

Did ronald reagan end the cold war term paper example

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DID RONALD REAGAN END THE COLD WAR?

Did Ronald Reagan end the Cold War?

Since the end of the Second World War, it was certain that a clash between the two remaining superpowers would be imminent since Europe is currently in a state of disarray. Both the Western and Eastern Blocs, led by the United States and the Soviet Union respectively, had felt threatened over the other's interest in the still recovering Europe and the right to be known as the only superpower standing. The resulting clash paved the way to the Cold War of 1947-1991, arguably the most volatile and dangerous standstill between the two remaining superpowers. When the war ended in 1991, arguments had persisted as to how it actually ended. Some say it was an inevitability due to Soviet collapse and US dominance. Others even argued it could be thanks to either US President Ronald Reagan or Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev. In regards to US President Reagan's role, he alone did not end the Cold War as he and Gorbachev's drive to attain a compromise and restore US-Soviet relations had enabled the war to end peacefully. According to Matlock (2008), US-Soviet relations before Reagan had been in at its lowest point as the "détente", initiated by former US President Richard Nixon and the General Secretary of the Central Party of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Leonid Brezhnev in 1972 after signing the Anti-Ballistic-Missile Treaty (ABM), the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) and a Declaration of Principles, had dissipated completely after the Soviet takeover in Afghanistan in 1972. US President Jimmy Carter had not taken the invasion lightly and withdrawn support to the 1978 SALT-II agreements while ordering sanctions against the Soviets. He had also ordered to remove all Soviet

representatives in New York, boycott the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow, and impose a rice embargo to the Soviet Union. Carter had also seen fit to dismiss talks to renew US-Soviet talks on cultural and educational exchange as a part of their punishment to the Soviets. Since it was at the dawn of the presidential campaigns, then presidential aspirant Ronald Reagan had accused President Carter of weakening the American force due to his dysfunctional actions against the Soviet Union and punishing even the regular Americans due to the Olympic boycott and cancelled educational exchanges. These actions, Reagan stated, would not enable the Americans to even influence the Soviet leaders to move out of Afghanistan and settle the Cold War peacefully. He had also re-energized the American public with his speeches, calling all to fight for democracy which had been slowed by Carter.

As a result of his arguments, Reagan successfully won against Carter in the 1980 Presidential bid and assumed office in January 20, 1981. It was visible to many that despite his rhetoric against Carter's actions towards the Soviet Union, Reagan did not have a clear idea on how he can overturn the arms race and end the Cold War. However, from the start of his term, he had immediately stated that it is crucial for the United States to negotiate with the Soviets to regulate nuclear weapon production and create strict verification policies to ensure regulation. Knopf (2004) stated that Reagan, unlike his predecessors and successors, believed the Soviet Union could be defeated and it would be prudent to create the pressure required to push the Soviet Union to notice the need for a change of tactics. There was also a need to see that both the US and the Soviet Union had similar interests,

which is why it is possible to create a mutual relationship with one another. Reagan, however, also criticized against the Soviet policies and its organization, including the political strategies used by Soviet leaders. In support of his position, he announced in his first press briefing as president that he supports “ an actual reduction in the numbers of nuclear weapons” and questioned Soviet’s goal of “ world domination”.

Sadly, the Soviet Union did not take the criticism lightly as they had the impression that Reagan is heightening the tensions between them. This impression continued to insinuate further delays in arms control, leaving the Soviets to decline NATO’s dual track decision and the validity of the unratified SALT-II treaty. In his end, Reagan still showed eagerness to reduce nuclear arms, however, he first concentrated on tackling the “ weakened” US defense due to Carter’s policies as it would influence how he would negotiate with the Soviets. He believed that if he left the military arm of the US frail, there is a possibility they would not be able to protect themselves if a threat occurs. Discussions over the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INK) in 1981 and the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) in 1982 also started, but had been postponed due to Reagan’s inability to concentrate on the talks.

While Reagan had shown clear determination to end the conflict and begin US-Soviet negotiations, it was only when Mikhail Gorbachev came into power that enabled both countries to find a compromise. Hacke (2004) stated that Reagan knew it would be easier to discuss reforms with Gorbachev, especially with the issue about Germany and the resolution of the Cold War. Nojeim and Kilroy (2011) had also added that Reagan had already seen the

possible dangers that may ensue if the US remains to be at odds with the Soviets. Since Gorbachev was still under pressure as the new premier, Reagan immediately began his plan and called Gorbachev to join him in discussing the German question of reunification and the arms negotiations. Gorbachev himself had expressed deep interest in ensuring talks regarding a détente and arms control continue, mirroring Reagan's desire to support the sentiment by meeting with the Soviet Premier in the Geneva Summit in 1985. Both leaders had discussed the future of the SDI, ending with the revision of exchange programs and the rekindled US-Soviet relations which had been marred from the early 1980s. They met once more in Reykjavik, Iceland in 1986, which was the most important discussion between both leaders to eliminate all missiles in Europe and started the crucial steps to end the Cold War. The agreement had also been the first for both nations to agree in terms to reduce arsenals as years progressed.

When it came to the German question of reunification, Reagan continued to entice Gorbachev to work with him to finalize Europe's total freedom from warfare and enable Germany to join its neighbors in their independence.

When he visited Berlin during the 750th jubilee celebrations, Reagan had once again reached out to Gorbachev in his 1987 speech, stating that:

“ If you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization: Come here to this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!”

While many had commended Reagan for his blatant challenge to Gorbachev, it was visible that both leaders would immediately find a compromise to make it possible. Gorbachev had shown that he was ready to accept

Reagan's challenge when he visited Washington in 1987 by signing the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) that would eliminate all nuclear and conventional missiles with intermediate range capacities that can reach both territories, the first treaty to eliminate nuclear arms.

Optimism continued to flourish as Reagan and Gorbachev continued to work constantly to diffuse the Cold War and reopen channels for both leaders to visit each other. In 1988, Reagan himself had visited Moscow after Gorbachev's announcement that the Soviet Union is finally withdrawing its forces out of Eastern Europe. Both leaders continue to meet in several summits to discuss more partnerships that aided further talks to end the conflict. By the time Reagan left the office in January 1989, the end of the Cold War was visible with the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the Malta Summit held at the end of that same year.

The end of the Cold War can be attributed to several factors - from the slowly diminishing power of the Soviet Union to the talks between Reagan and Gorbachev. In this case, Ronald Reagan's role in the resolution of the war was essential as he, despite the criticisms he lashed to the Soviet Union and his actions throughout his term, had been firm in calling for negotiations between the nations to resolve the dilemma and essentially end the Cold War. However, he alone cannot be credited to the end of the war because without Mikhail Gorbachev to assist in opening the Soviet Union into negotiations, Reagan's goal to free the world of nuclear power would and end the conflict would not persist. The cooperation between these two leaders had reopened channels for both nations to see eye to eye peacefully

and enabled the issues that originally caused them grief throughout the war resolved.

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