

Ronald reagan's impact on american politics



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Ronald Reagan was undoubtedly one of the most remembered presidents in United States history. Although much of his term in office controversial, Ronald Reagan redefined the purpose of government during the Reagan Revolution, which hardened the conservative agenda for years after he left office. His negotiations with Soviet Union's Gorbachev at the Reykjavik Summit were the turning point for the Cold War.

Ronald Reagan's term in office is commonly known as the Reagan Revolution. Within this revolution, the Reagan Boom occurred, which according to the Editors of Congressional Quarterly in U. S. Foreign Policy the Reagan Imprint resulted in 92 consecutive months of economic growth. The fruits of this boom included a 31% increase in gross national product and the creation of 18.4 million jobs by 1990. Reagan lowered taxes but increased the budget from 144 billion dollars in 1980, to the 290 billion dollars by 1988. (Presidents and their Decisions Ronald Reagan.) This raise in budget caused a deficit to the government. Reagan's philosophy was known as supply-side economics. In theory, if he lowered taxes the American people would spend more as well as save and invest.

Although it is to be believed that Reagan's policies created one million jobs in one month (<https://www.businessinsider.com>), that is far from the truth. September 1983 had a massive increase in hired employees, however, the bulk of these employees were returning members from striking against the American Telephone and Telegraph company. So, while Reagan's policies did create thousands of jobs, it was not as impactful as many believe today. The combined jobs Reagan's policies created, along with workers going back to work from being on strike, led to the unemployment rate falling from 7.6%

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to 5.5%. With the average American family's net worth increasing by 27% annually, more money went back into the economy making it even stronger. Now many Americans could live by the supply-side economic philosophy. Reagan's policies did not just affect the average white male American either, the employment of African Americans rose more than 25% as well as over half of the jobs created were filled by women. Much of Reagan's policies, he believed, would be difficult for the economy in the beginning, then in the long run display ample development overall. Reagan's belief was, by cutting taxes, reducing the size of government, reducing government expenditures equivalent to amounts of taxes being cut, was the best way to attain a stable budget. Though, during his term in office he failed to cut federal spending, he only increased it for his strong-arm maneuvers against the Soviet Union in an arms race.

During his first term, Reagan had one major goal in mind as far as foreign policy, that was to shift the Soviet Union from being a communist nation. Reagan wanted to stop the spread of communism and used the peace through strength strategy to attempt to do so. Reagan expanded the United States Military to the largest it had been in history in a time the United States was not actively in a war. He used the increased budget to enforce the increase in production drastically in nuclear missiles, and to deploy many of them across the West. Reagan also reinstated the building of the B-1 Bomber and started the production of the MX peacekeeper missile. Throughout his presidency, Reagan faced much opposition from Congress. For example, Reagan's eight yearly budget proposals were deemed unworkable and rejected by Congress. Additionally, Congress rejected an

amendment that in Reagan's opinion would permanently prevent the government from accruing more debt. Perhaps stoking opposition, Reagan expressed strong beliefs about the type of people who should serve in Congress. Reagan thought that congressional seats should be filled by those who had to be convinced to serve, rather than people who sought a career in government. Reagan believed that Congress often acted outside the constraints of the U. S. Constitution, which further galvanized his assertion that it be free of career politicians.

Ronald Reagan although having many ideas for reforms and policy ideologies, failed to enact many of them during his presidency. One of which was the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (SART). It was founded in 1982 by Reagan himself, and quickly failed due to the proposition being that the Soviet Union would deplete their arms inventory while the United States continued building inventory. Conversely, a successful and very well-known negotiation between Reagan and Gorbachev involved the agreement that Gorbachev would withdraw most of his nuclear arsenal and troops from Soviet controlled states, while Reagan had to abandon his idea of Star Wars and a space defense program. Both nations would also be reducing the number of nuclear weapons. In 1985 Gorbachev stopped nuclear testing, and deployment of intermediate range missiles.

The few policies that Reagan did get passed by Congress had a lasting impact on the economy. The Economic Tax Recovery Act is a reform put in place by the Reagan administration which implemented a 25% reduction in income taxes over a period of three years. The Tax Reform Act of 1986 simplified the income tax code and provided an incentive for growth in the

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economy by reducing the maximum rate on an ordinary income while raising tax rates on long term capital gains. Together these two tax acts reduced the maximum federal income tax rate to less than half of what it was before Reagan began his term in office.

Another Controversial part of Reagan's term in office was the fact that he proposed budget cuts for programs including Medicare, child nutrition programs, public service jobs, mental health subsidies, college education benefits, and unemployment compensation, while the First Lady Nancy Reagan bought china for their personal affairs at \$2000 a setting. The Reagan's wanted to cut federal funding for programs of those in need, while dining on luxurious plate ware, along with spending ample amounts of money on clothing accessories and redecorating the White House. The Reagan administration went so far as to declare ketchup as a vegetable for public schools to allow it to cut more funding.

Reagan believed he was helping other nations, as well as setting the United States above other countries by being involved in battles that involved fighting communism. Reagan also believed aid could be used in strengthen the United States relationship with allies. Reagan believed that dollar for dollar, our security assistance contributes as much to global security as our own defense budget. (US Foreign Policy) The Reagan Doctrine sent United States Military over to other countries which were thought to be committing human rights abuses, as well as to aid countries that rejected communism. Reagan's actions regarding this doctrine are one of many reasons the United States has become an imperialistic nation today.

The Iran Contra affair was an incident that occurred under the Reagan Doctrine which caused much controversy against the Reagan administration. Reagan supplied aid to the anti-communist governments in Central America which were embroiled in civil war in order to gain freedom for the hostages being detained in Lebanon. This was an undisclosed trade agreement that caused pandemonium when it came to light because it appeared the President was assisting terrorists. Once Democrats gained control of Congress they passed the Boland Agreement, discontinuing any additional aid to the Contras in Nicaragua. Reagan's administration was obligated to admit that it covertly funded the Contras by selling weapons. Not only was this an unlawful exchange, it was also a grave breach on the trade embargo against Nicaragua. Debate continues to this day about whether Reagan knew that he was indeed aiding a terrorist group. Although temporary, the United States lost much credibility because of this affair.

In learning in his second term that the only defensive strategy the US had against a nuclear attack was to retaliate with a nuclear attack, Reagan believed nuclear weapons should be abolished, if both nations being the Soviet Union and United States agreed. Arguably the United States had more technologically advanced and sophisticated weapons than the Soviet Union, even though the Soviet Union spent more money on their defense system. In discovery of the fact that the United States had no defense against nuclear attacks, Reagan created what he called my dream, which was later named the Strategic Defense Initiative. The Strategic Defense Initiative was an idea of a defense element that could take down nuclear missiles before ever reaching their target. This division of defense would be stationed from

Space, which is how it got its nickname, Star Wars. Reagan gained confirmation that this was a realistic ideology from the joint chiefs of staff, and once he gained that reassurance that it was practical he proceeded to start the funding for such program.

During the time of his leadership of the Soviet Union, Mikael Gorbachev sought out communications and negotiations with the United States. The first meeting was held in Geneva, and the two leaders were able to make a civil relationship unlike many leaders of the opposing countries before them. The Geneva Summit established rapport between the two leaders and allowed them to realize that they both were interested in the reduction of nuclear weapons. They could not reach an agreement during this summit because Reagan would not budge on his development of the Strategic Defense Initiative.

The second meeting took place in Reykjavik, Iceland, on 11 October 1986. Many proposals were put on the table that day. Gorbachev proposed for the immediate elimination of half of each country's supply of strategic nuclear weapons, as well as the complete abolition of all intermediate range missiles in Europe. Gorbachev also proposed the need of Reagan to eliminate the request of USSR removing all its missiles from Asian territory. Gorbachev wanted both sides to promise to follow all rules of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and was willing to agree to allow the United States to research and test on the ideology of anti-ballistic defense projects, if it took place within laboratories. Reagan himself knew these were better proposals than he could have ever hoped for, but standing his ground was a tactic used by Reagan in hopes to not have to make a compromise. Reagan showed no emotions

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towards these proposals and instead brought up several matters such as the USSR having the option to take the situation and turn it around by relocating Asian based intermediate range nuclear missiles and relocate them to western Europe. Reagan requested to follow a very vague perception of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty but gave his word to share any findings and success in the Strategic Defense Initiative, as well as promising that the United States would only deploy SDI once all nuclear weapons had been abolished. Reagan ensured that the United States would not make a first strike by nuclear missiles. The proposals are said to be The best Soviet Union offer in a quarter of a century. (213)

Despite agreements reached that half of the nuclear missiles were to be destroyed, there was much argument over the issues of SDI. On the second day in Reykjavik the proposals made by Gorbachev included asking for one hundred warheads to be left in Asia, requesting both countries follow the Anti-Missile Treaty for a period of ten years, and ensured the goodwill of the USSR by proposing that lab-based research on SDI was agreed upon. Reagan argued that fact and insisted that the entire purpose of SDI was to make the need for such treaty disappear. Reagan believed that the Strategic Defense Initiative was the best chance of ridding the world of those weapons.(RR) Both parties were set in their ways and could not reach a compromise. Reagan started bringing up irrelevant issues such as the long-term grain agreement and asked why the USSR had not fulfilled the purchase agreement.

The final proposal by Gorbachev showed that he indeed wanted to find a middle ground for agreement. He proposed the limitation of research,
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testing, and development of SDI meet the guidelines of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty for a minimum of five years. Gorbachev proposed the abolishment of half of each country's nuclear weapons if it was done parallel to one another, with the understanding that all nuclear weapons be eliminated in ten years. Reagan came back to this proposal with the request that America, at the ten-year mark, would be allowed to deploy Strategic Defense Initiative. At this point it became a standstill and neither party was offering any more proposals. Reagan misunderstood Soviet's rejection to SDI, and Gorbachev didn't understand why America needed SDI after ridding the world of nuclear weapons. Gorbachev had ideas of the next president changing any treaties or agreements made between them, while Reagan warned that another leader could develop nuclear weapons. Although both parties agreed on nuclear missile abolishment, they could not agree on the SDI, and left under the impression they would not meet again. This was a turning point for the Cold War.

The directness of Gorbachev surprised Reagan but did not delay Reagan's quick response time to such matters. There were numerous meetings between Gorbachev and Reagan, many of which caused controversy among the American people. The Soviet Union and the United States spent many years competing in an arms race against each other, the United States outspent the Soviet Union and ultimately won the race. This amount of spending caused much tension between Reagan and Congress throughout the bulk of his presidency. President Reagan, and Mikael Gorbachev met on many different occasions in attempt to put an end to such a race. During one of the meetings Ronald Reagan walked out without agreeing or signing any

type of treaty due to Mikael Gorbachev insisting Reagan give up and stop all funding of the Strategic Defense Initiative. This put the American people in a turmoil and panic, with the thought that the Soviet Union were going to drop missiles, and atomic bombs on the United States.

While much controversy during his time in office as with any leader, Reagan overall made much progress in foreign affairs. In developing a relationship with Soviet Union's Leader Mikhail Gorbachev, Reagan had a significant impact on the ending of the Cold War. The many negotiations held between Reagan and Gorbachev opened the communication door between the United States and the Soviet Union and led to the abolishment of many nuclear weapons held in both countries. Ronald Reagan redefined the purpose of government through his policies and tactics during his two-term presidency. Reagan's negotiations with The Soviet Union's leader Gorbachev at Geneva Summit were the turning point in the Cold War and opened the door for the reduction in nuclear arms.