuclear Armageddon in the early 60s, the war in Vietnam served to re-spark tensions and derailed any further efforts for an arms treaty.

After the Cuban Missile Crisis, both the Soviet Union and the United States began facing increasing incentives to resume peace talks. The United States was facing an ever-difficult situation in Vietnam and resuming talks with the Soviet Union were widely thought to be helpful in limiting further conflicts. Additionally, both parties were faced with extreme economic and domestic pressures as the popularity of continuing the uber-expensive arms race was becoming less and less appealing to the populaces whose pocketbooks were hurting.³³ So, faced with growing domestic pressures to de-escalate, the early 1970s brought about a general thawing of cold war tensions. This was later observed as a period of *détente*, and it took several forms during this decade.

One of the ways which *détente* was first seen was the 1972 Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT). The SALT talks yielded the “Antiballistic Missile Treaty along with an interim agreement which set caps on the number of intercontinental ballistic missiles each side could develop.”³⁴ The SALT talks proved that cooperation between the two powers was possible, even if the victory was short lived. The period of *détente* also saw the genesis of a conference that highlighted another moment of easing tensions. This was the First Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), which took place in Helsinki. The biggest result of the Summit was the Helsinki Accords. These accords were signed following the conference on the 1st of August 1975. The Helsinki Accords established the “inviolability of European frontiers and

³² Office of the Historian, “*Détente and Arms Control, 1969-1979*” *United States Department of State* <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/detente>

³³ *Ibid*

³⁴ *Ibid*

rejected any use of force or intervention in internal affairs”.³⁵ Right out of the gate, the accords urged the 35 signatory States, comprising the United States, Canada, the USSR, and every European country except Albania to comply with a new framework dedicated to protecting national sovereignty and human rights.

Although this decade saw the rewards of détente through the treaties and talks, the non-binding legal nature of both SALT and the CSCE shortly resulted in the breakdown of cooperation and by the late 70s, détente seemed to be coming to an end. Solidifying the end of the decade of “relaxation” was the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. After this, the period of cooperation was officially over and no further talks between the rivals would ensue until after Mikhail Gorbachev was elected to office in 1985.

Case Study 1 - Reagan and Gorbachev in Geneva, 1985

Reagan’s Soviet Rhetoric and Actions Before Geneva: Evil Empire Speech and the Strategic Defense Initiative

In the wake of the Soviets incursion into Afghanistan, Ronald Reagan entered office in January of 1981. With the period of détente between the Soviet Union and the United States over, he was fully committed to the idea that the Soviet Union had been involved in a massive military buildup during the late 1970s and that the United States needed to switch its approach to its’ Foreign Policy.³⁶ With this conviction, Reagan proposed, and Congress passed a bill that increased American military spending by 10%. This 10% increase over the years of 1981-85,

³⁵ Ministère De L’Europe Et Des Affaires Etrangères, “45th Anniversary of the Helsinki Accords (01 August 2020)” <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/security-disarmament-and-non-proliferation/news/2020/article/45th-anniversary-of-the-helsinki-accords-01-aug-20>

³⁶ Greenstein, Fred I. “The Impact of Personality on the End of the Cold War: A Counterfactual Analysis.” *Political Psychology* 19, no. 1 (1998): 1–16. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3792111>.

amounting to almost an extra 40 billion dollars a year in military spending, doubled what Jimmy Carter's administration had proposed for the same period. This was a massive point of escalation early in Reagan's presidency as the Soviets came to see the new administration as a deeply unsettling entity. In the Soviet's eyes, they saw "American strategic planners advancing doctrines that called for the United States to go beyond mutual deterrence and acquire the capacity to 'prevail' in the event of a war."³⁷

Rhetorically, one of the most powerful speeches Reagan gave during his first term has come to be known as his "Evil Empire" speech. This speech is a key reflection of his view on the Soviet Union and indicated to the world his Foreign Policy positions. The speech was delivered on March 8th, 1983. President Reagan addressed the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando Florida, where he warned them of the dangers of the Soviet Union. He described the Soviet Union as "the focus of evil in the modern world" and urged his listeners to "resist the aggressive impulses of an evil empire" and oppose a nuclear freeze.³⁸ Scholar Thomas Goodnight contends that this was part of the President's effort to reformulate the 'rhetoric of war' and address the issue created by the increasing national interest in a nuclear freeze. Goodnight contended that Reagan's Evil Empire speech conveyed the administration's insistence on a nuclear weapons build-up by portraying "nuclear war as part of an age-old struggle between good and evil, a conflict beyond strict rational assessment."³⁹ This was a key rhetorical element during Reagan's first term.

³⁷ Ibid, 5

³⁸ Reagan, Ronald "Evil Empire Speech" *Voices of Democracy: The U.S Oratory Project*, March 8th 1983, <https://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/reagan-evil-empire-speech-text/>

³⁹ Goodnight, G. Thomas. "Ronald Reagan's Re-formulation of the Rhetoric of War: Analysis of the "Zero Option," "Evil Empire," and "Star Wars" Addresses." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 72 (1986): 390-414.

This rhetoric, although influenced throughout his first term, was not new to Reagan. To show the unchanged nature of his views up until this point, one can look back to a speech Reagan delivered in 1962 which conveys a similar message. Reagan claimed in this speech that the Soviets “have openly and publicly declared that the only morality they recognize is what will further their cause, meaning that they reserve unto themselves the right to commit any crime, to lie, to cheat, in order to attain that.”⁴⁰ Reagan was notorious for continuing this anti-Soviet rhetoric and sentiment during his first term in office.

Another action taken throughout Reagan’s first term that reflected his hardline view on Soviet policy came in the same year as his Evil Empire speech. In 1983, Reagan unveiled the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). The debut of SDI brought U.S-Soviet relations to a strenuous level. Reagan viewed SDI as a defense mechanism that could be shared and would render attacks – from both sides - obsolete. However, the Soviet response did not reflect Reagan’s optimism for SDI and his solution became a point of existential worry for the Soviets. They viewed the technology as a piece of equipment that would render the Soviet military operation as worthless and take them out of their position as a dominant power.⁴¹ SDI became a central point of distrust for the Soviets, and by the end of 1983 the Kremlin instructed its KGB to be alert for signs of an imminent attack.

Summitry Between Reagan and Gorbachev: The Warming of Tensions in Geneva, 1985

The words and actions of Reagans first term leading up to 1984 created a viscous cycle of escalation between the Soviet Union and the United States. However, in 1985, the Reagan

⁴⁰ Shimko, Keith L. “Reagan on the Soviet Union and the Nature of International Conflict.” *Political Psychology* 13, no. 3 (1992): 353–77. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3791603>.

⁴¹ Lewis, Kevin et al. “The Kremlin and SDI” *Foreign Affairs*, Spring 1988 <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/1988-03-01/kremlin-and-sdi>

administration witnessed the election of Mikhail Gorbachev, a relative progressive in the Soviet Union who knew that economic reform was needed if the nation was to survive. Gorbachev's election to serve as the USSR's new General Secretary offered a unique opportunity for the Reagan administration. It was a symbol of a new beginning and international transformation for the Soviet Union. Once he was elected, the new Soviet leader initiated a series of reforms, beginning with acceleration of the economy, the anti-alcohol campaign, and the new policy of glasnost (openness), which became known later as perestroika.⁴² These policies signified to the United States that they might have a potential leader they could work with in the USSR. In the sphere of U.S.-Soviet relations, the first year of perestroika was one of building trust and of intense learning for both Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan. Reagan and Gorbachev began in this year to exchange letters and although public rhetoric "did not change to any significant degree, the unprecedented exchange of letters between the two leaders gave them an opportunity to engage in a serious dialog about the issues each saw as the most important ones and prepared the ground for their face-to-face meeting in Geneva."⁴³

In the months leading up to the Geneva Summit, Reagan made an unprecedented move not to draft a joint communiqué with the Soviets to release after the conclusion of the Summit. This move, although unprecedented, ended up freeing the leaders to discuss more openly. One of Reagan's foreign ambassadors, Jack Matlock, describes Reagan's thinking and motivation behind the move: "If we were to move away from the confrontational psychology that had marked relations up until then, it was better not to tie the hands of our leaders, even loosely,

⁴² The National Security Archive, "To the Geneva Summit: Perestroika and the Transformation of U.S - Soviet Relations" *NSA Archive*, November 22nd, 2005.

<https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB172/index.htm>

⁴³ Ibid

before they met.”⁴⁴ This anecdote by Ambassador Matlock shows how the Geneva Summit, before it even began, was groundbreaking in its approach to personal diplomacy. Despite Reagan’s anti-communist beliefs, he was ready for an open and honest discussion and did not want another pre-orchestrated event of political theater.

With the ushering in of a new era of Soviet leadership, and a Reagan administration ready to meet, the world saw on November 18th, 1985, for the first time in 6 years, the leaders of the Soviet Union and the United States come together in Geneva. The first important interaction between the two leaders occurred when, shortly after their arrivals, they secluded themselves to a room with only their translators present. It was here that Reagan noted, which is now found in a declassified memorandum of the meeting, that he knew “the two of them would talk about many things, including arms, in the main meeting, but he wondered if the primary aim between them should not be to eliminate the suspicions which each side had of the other.”⁴⁵ This is a key moment between the two leaders as it established a baseline which they would end up working off of during the main negotiations at Geneva and in the summits to come.

One of the main points of negotiations during both the Geneva and Reykjavik Summits was the issue of SDI. In the first sit down at Geneva, Gorbachev’s opening remark reiterated the Soviet’s view on SDI and insisted on the “importance of cooperation and common security among the states going forward.”⁴⁶ Reagan countered this point by arguing that the USSR had not “given the United States much reason to trust them, with its rhetoric of a ‘one-world

⁴⁴ Mann, 91

⁴⁵ Glass, Andrew, “Reagan and Gorbachev Meet in Geneva, Nov. 19, 1985,” POLITICO, accessed November 9, 2022, <https://www.politico.com/story/2016/11/reagan-and-gorbachev-meet-in-geneva-nov-19-1985-231579>.

⁴⁶ Atomic Heritage Foundation, “Reagan and Gorbachev: The Geneva Summit” July 26th, 2018 <https://www.atomicheritage.org/history/reagan-and-gorbachev-geneva-summit>

communist state,' and their continued military buildup."⁴⁷ On the other hand, he did say that the US was "ready to try to meet Soviet concerns if they were ready to reciprocate."⁴⁸ Although the dialogue between the leaders was quite cryptic, it was a monumental moment just to have both leaders in the same room.

The end of the Geneva Summit was marked by a significant change in both leaders' attitudes towards one another. One of the big developments from the meeting was that both leaders agreed to visit each other's country in the future and agreed that their foreign ministers will also meet more regularly in the future.⁴⁹ This showed a new interest from the Reagan administration in improving diplomatic relations and perhaps shift away from a power dynamic that they had relied during their first term which focused on military superiority as a tool for peace. Additionally, in a joint statement after the summit, although marked by delicately balanced diplomatic language, both sides said that "while acknowledging the differences in their systems and approaches to international issues, some greater understanding of each side's view was achieved by the two leaders."⁵⁰ They agreed about the need to improve U.S.-Soviet relations and the international situation.

Reagan's Rhetoric After the Geneva Summit

After the Geneva Summit, the United States delegation immediately underscored the importance of the meeting. Reagan's Secretary of State noted that "Reagans one-on-one meetings with Gorbachev were clearly productive" and that he was finding Eduard Shevardnadze

⁴⁷ *ibid*

⁴⁸ *Ibid*

⁴⁹ Shultz, 607

⁵⁰ Rojas, Don, and Andrew Salkey. "Reflections on the Geneva Summit: The Perspective of a Journalist from the Developing World" *The Black Scholar* 17, no. 1 1986
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41068139>.

(Schultz's Soviet counterpart) "to be a person I could talk with in an easy and straightforward way."⁵¹ Schultz noticed that the Soviets' also seemed to appreciate and value the personal exchanges.⁵² Schultz also noted that personal relations had improved to the point where future diplomacy and summitry would be more effective. The two parties had reached a point where they could find issues where agreement was possible and quickly go ahead and agree. One of the biggest points of resolution that came from the Geneva summit was however, in fact, the ability to disagree "without getting set back or discouraged."⁵³ After the Geneva Summit of 1985, the world saw a shift in rhetoric from President Reagan.

Case Study 2- Reagan and Gorbachev in Reykjavik, 1986

Reykjavik: Context Leading up to the Summit

Almost a year after Reagan and Gorbachev met in Geneva, arms negotiations between the two countries had stalled. The summit at Reykjavik represented simultaneously the "culmination and the collapse of realistic hopes for arms control."⁵⁴ It began back in January of 1986, shortly after the summit in Geneva, when the Gorbachev administration announced the next substantive proposal for arms control. Consisting of a step-by-step plan to rid the world of nuclear weapons by the year 2000.⁵⁵ One of the main rhetorical consequences of this proposal was that many in Reagan's administration still saw this action merely as a tool of Soviet Propaganda and failed to

⁵¹ Schultz, page 607

⁵² Ibid, 607

⁵³ Ibid, 607

⁵⁴ Schlesinger, James. "Reykjavik and Revelations: A Turn of the Tide?" *Foreign Affairs* 65, no. 3 (1986): 426–46. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20043074>.

⁵⁵ "Gorbachev's Nuclear Initiative of January 1986 and the Road to Reykjavik | National Security Archive," accessed November 14, 2022, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/nuclear-vault-russia-programs/2016-10-12/gorbachevs-nuclear-initiative-january-1986>.

understand that it reflected Gorbachev's actual foreign policy position.⁵⁶ This thinking would later prove incorrect and turned out to be a major piece of Gorbachev's goals in Iceland.

A critical point in understanding the importance of the Reykjavik Summit and the power of personal diplomacy is the difference in motivations and perceived outcome the two leaders had. For Gorbachev, his main goal for the Summit was for him and Reagan to devise a framework for an agreement on nuclear abolition.⁵⁷ Gorbachev was quite candid in this goal during the preparation for the Summit and in his correspondences with Reagan. He consistently re-iterated his sentiment with statements describing that his "ultimate goal was the liquidation of nuclear weapons" and that the "leitmotif [of these talks] is the liquidation of nuclear weapons."⁵⁸ Another crucial difference in the goals between the two administrations was Gorbachev's view on SDI. In 1986, he was facing intense internal pressure from his government to get Reagan to halt SDI, which they still viewed as an existential threat to the Soviet Union. Gorbachev consequently had to incorporate this into his goals for the Summit.⁵⁹ With the elimination of SDI a leading issue for Gorbachev, the conference was poised to result in another deadlock of negotiations.

This assumed deadlock becomes even more apparent when analyzing Reagan's goals and perceived outcomes for the Summit in Reykjavik. In comparison with Gorbachev's lofty goal of eliminating nuclear weapons, Reagan and the United States Government were privately declaring

⁵⁶ Gorbachev, Mikhail, "Memoirs" *Doubleday*, September 1st, 1996, page 403

⁵⁷ Freeman, Stephanie "The Highest Stakes Poker Game Ever Played: Ronald Reagan, Mikhail Gorbachev, and the Reykjavik Summit of 1986" <https://ir.vanderbilt.edu/bitstream/handle/1803/4203/10FreemanS.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

⁵⁸ "Anatoly Chernayev's Notes on Gorbachev's Instructions to the Reykjavik Preparation Group" *National Security Archive*, accessed November 14, 2022,

<https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document05.pdf>.

⁵⁹ Freeman

that “no signed agreements were expected of necessary” at the Summit in Reykjavik.⁶⁰ Even though Reagan shared Gorbachev’s conviction for the need to eliminate nuclear weapons, he would travel to the Summit with no plans to propose an agreement on the matter or even discuss the issue.⁶¹ Stephanie Freeman, a leading Reagan scholar, surmises that Reagan, unlike Gorbachev, did not have one or two specific goals that he wanted to engage with but rather a full host of issues. Ranging from “arms control, bilateral issues, regional matters, and human rights.”⁶² This dissonance between the two leaders’ goals for the summit makes the outcome of Reykjavik even more incredible and telling of the power of personal diplomacy and summitry.

Reykjavik Summit: Gorbachev and Reagan Meet in Iceland

On October 11th, 1986, the two leaders met in Iceland’s capital, Reykjavik. Having established a working relationship in Geneva, Reagan and Gorbachev arrived in Iceland with a better understanding of each other but remained steadfast in their proposed solutions to end the conflict between the two nations. The two parties were set to begin negotiations at odds with Reagan, seemingly set in his conviction in a nuclear defense system, and Gorbachev, with a mission of total nuclear disarmament. However, the combination of the working relationship the two leaders had combined with the divergent goals both leaders traveled to the meeting with created a summit with a unique rhetorical opportunity. As previously mentioned, the Reagan administration came to Iceland with few tangible goals other than to set a date for a Washington D.C summit. This allowed Gorbachev to “spring” his policy goals onto Reagan as the President

⁶⁰ Ibid, 33

⁶¹ Ibid

⁶² Ibid

did not undergo the usual debate preparation as he had done for the Summit at Geneva.⁶³ Gorbachev was able to exploit Reagan's consistent anti-Soviet rhetoric to flip the script on him. Gorbachev's first move was to create an alternate discourse. He successfully was able to create a discussion which treated the complete elimination of weapons as realistic. Gorbachev then "then linked all of these proposals to a condition that SDI research would be confined to laboratories."⁶⁴ This move allowed Gorbachev to "outflank Reagan as a peacemaker" and gave him the opportunity to put his viewpoint in the political calculus. This viewpoint was "of trust and cooperation in international affairs, and Reagan did not accept it."⁶⁵

This rhetorical ambush was arguably the most important part of the Summit, as it reframed the conversation and allowed the East-West parties to enter a new period of talks. Gorbachev summed it up best in an address where he characterized the meetings as "landmark" and which "signified completion of one stage in the disarmament effort and the beginning of another. We broke down the old pattern of talks and brought the Soviet-American dialogue out of what, I would say, was political fog and demagogy."⁶⁶ Although again, little legislature came out of the meeting, Gorbachev was able to successfully use the summit to put the U.S on their heels and fundamentally change the rhetoric between the USSR and the United States.

⁶³ Michael Weiler, and W. Barnett Pearce. "Reagan and Public Discourse in America" *Studies in Rhetoric and Communication*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press. <https://search-ebscohost-com.avoserv2.library.fordham.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=26958&site=eds-live>

⁶⁴ Ibid

⁶⁵ Ibid

⁶⁶ Gorbachev, Mikhail, "Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World" *Harpercollins*, January 1st, 1987, page 227

Reagan's Soviet Rhetoric After the Reykjavik Summit

After the Geneva Summit of 1985, and the following meetings in Reykjavik, Washington, and Moscow between Reagan and Gorbachev, the world saw a drastic shift in rhetoric from the President. On the eve of his final meeting with Gorbachev in Moscow in 1987, the Washington Post noted that:

“Reagan is riding the crest of an immense change in U.S.-Soviet relations that largely reflects significant differences between Gorbachev and his predecessors. But the change in Reagan's outlook began before Gorbachev took over and has developed rapidly in response to what the president sees as major changes in the Soviet Union.”⁶⁷

A longtime associate of Reagan's told the Post that “Ronald Reagan came into office thinking that everything about Soviet-U.S. relationships was black and white," but now he has “become a master of the gray.”⁶⁸ When discerning the origins of the new “gray” area that Reagan is able to operate in, I look to the negotiations Reagan became accustomed to having with Gorbachev. Through their relationship, Reagan was better able to understand the domestic pressures his Soviet counterpart was dealing with this gained more respect for him. Reagan was forced to adapt his rhetoric to fit the evolution of his understanding of not only Gorbachev, but also the Soviet Union.

In addition to the rhetorical changes attributed to the Geneva Summit, the meeting between Gorbachev and Reagan also had lasting rhetorical consequences. Before Reykjavik, Reagan had portrayed himself as the “reluctant but determined participant in the Cold War” with

⁶⁷ Cannon, Lou “Reagan, Gorbachev Two Paths to Détente” *The Washington Post*, May 29th, 1988. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1988/05/29/reagan-gorbachev-two-paths-to-detente/8bec251e-7160-4599-a6e4-f527c4ff885a/>

⁶⁸ Ibid

his hand being forced by the Soviets.⁶⁹ However, after the success of Gorbachev's "rhetorical ambush", after the summit, the public opinion in the United Kingdom and Germany was swayed. The result was a public which now believed that "the USSR was making a greater effort than was the United States towards nuclear arms agreement" and that Reagan was to blame for the lack of tangible outcomes from the meeting.⁷⁰

However, Reykjavik also provided the United States with some strategic advantages. It instilled in their public confidence that nuclear arms control was possible. Nikolai Sokov, a fellow at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies summed it up best when he wrote: "Reykjavik has become a symbol of sorts – an example that nuclear disarmament is within reach if political leaders have courage to make such a decision and break through bureaucratic politics and the maze of arcane nuclear balance theories."⁷¹ This idea was also echoed by Schultz when he reflected on the event:

"I suppose that what startled people in Reykjavik was not what was said, because both Reagan and Gorbachev had said that before, but the fact that here were the two leaders in an operational setting talking about timetables."⁷²

Although many in the world viewed Reykjavik as a rhetorical win for the Soviet Union and Gorbachev with his skilled rhetorical ambush, the Summit was not a total failure for the American entourage. They were able to show the world that even if they were not yet ready to give up on SDI (and Reagan wasn't sure that this was the right move) that ultimately, they were

⁶⁹ Michael Weiler, and W. Barnett Pearce. "Reagan and Public Discourse in America" *Studies in Rhetoric and Communication*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press. <https://search-ebscohost-com.avoserv2.library.fordham.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=26958&site=eds-live>

⁷⁰ Ibid

⁷¹ Sokov, Nikolai "Reykjavik Summit: The Legacy and Lessons for the Future" *Nuclear Threat Initiative* November 30th, 2007. <https://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/reykjavik-summit-legacy/>

⁷² Ibid

still engaged in talks and negotiations with the other side. In a period of great nuclear fears, this move gave Reagan a lot of political capital.

Discussion and Analysis

Reagan and Gorbachev in Geneva

After examining the evidence and mapping the changes in rhetoric after the Geneva summits, I conclude that there were substantial strides made through diplomacy and summitry on the dampening of anti-Soviet rhetoric and the strengthening of personal ties between the leaders of both nations. During the final dinner at Geneva, both sides emphasized that at Geneva they “started something that would lead them to more significant steps in improving bilateral relations and the global situation, with mutual understanding and a sense of responsibility.”⁷³ Secretary of State George Schultz also spoke to the productiveness of the summitry between Reagan and Gorbachev. After Geneva, Schultz notes in his memoir: “the precedent of serious and direct talk had been established” and he could see the “real possibilities of a better relationship.”⁷⁴

Reagan and Gorbachev in Reykjavik

At the end of the Reykjavik Summit, although there was almost nothing to show in policy measures, there had been rhetorical victories won by Gorbachev and there seemed to be a mindset shift in Reagan on SDI. From the nuclear disarmament perspective, “the value of the Reykjavik summit was less in the specific proposals that were discussed by the parties, but rather in the fact that the two leaders boldly tackled the issue of very deep reductions.”⁷⁵ After being set

⁷³ The National Security Archive, “To the Geneva Summit: Perestroika and the Transformation of U.S - Soviet Relations” *NSA Archive*, November 22nd, 2005.

<https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB172/index.htm>

⁷⁴ Schultz, 607

⁷⁵ Sokov, Nikolai “Reykjavik Summit: The Legacy and Lessons for the Future” *Nuclear Threat Initiative* November 30th, 2007. <https://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/reykjavik-summit-legacy/>

up with the high hopes of nuclear disarmament only for it to be conditioned to the elimination of SDI, Reagan left Iceland frustrated. One of his advisors who had traveled with him in his entourage recounts Reagan never having look so upset before. According to this advisor, “Reagan wasn’t convinced that he had done the right thing by saying that we had to have SDI.”⁷⁶ This is a huge leap from Reagan’s position on SDI just two years prior. He was convinced that a defense system was the way to achieve nuclear peace and this evolution is critical in explaining the importance summitry has on presidential rhetoric.

Although many historians will look at Reykjavik as a failure, the importance of this summit meeting should not be lost in the lack of hard policy. Each side had seen just how far the other was willing to go to end the nuclear arms race. Mann recounts Schultz’s reflection of the Summit:

“As we all know, once you’ve put your positions on the table, you can say, ‘I’ve withdrawn them,’ but they’re not withdrawn. They’re there. We’ve seen your bottom line, and so we know where it is, and they all came right back on the table before long.”⁷⁷

During a period, full of clandestine activities and suspicion between the Soviet Union and the United States, this transparency was a turning point in the Cold War. The Reykjavik Summit allowed for the spirit and the boldness of the two leaders to shine. Despite all the differences between them, they both passionately believed in the idea of nuclear disarmament and for the first time at this meeting acknowledged it formally.⁷⁸ Both sides had revealed their hands, and there was now the ability to move into future summits with this information and act appropriately.

⁷⁶ Mann, 45-46

⁷⁷ Ibid

⁷⁸ Sokov, Nikolai “Reykjavik Summit: The Legacy and Lessons for the Future” *Nuclear Threat Initiative* November 30th, 2007. <https://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/reykjavik-summit-legacy/>

Conclusion:

In this paper, I attempted to answer the question regarding the effectiveness of state diplomacy and summitry on easing rhetoric. The Reagan and Gorbachev summits provided an excellent opportunity to examine the evolution of their relationship before and after the summits of 1985 and 1986. I found that Presidential Rhetoric coming from Reagan softened after both the Geneva and Reykjavik Summits. Reagan's harsh rhetoric describing the Soviet Union as an "Evil Empire" dissipated. It was replaced with rhetoric reflecting the new status of their relationship. Reagan had "called for a fresh start" and argued that after their meetings they "understand each other better."⁷⁹ Schultz summed it up best when he wrote Reagan had "zeroed in on the character of the human being in the other chair. He was genuinely impressed by what he saw and felt in his encounter with Gorbachev."⁸⁰ He goes on to say how that relationship would shape the outlook Reagan had throughout his second presidential term. He had a new sense of what was "possible with the Soviets."⁸¹

Although this paper does not claim that summitry was the main or principal factor on Reagan's changing of views on the Soviet Union, but it does argue that summitry and personal diplomacy has a place in international relations. For example, just recently during the state dinner with French President Emmanuel Macron, President Biden noted that he was open to receiving Russia at the table. Although the results of such a meeting will most likely be miniscule, it is a strong first step to end the conflict in Ukraine.

The findings in this paper carry a couple of implications for the possible direction of foreign policy and personal diplomacy in the coming years. As mentioned, the United States has

⁷⁹ Schultz, 607

⁸⁰ Ibid

⁸¹ Ibid

exited the period of hegemonic rule. From a solely economic perspective, In the 1990s, at the height of the unipolar moment, around “70 percent of global economic activity took place in Europe and the Americas and in the next few decades, that number is likely to drop to about 40 percent, with Asia projected to account for the majority of global gross domestic product (GDP) by mid-century.”⁸² China is by far the biggest contributor to this number and because of that, there is a new need for economic and political cooperation between democracies to fight authoritarianism. These efforts can come primarily through diplomatic channels. Not only is China gaining influence, but their efforts are taking shape today. For example, China is employing the tools of statecraft, including personal diplomacy, “to shape a world consistent with [its] authoritarian model.”⁸³ The Chinese government trains officials from other countries under its influence on China’s governance and economic model. Additionally, in the technological space, China has pushed for authoritarian norms, such as greater national sovereignty over the Internet, via mechanisms such as the BRI’s “Digital Silk Road” initiative.⁸⁴

The findings of this paper also hold implications for the future of international climate summits. The leaders of the world are facing an increasing imperative to come together and address the problem of a warming environment. This is an issue where our fates, whether fair or not, are closely intertwined. It will redefine “how we live and work, and change the systems of production, trade, economics, and finance.”⁸⁵ In a similar way that the threat of nuclear warfare gripped the world in fear during the Cold War, climate change is bringing about a similar level of

⁸² Cimmino, Jeffrey, “Twenty-First-Century-Diplomacy: Strengthening US Diplomacy for the Challenges of Today and Tomorrow” *Atlantic Council*, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/21st-Century-Diplomacy-PDF.pdf>

⁸³ Ibid

⁸⁴ Ibid

⁸⁵ Carius, Alexander et al. “21st Century Diplomacy: Foreign Policy is Climate Policy (Report and Project Launch)” *The Wilson Center*, October 1st, 2020. <https://www.newsecuritybeat.org/2020/10/21st-century-diplomacy-foreign-policy-climate-policy-report-project-launch/>

global attention. For example, the World Economic Forum's "Global Risk Report consistently identified environmental degradation and climate change related impacts as among the most severe and likely risks facing the globe."⁸⁶ Although this risk must be matched by a level of cooperation and diplomacy similar to that seen between Reagan and Gorbachev, think tanks such as the *adelphi project* in Germany admit that A new type of climate diplomacy is "evolving to make use of a full range of policies, including development cooperation, conflict prevention efforts, and humanitarian assistance, in addition to more traditional measures of climate change adaptation and mitigation."⁸⁷ So, in order to match the threat level of climate change, the ambition and scale of diplomacy in the 21st century must match its' magnitude and urgency.

The last issue facing the international community that should be addressed by the type of personal diplomacy this paper explored is the problem of terrorism. Terrorism has been re-tooled and has become a international phenomenon which knows no boundaries or limits. So logically when state-actors attempt to combat this new international and boundaryless threat individually, the responses are often fractured and can sometimes work against one another. However, scholar Haris Pesto posits that diplomacy can also be tooled to become one of the most efficient international processes to create a coherent and unified front to combat terrorism. For Pesto, one of the main reasons diplomatic actions are so powerful in fighting terrorism is because it fosters "change without resorting to violent means" This means that "familiar characteristics of

⁸⁶ Ibid

⁸⁷ Carius, Alexander et al. "Climate Diplomacy - Foreign Policy Responses to Climate Change" *adelphi*, 2017 <https://www.adelphi.de/en/publication/climate-diplomacy-foreign-policy-responses-climate-change>

traditional state actor movements are strengthened, while the impact of terrorist organizations is reduced.”⁸⁸ He goes on to conclude that:

“Diplomacy, skillfully guided, represents the connective tissue that can incorporate all anti-terrorism measures into one compact and well-connected whole. Without efficient diplomacy, anti-terrorism measures and activities are fragmented and unconnected, and therefore also inefficient.”⁸⁹

I find this argument particularly powerful given the Geneva and Reykjavik Summits analyzed in this paper. One of the main reasons why Reagan’s anti-communist rhetoric shifted was because he was able to open a direct channel of communication with the Soviet Union and gained a better understanding of the nation and its leader, Gorbachev. The same way these summits allowed for the two leaders to create an open and efficient relationship with their ‘cards all on the table’ was critical in the easing of tensions. This sentiment is reflected in Pesto’s argument. If diplomacy can be expanded to create an international coalition to fight terror, the same efficiency and transparency between state actors can be achieved.

Whether the issue facing the international community is terror, climate change, or authoritarianism, the findings of this paper will remain relevant for state leaders and their diplomats. Communication, diplomacy, and cooperation will also be critical in identifying equitable solutions and strategies to combat international issues like these. Finally, as long as society continues to reject war as a primary solution to international disagreements, the need for summitry and state diplomacy will remain vital to the success of international relations.

⁸⁸ Pesto, Haris. “The Role of Diplomacy in the Fight Against Terrorism.” *Connections* 10, no. 1 (2010): 64–81. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26326234>.

⁸⁹ Ibid

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