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“Better Unmentioned.” An Assessment of Reagan Administration Aid to Pakistan, Panama, and
Zaire

Senior Thesis.

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“Better Unmentioned:” An Assessment of Reagan Administration Aid to Pakistan, Panama, and Zaire.¹

By Charles Sherrard.

In the 1940 movie *Santa Fe Trail*, then-actor Ronald Reagan plays the part of George Custer, depicted in the film as a dashing young cavalry officer who fights against the abolitionist John Brown (who is portrayed as a crazed radical) alongside the story’s main character, Errol Flynn’s “Jeb” Stuart. There are some striking similarities between Reagan’s character in the film and the image he helped foster during his presidency. Like Custer in the film, Reagan tried to create a myth where he was the “cowboy” fighting against the radical Soviet Union alongside the members of his cabinet. Reagan’s world was the world of movies, simple, uncomplicated, and Manichean. He would even go as far as to wear cowboy boots publicly during his presidency. He may have occupied the White House during his presidency, but as far as his mind was concerned, he was in the Wild West.²

The problem was, it was all fiction. On February 16th, 1990, former President Ronald Reagan sat in the witness box. His former National Security Adviser, John Poindexter, was on trial, accused of lying to Congress about his involvement in the Iran-Contra Affair four years before. When Poindexter’s attorney, Richard Beckler (who was beloved by the media for his courtroom gesticulations and unorthodox questioning style) asked Reagan what he remembered about his “dealings with an Asian country,” President Reagan responded that he had “never

¹ Reagan Testimony in the Trial of John Poindexter, Part II, C-Span Archives.

² *The Santa Fe Trail*, Directed by Otto Brower, Edwin Knopf, 1940, Robin Givhan “The Republican Candidates Idolize Reagan. But Not One of Them Can Match His Style,” *Washington Post*, 8/7/15

made any effort” to find out where the funds for the Contras were coming from, and that the sources of that funding were “better unmentioned.”³ In hindsight, it seems almost surprising that this statement did not generate more controversy at the time Reagan uttered it. Perhaps it was simply due to how normal the statement must have seemed to the public after four years of scandal. Whatever the reason, the truth is that the statement meant nothing less than an admission by the President of the United States that he let his subordinates act with autonomy and without supervision.⁴

Reagan gave those subordinates, mainly Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director William Casey, unparalleled power, causing them to make huge mistakes. By operating with a level of freedom not seen since the days of Allen Dulles a generation earlier. Casey wielded a large amount of power over US foreign policy. However, Casey’s autonomy bypassed the rest of the Reagan administration, to say nothing of Congress, and the resulting lack of oversight led Casey to commit many unforced errors that would impact national security for decades. These mistakes are important in a larger sense because we can learn from those errors to do better in the future.⁵

A common criticism of histories of the Reagan administration is the argument that there are not yet enough declassified sources to draw from to write an adequate history of the Reagan administration. But, as the following pages will show, there are, in fact, many sources from

³ Reagan Testimony in the Trial of John Poindexter, Part II, C-Span Archives, Steve Coll. *Ghost Wars: the Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan and bin Laden from the Soviet Invasion to September 10th, 2001* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004) loc 1342, David Van Reybrouck, *Congo, the Epic History of a People*, New York: HarperCollins, 2010) 528, Frederick Kempe, *Divorcing the Dictator: America’s Bungled Affair with Noriega* (New York: G.P Putnam’s Sons, 1990) 195

⁴ Ibid.,

⁵ Central Intelligence Agency Electronic Reading Room (CIA-ERR) “Nicaragua/Mining,” Dan Rather Interview, 4/24/18 Joseph E. Perisco, *Casey: The Lives and Secrets of William J. Casey: From the OSS to the CIA* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1990) 181,

where to draw evidence. Many of these critics point out the lack of Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) documents as evidence of their argument. While it is true that very few FRUS collections on the Reagan administration are declassified, some of those that are highly relevant to this topic (particularly the collections on the Soviet Union, which contain much information on the Reagan administration's relationship with Pakistan) are available. To compensate for the relative lack of FRUS documents, I have made extensive use of other archives, such as the National Security Archive and the CIA Archive, to research the Reagan administration's relationship with Panama and Zaire. I have also obtained information from newspaper and magazine articles from the period. Finally, some of the sources in this paper are from interviews conducted by the writers of secondary literature.⁶

The Cold War had begun a little more than forty years prior to Reagan's inauguration, as Britain and France retreated from colonial power and the United States and the Soviet Union became the preeminent world powers after the fall of Nazi Germany in 1945. In particular, as the British slowly withdrew from their former colonies (beginning with India in 1947) they sought to pass the imperial mantle to the United States, in order to continue waging the "Great Game," or the Anglo-Russian political rivalry in Asia that had been brewing since the 19th century.⁷

These international power dynamics increasingly led the United States to act out of what have been perceived as "imperial" ambitions. However, these ambitions were nothing new. As far back as the mid 19th century, American nationalism revolved around the belief that the nation

⁶ Kempe, *Divorcing the Dictator: America's Bungled Affair with Noriega* (New York: G.P Putnam's Sons, 1990), *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS), 1986-88, Vol VI, Central Intelligence Agency Electronic Reading Room (CIA-ERR) "Nicaragua/Mining," Dan Rather Interview, 4/24/18, U.S Drug Charges Cite 4 Cuban Aides," *The New York Times*, 11/6/82, Minutes of A National Security Planning Group Meeting, 5/16/86, NSA Archive BB 283, 6

⁷ Steven Kinzer, *The Brothers: John Foster Dulles, Allen Dulles, and their Secret World War* (New York: St Martin's Press, 2013), 63

had a divine right to expand from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean, regardless of the presence of Mexicans and Native Americans who stood in the way. The Cold War represented an international turn of these trends with strong British encouragement.⁸

After the end of the Second World War, American involvement in the Cold War quickly escalated. The covert schemes of the John Foster and Allen Dulles, who organized the toppling of moderate regimes and their replacement with pro-western puppets, gradually evolved into the quagmire in Vietnam. The Vietnam War, which began as an effort to help France keep control of its Vietnamese colony, slowly escalated until the United States was openly fighting a war on behalf of the South Vietnamese government against North Vietnam. The war's huge cost in human life (both American and Vietnamese) led the United States to be hesitant to commit troops to future conflicts. By 1976, one year after the Vietnam War had ended in defeat for the United States, many Americans thought their country was in a state of decline. Four years of Soviet advances during the Jimmy Carter administration would only cause that idea to grow. However, Carter was defeated in the 1980 presidential election by Ronald Reagan.⁹

The outline for the "Reagan doctrine," can be found in future Reagan administration Ambassador to the United Nations' Jeane Kirkpatrick's 1979 essay "Dictatorships and Double Standards." Kirkpatrick argues that Carter had abandoned the Shah of Iran and Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza to revolutionary forces out of an interest in human rights, but against the best interests of the US. Kirkpatrick's argument in favor of supporting right-wing dictatorships would later become a key part of the "Reagan Doctrine." Kirkpatrick's ideologies

⁸ Kinzer, *The Brothers*, 279, John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of US National Security Policy During the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 235 John C. Pinheiro, *Missionaries of Republicanism: A Religious History of the Mexican-American War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 53

⁹ Gaddis, *Strategies*, 235, 307, 342

had an earlier precedent in the former Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. A fanatical Presbyterian, Dulles believed that the Soviet Union would stop at nothing to impose its idea of communism upon the rest of the world. John Foster Dulles' anti-communist zeal would find successors in Kirkpatrick, Bill Casey, and Oliver North.¹⁰

Casey's chief flaw was his fanaticism. His refusal to negotiate, and his tendency to see world politics as a zero-sum game crippled his government's ability to negotiate solutions to long, drawn out conflicts. Like Dulles before him, he saw the Cold War as an almost religious struggle between good and evil. Because Reagan gave him so much power over policy, Casey's fanaticism then became a part of the CIA and US foreign policy. Casey's zealotry became inseparable from the "Reagan" administration's worldview for six years, until the Iran-Contra Affair became news and Casey resigned from the CIA.¹¹

Casey's resignation allowed other figures, such as the long-neglected Secretary of State George Shultz, (as well as First Lady Nancy Reagan) to come to the fore. Casey's fall brought about an immediate shift in the administration's decision making. Under the control of this new, less hardline faction, the administration began seeing results. Shultz supported a Central American peace deal, negotiated by the President of Costa Rica, Oscar Arias, that saw free elections take place in Nicaragua in 1990. These elections resulted in the fall of the Sandinista government that the administration had been trying to remove since the beginning of Reagan's first term. During this time, Reagan also achieved a great deal of progress towards nuclear arms control in summit meetings with Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev.¹²

¹⁰ Perisco, *Casey*, 181, Kinzer, *The Brothers*, 279

¹¹ Reagan Testimony in the Trial of John Poindexter, Part II, C-Span Archives.

¹² George Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1991) Kindle Edition, loc 14150

In his book *A Twilight Struggle: American Power and Nicaragua, 1979-1990*, Robert Kagan argues that the 1990 Nicaraguan elections (which were certified by international observers) only happened because of the Contra War. He is largely correct. However, Kagan implicitly attacks the Oliver North/Bill Casey wing of the Reagan administration (which opposed negotiations with the Sandinistas and which he, as a State Department official, would have been in opposition to) when he claims that “Reagan’s policies, unmodified by the Arias plan or by Congress, would probably have meant many years of inconclusive struggle in Nicaragua.”¹³ It was this hardliner faction that sought to aid Noriega as part of the Contra War. Kagan’s thesis is given weight by the fact that we saw his prediction come true in two other countries, Afghanistan (through American aid to Pakistan) and the Congo. I use Kagan’s argument to frame what the Reagan administration considered American interests, and to lay out the strategy of a moderate wing of the administration’s members.¹⁴

The Reagan administration was disinterested in tying up the loose ends of conflicts in Pakistan and Zaire to prevent negative long-term consequences. Perhaps the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan and the rise of Chinese influence in the Congo could have been prevented if the conflicts in those regions had been concluded and the countries themselves allowed to rebuild. Had it not been for the Arias plan in Central America, might we be seeing terrorist attacks coming from that region now? And had we been willing to make an agreement with the USSR to form a transitional coalition government in Afghanistan and to formulate a peace plan for Central Africa, would we be so worried about those regions today?¹⁵

¹³ Robert Kagan, *A Twilight Struggle: American Power in Nicaragua, 1977-1990* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1996)

¹⁴ Reybrouck, *Congo*, 528, Kempe, *Divorcing the Dictator*, 195, Coll, *Ghost Wars*, loc 1342

¹⁵ Reybrouck, *Congo*, 528, Kempe, *Divorcing the Dictator*, 195, Coll, *Ghost Wars*, loc 1342

The strategy that I will apply to the contexts of all three regions (because it is the strategy that provoked so much ire from Casey and the other hardliners) has been referred to by theorists and historians as “linkage.”¹⁶ “Linkage” was a policy associated with the Nixon and Ford administrations in the 1970s, and its most famous proponent was then National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger.¹⁷ It was then carried on through some Reagan era officials, especially in the State Department. Kissinger’s policies defined an era of the Cold War that would become known as the period of *Détente*, because of its relative peace between the United States and the Soviet Union. Built off of George Kennan’s idea of “containment,” or preventing Marxism from gaining new territory, “linkage” consisted of negotiating with the Soviet Union in order to produce results favorable to both power blocs. To do this, the Nixon and Ford administrations would either offer concessions or apply pressure to the Soviet Union to induce them to agree to a certain demand.¹⁸

By the time Casey resigned, though, the damage had been done. Aid to the anti Soviet *mujahideen* fighters in Afghanistan had allowed religious fundamentalism to grow exponentially in that country. Casey’s allies who had managed to survive the Iran-Contra scandal, mainly National Security Adviser Frank Carlucci and Deputy National Security Adviser Colin Powell, combined with the Pakistani dictator Zia ul-Haq, sabotaged an agreement between the Soviet Union and the United States that would have established a power sharing coalition government in Afghanistan. In Central America, an illegal drug trade aided by Casey’s ally, the Panamanian

¹⁶ Gaddis, *Strategies*, 290

¹⁷ To be clear, this is not an endorsement of the ethics of military aid to these dictatorships. However, the ethics (or rather the lack of them) has been documented elsewhere by other scholars. This paper will thus examine the effectiveness, rather than the morality of the Reagan Doctrine.

¹⁸ Kagan, *A Twilight Struggle*, 722, Gaddis, *Strategies*, 290

dictator Manuel Noriega, would continue to expand. And in Zaire/Congo, Casey's blind eye to Chinese influence would see that country drift further into the Chinese sphere of influence.¹⁹

By failing to negotiate, the Reagan administration left these regions behind to stew in the mess that Casey and Reagan had created. Negotiated settlements could possibly have provided lasting ends to the regional problems that plagued Afghanistan and Central Africa, as they did with Central America (albeit not with the drug problem). But Casey and Reagan left them to fester. These solutions did not need to come at the price of accepting leftist expansion or ceasing to pressure the Soviet Union. On the contrary, they represent missed opportunities that could have led to new allies for the United States led faction of the Cold War. At minimum, they would have squeezed the Soviet Union closer to its own borders at a time when it struggled to contain uprisings in Eastern Europe (something it would ultimately fail to accomplish). Reagan's utter dependence on Casey not only caused long term problems in US foreign policy, but also did not contribute to the fall of the Soviet Union. I choose these dictatorships in particular in for their geographic balance and because of the centrality that each had in the internal discussions of the Reagan administration.²⁰

This is different from how most historians have viewed the Reagan administration. His admirers, obviously, have defended him, claiming that he directed foreign policy and brought down the Soviet Union. His detractors, however, also give him too much credit. In their rush to criticize Reagan over his handling of the Iran-Contra Affair (which he generally deserves) they

¹⁹ Steve Coll. *Ghost Wars*, loc 1342, Reybrouck, *Congo*, 528, Kempe, *Divorcing the Dictator*, 195

²⁰ Coll. *Ghost Wars*, loc 1342, Van Reybrouck, *Congo*, 528, Kempe, *Divorcing the Dictator*, 195, Victor Sebesteyen, *Revolution 1989: The Fall of the Soviet Empire* (New York: Vintage Books, 2009) xix, On the sources, I have primarily chosen American sources drawn from US government archives, not because sources from these countries is less important or less reliable, but because this project is primarily about the actions of the Reagan administration, and not about the effects on the populations of these countries. Additionally, these sources are more easily obtainable.

claim that Reagan was the mastermind behind the scheme, an “Imperial President” making decisions unilaterally. The truth is arguably worse. Reagan simply did not know enough about foreign policy to keep subordinates he liked from doing whatever they wanted. A strategy that would later become known as the “Reagan Doctrine” really had little to do with Reagan at all.²¹

Internal Dynamics of the Reagan Administration.

Sean Wilentz’s book *The Age of Reagan* is a case in point. While the book is overall a fine piece of literature dealing with a topic that few academics have the courage to write about, he may assign Reagan too much agency in his book. Wilentz criticizes the public desire for a “smoking gun,” indicating that Reagan planned the Iran-Contra scheme, but does not offer alternative evidence to back up what he claims Reagan did. It is entirely plausible that Reagan did know about Casey’s activities during the Iran-Contra Affair and feigned ignorance to maintain deniability. However, to accuse Reagan of lying about his involvement in the Iran-Contra scandal would be to accuse him of perjuring himself during the Poindexter trial, something that I am not willing to do without strong evidence to the contrary. In any event, Casey directed US foreign policy, with or without Reagan’s oversight.²²

Famed Cold War historian John Lewis Gaddis’ assessment of the Reagan administration is also somewhat incomplete. In his analysis of the Reagan years, Gaddis focuses on how Reagan was able to highlight human rights issues in the USSR (which, although certainly an important contribution on Reagan’s part, was not invented by him—human rights had been an issue ever since the Helsinki Final Act agreement), negotiations with Gorbachev over nuclear arms

²¹ Sean Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan: A History, 1974-2008* (New York: HarperPerennial, 2008) 239

²² Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 239, Reagan Testimony in the Trial of John Poindexter, Part II, C-Span Archives. Coll. *Ghost Wars*, loc 1342, CIA ERR, “Nicaragua/Mining,” F

reductions (which had precedent in the SALT talks) and the escalation of force against Soviet advances in the third world. Furthermore, Gaddis describes Reagan as a bright strategic thinker who was independent from his advisers.²³

Gaddis does not include how CIA director William Casey (who had been Reagan's campaign manager during his 1980 election campaign and so enjoyed a close relationship with the President that Secretary of State George Shultz and other state department officials did not have) operated with a shocking amount of autonomy during the Contra War. Indeed, if Reagan was such a bold and clear thinker, why was he clearly unable to resolve the intense factionalism that pervaded his administration? Even during the campaign, Reagan relied on Casey, referring to him as "the expert."²⁴ When he did pick a side, he most often picked the faction that had the closest relationship with him personally, that is, the Casey/Kirkpatrick/Weinberger faction. Shultz's credibility was so damaged by this exclusion that it compromised his effectiveness as secretary of state, as evidenced by Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevernadze's statement that "the Secretary of State said one thing; other members of the Administration did something else."²⁵

For all these mistakes, did Reagan/Casey really accomplish what his fiercest defenders say he did, the destruction of the Soviet Union? He may certainly have hastened it. The Soviet war in Afghanistan not only crippled the once proud Red Army and slaughtered thousands of young Russian men, but permanently changed the Soviet psyche as well. Soviet citizens became as disillusioned with their country during the 1980s as Americas had with the United States

²³ Gaddis, *Strategies*, 290, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS), 1986-88, Vol VI, 139

²⁴ Joseph E. Perisco, *Casey: The Lives and Secrets of William J. Casey: From the OSS to the CIA* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1990) 181

²⁵ Gaddis, *Strategies*, 371, FRUS, 1986-88, Vol VI, 139

during the 1960s with the Vietnam War. The difference was that the United States had the flexibility to adapt to and manipulate public opinion via the democratic system, an advantage the Soviet Union did not possess. However, the ultimate fall of the Soviet Union lay in the hands of larger historical forces. The Soviet economy was in desperate shape by the time Gorbachev took power in 1985. Ultimately, the Soviet system was able to keep up a façade of stability for the first half century of its existence, but by the 1980s, it began to crash. This is important point to note in this paper because it is a key part of assessing the overall impact of the Reagan administration's policies.²⁶

Détente's detractors believed that "linkage" failed because it assumed that the Soviets would be willing to follow through on their negotiated agreements. These broken promises led first to the isolationism of the Carter administration and then the aggression of the Reagan era. However, I believe that the policy of linkage failed not because of naivete, but because of an obsession (typical of most Cold War thinkers) with the Soviet Union and relied too much on the USSR to achieve its goals. This paper will argue that a series of negotiations with a series of different countries (Tanzania, Nicaragua, Afghanistan, and the USSR) would have had a much greater short and long-term benefits for the United States.²⁷

In this section, I will analyze the internal dynamics of the Reagan Administration. I will make use of memoirs from administration figures to get a sense of how they may have felt about one another. I will also make use of accounts of the Reagan administration CIA by Bob Woodward and Joe Perisco. Finally, the court testimony during the Iran Contra Affair, specifically the Poindexter trial, has been very helpful. Reagan's memoirs and diaries have also

²⁶ Sebesteyen, *Revolution 1989*, xix, Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, loc 14150

²⁷ Kagan, *A Twilight Struggle*, 722, Gaddis, *Strategies*, 290

proven useful. In this section, I will make the claim that the Reagan administration was not controlled by a strong President Reagan as is often believed, but that in fact most of the internal authority over foreign policy in the administration was ceded to CIA Director Casey, much to the consternation of other administration officials such as Secretary of State George Shultz.²⁸

Casey and Shultz were certainly enemies. Shultz attacked Casey in his memoirs, stating that he was “increasingly uneasy about him.”²⁹ Shultz felt (correctly) that Casey was an ideologue who was obsessed with attacking the Soviet Union, Sandinista Nicaragua, and their allies. Many of Shultz’s concerns would be borne out as Casey launched one reckless foreign policy decision after another, most notably in the cases of mining in Nicaragua and with US support to Noriega. For their part, Casey’s allies hated Shultz, with Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North stating that Shultz was “ambitious” and someone who wanted to take all the credit for any foreign policy accomplishments (which more accurately describes North than it does Shultz).³⁰

When Reagan did side with Shultz, he did it to appease a more liberal faction of the Republican Party that was still alive and to some degree powerful during the 1980s. Republicans like Senate Majority Leader Howard Baker and even the *National Review* magazine editor William Buckley had supported the Panama Canal Treaties in 1978 and had an ideological commitment to the old ideas of détente. When Gaddis states that Reagan wrote that scolding Casey “has to be done,” what he seems to miss is that Reagan meant that it “has to be done” for

²⁸ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 14151, Perisco, *Casey*, 227, Woodward, *Veil*, 4959, Reagan Testimony in the Trial of John Poindexter, Part II, C-Span Archives. Ronald Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries* (New York: HarperCollins, ed. Douglas Binkley, 2009) 117, Ronald Reagan, *An American Life: The Autobiography* (New York, Simon & Shuster, Kindle Edition, 1990) loc 357,

²⁹ *Ibid.*, loc 14175

³⁰ Oliver North, William Novak, *Under Fire: An American Story*, (Franklin, TN: Post Hill Press, 1991) Kindle Edition, loc 935

political reasons, not ideological ones. This ability to keep the different factions of the Republican Party at relative peace with one another was one of Reagan's two political strengths. After beginning his conservative activism as an actor in Hollywood, he further honed these skills as the Governor of California from 1967-73, and finally perfected them during his two presidential runs in 1976 and 1980. He had been a part of the Republican party for a generation, and he knew it inside and out by the time he became president.³¹

However, nothing in Reagan's background had prepared him for foreign policy. He had never been a member of Congress or worked for the state department or one of the other agencies that dealt with the diplomacy of the United States. This lack of experience is why he left much of his foreign policy strategy to Casey, who had been an intelligence agent as part of the OSS (Office of Strategic Services) during World War II. The closest his experience ever came to foreign policy was his service during the Second World War, and that had mostly included making movies for the troops (which helped more with his ability to woo an audience than it did his foreign policy skills).³²

Reagan's screen career leads us to his other political strength, the power of his personality, which Gaddis also pays much attention to. Many times, it seems as though Gaddis is critiquing the image of Reagan rather than the record of the Reagan presidency. Of course, Gaddis wrote that edition in 2005, so it is possible that he was not privy to documents that have been more recently declassified. However, he still had access to a number of memoirs from Reagan administration officials (some of which he cites) which should have given him a more nuanced view of the Reagan years. He was also writing during the height of the Reagan era, at a

³¹ Gaddis, *Strategies*, 371, George Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1991) Kindle Edition, loc 14150

³² Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, loc 14150,

time when Reagan seemed a much stronger political figure than he does now. Gaddis may have also treated Reagan the way he did because that in turn helped his larger thesis that the “strategies of containment” were what won the Cold War for the United States. Finally, Gaddis is widely considered to lean conservatively in his analysis of the Cold War. Regardless, it is certain that years of acting experience had given Reagan a warm public persona, a soothing voice, and unrivaled charisma.³³

Reagan’s image was certainly one that he cultivated meticulously throughout his life. Indeed, Wilentz writes that he, like many children of alcoholics (his father was a heavy drinker) had trouble separating fantasy from reality. Reagan seems to have almost needed the image of himself as a tough, “all-American” guy who was fighting against chaos for the sake of “the American way.” Politics simply served as another way for Reagan to advance that image to greater heights. Even while he was in office, he would hold movie displays on a regular basis, and often seemed to know more about politics than he did about diplomacy. His time in film influenced the way he saw international politics. In *The Santa Fe Trail*, the people of color in the film are portrayed without agency, just as Reagan and his accomplices would see Pakistanis, Panamanians, and Zairians during his time in office. The picture of Reagan as a cowboy may have won Reagan fame on the big screen and votes as a politician, but it did not lend him foreign policy experience. This would lead a void for others to fill.³⁴

Reagan’s admirers are incorrect in stating that there was no central Kissinger-like figure in the Reagan White House. For the first six years of the Reagan administration, Casey filled that role for Reagan, and his role only disappeared with his death in 1987. Casey was the first CIA

³³ Gaddis, *Strategies*, 371, Mark Alden Branch, “Days of Duck and Cover,” *Yale Alumni Magazine*, 4/2000,

³⁴ Robin Givhan “The Republican Candidates Idolize Reagan. But Not One of Them Can Match His Style,” *Washington Post*, 8/7/15

Director to have Cabinet rank, and the first to have an office adjacent to the White House in addition to the regular one at the CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia. For the first six years of his administration, Reagan was content to give Casey carte blanche in supporting the Nicaraguan and Afghan insurgencies. Casey was the chief planner behind the aid to the Afghan *mujahideen*; and would launch a covert operation to lay mines off the coast of Nicaragua. When the Nicaraguan operation was discovered by a reporter at the *New York Times*, both Republican and Democratic Senators (including the famed arch conservative Barry Goldwater) became infuriated with Casey hauling him before their committees to explain himself. Robert Pastor (a former Carter administration official) also blamed Casey for Haig's resignation in 1982, stating that Haig had opposed Casey's Contra strategy, but that Casey had "isolated" Haig.³⁵

However, Shultz had opposed the Nicaraguan mining operation. In his memoirs he states that he "strongly opposed" Casey's mining proposal at a NSPG (National Security Planning Group) meeting on May 31st, 1983.³⁶ This assertion is backed up by documentation of a different NSPG meeting on June 24th, 1984, where Shultz states that "no mines" should be part of the US aid to the Contras. While it should be noted that this meeting took place after knowledge of the mines became public, Shultz was the only person at the meeting to voice opposition to mining.³⁷ However, according to Shultz, Reagan overruled him without his knowledge and authorized Casey to carry out the mining operation. An anonymous CIA source speaking with reporter Bob Woodward would contradict Shultz's account, stating that Shultz said "fine" when asked to give

³⁵ Coll, *Ghost Wars*, loc 1342, CIA ERR, "Nicaragua/Mining," Robert Pastor, *Not Condemned to Repetition: The United States and Nicaragua* (Cambridge, MA: Westview Press, 2002) 194, Perisco, *Casey*. 227, 306

³⁶ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, loc 14150

³⁷ Minutes of A National Security Planning Group (NSPG) Meeting, 9/11/84, Reaganfiles, Document Collections, National Security Council and National Security Planning Group Meetings, 4

his assent to the mining operation.³⁸ Regardless, however, Shultz opposed the operation before Reagan made the decision to go ahead with it anyway (backing Casey over Shultz's objections in a decision emblematic of Reagan's preference for Casey) according to both sources. Shultz would later describe the mining debacle as "a political disaster for the administration."³⁹

Casey also did not get along with Reagan's first Chief of Staff, James Baker. Baker had managed George H.W Bush's presidential campaign in 1980, when Bush was Reagan's Republican primary opponent rather than his running mate. The conflict of the Republican presidential primaries immediately created competition between Baker and Casey at the very beginning. Once Reagan had won the Republican nomination, Baker joined Reagan's campaign in order to help him win the general election against then President Carter. However, Baker and Casey still clashed. Before the first debate between Reagan and Carter, Casey stole copies of Carter's debate preparation notes. Casey and Baker disagreed about what to do with them. Eventually the feud escalated into a scandal that nearly convinced Reagan to force Baker and Casey to undergo polygraph tests to ascertain who was telling the truth.⁴⁰

Baker and Casey's rivalry continued well into Reagan's time at the White House. When Reagan's National Security Adviser, William Clark (who was a member of the Casey wing of the cabinet) resigned, Baker and Kirkpatrick both seemed likely candidates to take over that position. Kirkpatrick, herself a hardliner, was backed by Casey. However, Baker was able to convince Reagan to appoint him to the post. But, before he could be formally appointed, Casey and Kirkpatrick persuaded Reagan not to go with Baker. Instead, Clark's deputy, Robert

³⁸ Bob Woodward, *Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA, 1981-1987* (New York: Simon & Shuster's, 1987) Kindle Edition, loc 4959

³⁹ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, loc 8151

⁴⁰ James Baker III, Steve Fiffer, *Work Hard, Study...And Keep Out of Politics: Adventures and Lessons from an Unexpected Public Life* (New York: G.P Putnam's Sons, 2006) 118

McFarlane, became the new National Security Adviser. The press considered McFarlane to be a “compromise candidate” between Kirkpatrick and Baker, but in practice he tended to side with the Casey faction. That was as close as the Baker/Shultz wing of the administration ever got to wresting control away from the Casey faction for years. They would not get another chance until 1987 in the wake of the Iran-Contra scandal.⁴¹

Casey was a complicated figure. A product of Tammany Hall and the Catholic Church, each of those two institutions gave him qualities that he would take to the Reagan administration. The tough, almost gangster like mentality of Tammany Hall combined with his religiosity to produce a kind of faith in himself and his equally high ambitions that was of almost fanatical proportions. His social class also influenced how he saw the rest of the administration. As someone whose family was nouveau bourgeois, he held both a disdain for the poor and a contempt for the rich that made him many enemies. He saw many of the poor as leeches who sucked the blood of the bourgeoisie like himself. As for the rich, he viewed them as upper crust snobs who did not understand street-smart people like him. When viewed in combination, they paint a picture of someone who is disgusted with those he deemed “below” him, while frustrated by his inability to gain entrance to the ranks of those “above.” This economic situation hardened his ambitions and fanaticism still further.⁴²

Casey had also been a part of the Office of Secret Services (OSS) during the Second World War. Like the Cold War as a whole, the OSS had been created at the behest of the British government, who wanted the US to have an intelligence arm against both the German and later the Soviets. The British had also pushed the United States to get involved with the Cold War more

⁴¹ Ibid., 199

⁴² Perisco, *Casey*, 39

broadly, as a way to pass on their declining empire. Like his predecessor as CIA Director, Allen Dulles, Casey had been a protégé of the OSS' leader, the bold and flamboyant William "Wild Bill" Donovan. Donovan placed an emphasis on incorrect action over inaction. Both Casey and Dulles would take that mentality to the CIA later on in their careers. Combined with his brother, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, CIA Director Allen Dulles would mastermind coups in Iran, Guatemala, and the Congo (where the coup, led by future Zairian dictator Joseph Mobutu, would overthrow a Congolese leader who would become an icon for the left, Patrice Lumumba). In all three of these cases, the overthrow of moderates led to vacuums that deprived US foreign policy of a generation of moderates that they might have had had they been able to sway these leaders to the US camp (or at least nonalignment). US President John F. Kennedy would later fire Dulles after the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961. The influence of Donovan clearly left a mark on both Dulles and Casey. But, due to his proximity to President Reagan, Casey would go on to obtain an even more dangerous level of power.⁴³

Why was Reagan so ready to trust Casey specifically so completely with situations that had a profound impact on the security of the United States? Studying Reagan and his writings leads to two reasons, both of which were important to understanding the Reagan-Casey relationship. The first reason has to do with political loyalty. Two of the other hardliners inside the Reagan administration were Defense Secretary Casper Weinberger and Attorney General Edwin Meese. Both had been with Reagan since his tenure as the governor of California, and so commanded a great deal of loyalty from him. Weinberger in particular had a rocky relationship with Shultz. The two had clashed over Weinberger's support for Casey as well as committing US

⁴³ Perisco, *Casey*, 57, 227, Steven Kinzer, *The Brothers: John Foster Dulles, Allen Dulles, and their Secret World War* (New York: St Martin's Press, 2013), 279, 303, 325

troops into Lebanon. Weinberger, aware of former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara's Vietnam War-related infamous legacy, did not want to contribute troops to a potential quagmire. Shultz acknowledged in his memoirs that Weinberger enjoyed a closer relationship with Reagan than he did, and attributed Weinberger's influence to his closeness with the president.⁴⁴

Meese's relationship with Casey was slightly more complicated. Another member of Reagan's staff during his time as governor, he maintained his support of the Casey faction once Reagan won the presidency. But he kept a good relationship with Chief of Staff Baker, with Haig even accusing Meese of being part of a moderate "troika" made up of Meese, Baker, and Baker's deputy Mike Deaver.⁴⁵ Meese's position as Attorney General (a position not directly related to foreign policy) no doubt allowed him to remain aloof from the rest of the factional battles that engulfed the Reagan administration's foreign policy team. However, Meese would take a more cautious line than the rest of the hardliners on the Iran-Contra scandal. Aware that the scandal could tarnish his record as Attorney General, Meese initially was hesitant to back the plan. Eventually, however, he went into line behind the other hardliners, and supported the initiative before the scandal broke in 1986.⁴⁶

The other reason behind Reagan's attachment to Casey may have had to do with Reagan's origins. Reagan almost certainly identified with Casey, as both were, in Reagan's mind at least, Irish Catholic men who "pulled themselves up by their bootstraps" to fame and fortune.

⁴⁴ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, loc 17171, Paul Kengor, "Bill Casey's Centennial," *The American Spectator*, 4/5/13

⁴⁵ Alexander Meigs Haig Jr, *Caveat: Realism, Reagan, and Foreign Policy* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1984) 82

⁴⁶ Minutes from a NSPG Meeting, 6/25/84, Reaganfiles, Document Collections, National Security Council and National Security Planning Group Meetings, 12, Malcolm Byrne, *Iran-Contra: Reagan's Scandal and the Unchecked Abuse of Presidential Power* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, Kindle Edition, 2015) loc 3839

While there is no direct evidence that either individual saw the other in this vein, it is most likely true given the closeness of their relationship and the similarity of their backgrounds.⁴⁷

Casey's sway over Reagan also came through political pressure. Casey had long been a part of the "new right" that had been slowly growing since the days of the Eisenhower administration. This movement gained strength thanks to the perceived failures of détente in preventing the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the fall of the regime of Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua, and the Iran hostage crisis. The Panama Canal Treaty of 1978, negotiated by Reagan's opponent Jimmy Carter, also gave fuel to a movement that saw the treaty as a surrender of sovereign US territory. Casey's allies in the Reagan administration were icons of the new right such as Jeane Kirkpatrick and Cap Weinberger. Additionally, Casey had befriended prominent right-wing publisher William Buckley, even going as far as to give financial advice to Buckley on how best to manage his magazine, *The National Review*. All this made it hard for Reagan to ignore Casey. It is even possible that Casey may have had as much influence over an unwilling Reagan as he had when the president was eager to go along with his plan. Casey and the "new right" had secured Reagan the Republican Party nomination in 1980, and Casey and his allies were not about to let the president forget that.⁴⁸

When Casey tried to persuade Reagan to give him the post of Secretary of State, First Lady Nancy Reagan convinced the president to appoint Al Haig, someone more palatable to the Baker/Shultz wing of the cabinet. Nancy Reagan, far more active in the internal politics of the White House than the president himself was, became the strongest voice for moderation in the Reagan administration. After the Iran-Contra scandal broke in 1986, it was Nancy Reagan who

⁴⁷ Reagan, *An American Life*, 357

⁴⁸ Perisco, *Casey*, 199

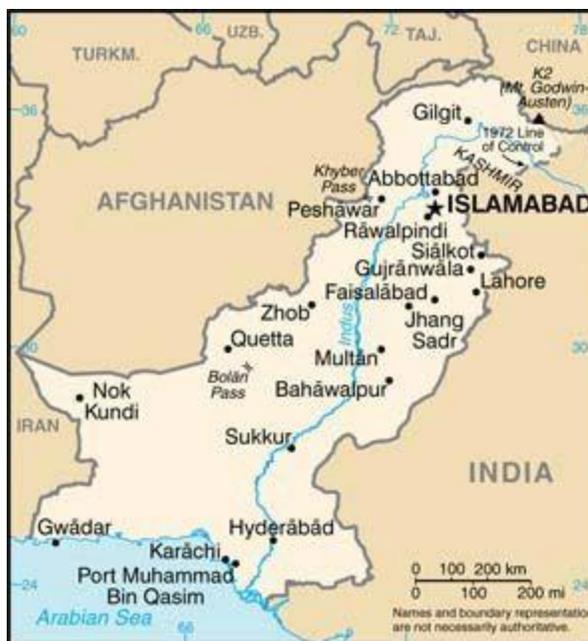
filled the position Casey had previously occupied. Together with Shultz, Baker, and White House Deputy Chief of Staff Mike Deaver, Nancy Reagan put the country on a course back toward a more moderate foreign policy. Her main legacy as First Lady is one that is mostly unknown. This is a point that has been largely unstudied by scholars; and should be one of the primary topics for future histories of the Reagan Administration.⁴⁹

Casey's death from a brain tumor in 1987, combined with the Iran-Contra scandal, which made a Democratic congress even more hesitant to support the Contras than it had been previously, was enough to force the Reagan administration into accepting the Arias negotiations in Central America. Before his death, Casey had tried to sabotage Arias, intimidate him into backing down, and even invited him to the White House so that he could be ambushed by Casey and Reagan. "We can't put ourselves in the hands of little Central American countries!" Casey stated at one NSPG (National Security Planning Group) meeting.⁵⁰ But the Iran-Contra scandal made the Casey/McFarlane Contra strategy politically impossible. Arias had met with Democratic House Speaker Jim Wright and gotten him to throw his support behind Arias' plan. From then on, any Contra strategy had to be tied to the Arias plan.⁵¹

⁴⁹ "Time Says Nancy Reagan Acquires Political Clout," CIA Electronic Reading Room, 1

⁵⁰ "Minutes of A National Security Planning Group Meeting," 5/16/86, NSA Archive BB 283, 6

⁵¹ Kagan, *A Twilight Struggle*, 532



Pakistan

On December 7, 1982, President Reagan and Zia ul-Haq, the then dictator of Pakistan, met at a reception at the White House to affirm their alliance against the Soviet Union. While Zia and Reagan stood on opposite sides of the room, Reagan began a speech. Reagan lauded Zia for what he said was the dictator's "desire for peace in South Asia."⁵² Quoting a proverb by the Pakistani poet Muhammed Iqbal about "seeking," the President stated that "the US and Pakistan are seeking the same goals."⁵³ The leaders then toasted one another as they resolved to continue the Pakistani-American alliance.⁵⁴

Only, they were not in fact seeking the same goals, at least not over the long term. Despite the alliance between the US and the Pakistani governments that had been forged in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the two countries were set on a collision

⁵² "President Reagan's (sic) and President Zia Toast to Each Other on December 7th, 1982," YouTube, Reagan Library, 6/8/17.

⁵³ *Ibid.*,

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*,

course over the next two decades. Thanks to Reagan's actions, Pakistani government influence in Afghanistan would continue to grow to the detriment of American interests. The fall of Afghanistan into the Pakistani government's sphere of influence precipitated a rise in radicalism in Afghanistan. The Pakistani government's Saudi monarchical allies would also bring problems, as they funded a generation of Arab extremists who would spread anti-American ideology across the Middle East.⁵⁵

The Pakistani government's new influence in Afghanistan would cause problems to begin to mount across the Middle East and South Asia. When the Soviet backed dictator of Afghanistan, Muhammad Najibullah, was overthrown by the rebel *mujahideen* forces in 1991, several different *mujahideen* factions fought for control, plunging the country into chaos. For five years, the battle for control of Afghanistan raged between different factions of the *mujahideen*. This ended in 1996 with the beginning of *Taliban* rule in the country. At first, the *Taliban* claimed that they were no different from other radical governments who had ties to the United States, including Saudi Arabia. But they decided to shelter another veteran of the Soviet-Afghan War, Osama bin-Laden, in the country. Bin Laden was already on the run from the United States as a result of the bombings he organized in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998. A Saudi national, he had joined the Afghan War in the 1980s as a middleman between the Saudi government and the *mujahideen*. His involvement in the war coincided with the introduction of Arab *mujahideen* fighters into Afghanistan, many of whom would later return to their country of origin to drive radical politics there as well. In 2001, the combined influences of the Saudi monarchy's and the Pakistani government's power in Afghanistan cumulated in the attacks of September 11th, which killed thousands of American citizens. The timeline of events that led to

⁵⁵ Coll. *Ghost Wars*, loc 1342

that day was long and complicated, and spanned over twenty years. It would begin, however, with the Reagan administration's support of the *mujahideen* in the 1980s.⁵⁶

In this section, I will analyze the Reagan administration's aid to the Pakistani government in the context of the Anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan. Recently declassified State Department archives have provided a huge help to my research in this section. The NSA archive and Gordon Corera's book *Shopping for Bombs* have been useful in finding material on the Pakistani government's nuclear weapons program. Finally, Steve Coll's book *Ghost Wars* provides an excellent reference point on the CIA's support to the Afghan mujahideen. Memoirs of administration figures also help. In this section, I argue that the lack of a comprehensive solution to the Afghan crisis allowed militancy in Afghanistan and the wider Middle East and the Pakistani government's nuclear weapons program to spiral out of control.⁵⁷

The Jimmy Carter administration had distanced the United States from Pakistan in the late 1970s because of Zia's determination that Pakistan should build a nuclear weapon. Driven by its commitment to the idea of human rights, the Carter administration's relationship with Pakistan had grown still colder after Zia's military coup in 1977. Upon the advice of Carter's National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, the CIA began arming the Pakistani army to help the *mujahideen* after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, but Zia publicly disparaged this aid, calling it "peanuts."⁵⁸ The Reagan administration was determined to expand

⁵⁶ Ibid,

⁵⁷ Gordon Corera, *Shopping for Bombs: Nuclear Proliferation, Global Insecurity, and the Rise and Fall of the AQ Khan Network* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 31, Steve Coll. *Ghost Wars: the Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan and bin Laden from the Soviet Invasion to September 10th, 2001* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004) loc 1342, Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) 1969-1976, Vol E-6, 275, State Department Report, "Pakistan and the US Seeking Ways to Improve Relations, 3/23/81, NSA Archive, Briefing Book 377, 4.

⁵⁸ Gordon Corera, *Shopping for Bombs: Nuclear Proliferation, Global Insecurity, and the Rise and Fall of the AQ Khan Network* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 31

upon Brzezinski's plan, making Afghanistan a centerpiece of their plan to counter Soviet influence⁵⁹

Initially, the Reagan administration was careful to be sensitive in their support of Zia. A NSPG meeting deliberated the size of the administration's military aid package to the Pakistani government. Mindful of an American public still hesitant about Zia due to his human rights abuses and the Pakistani government's nuclear program, the administration was careful in how it presented its help to the Pakistani army. Nonetheless, they were also determined to dramatically increase American support of Zia, stating that they wanted to send "at least 100 million dollars" more than Carter's program.⁶⁰

The Reagan administration quickly became convinced that it could not make a serious attempt to quash the Pakistani government's nuclear program while at the same time expecting Zia to continue his program of aid to the *mujahideen*. An administration report in 1981 stated that Zia "will never give up the program" because it was essential to his popularity.⁶¹ The same report stated that there was a good chance for a US-Pakistani alliance due to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, claiming that "the stage is set for improvement."⁶² The report concluded by arguing that "US interests in aiding Pakistan are closely related to US national security and are certainly not negated by the drawbacks to that aid."⁶³

Still, the Reagan administration continued to present an appearance of trying to attempt to persuade Zia to abandon the nuclear program. Secretary of State Alexander Haig (who was

⁵⁹ Minutes from a NSPG Meeting, 3/19/81, Reaganfiles, Document Collections, National Security Council and National Security Planning Group Meetings, 7

⁶⁰ Ibid.,

⁶¹ State Department Report, "Pakistan and the US Seeking Ways to Improve Relations, 3/23/81, NSA Archive, Briefing Book 377, 4

⁶² Ibid., 1

⁶³ Ibid., 4

Reagan's Secretary of State until he was replaced by Shultz in 1983) wrote that the US "would choose to cut off assistance" in the event of a Pakistani government nuclear test.⁶⁴ Reagan discussed the Pakistani nuclear program at the meeting mentioned above on December 7th, 1982. Reagan would write that Zia "gave me his word that they were not building an atomic bomb."⁶⁵ Reagan stated this despite being told by Shultz that there was "overwhelming evidence" that Zia was lying.⁶⁶ However, Shultz also wrote that the Reagan administration could not pull its support from Zia's regime because of the chance that Zia would end his support of the *mujahideen*. The Reagan administration essentially allowed the Pakistani government's nuclear program to thrive because they were so focused on the *mujahideen*.⁶⁷

In doing so, the Reagan administration ignored the fact that the Pakistani government's nuclear program was being financed in part by enemies of the United States. Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi, the same individual who Reagan had referred to as a "tyrant" had been helping the Pakistani nuclear program since the 1970s when Pakistan was under the leadership of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.⁶⁸ Libyan support of the program included financial assistance and a failed attempt to supply Pakistan with uranium through the country of Niger. Whether or not the Reagan administration had connected the dots between Zia and Gaddafi or not, they should have foreseen the potential for such an alliance. Both Gaddafi and Zia were led by fundamentalist ideologies, and both were attracted to the idea of building "an Islamic bomb."⁶⁹ However, cooperation between the Libyan and Pakistani governments' nuclear programs in the 1980s

⁶⁴ Haig-Sen Hatfield (R-OR) 11/21/81, NSA Archive, Briefing Book 377, 1

⁶⁵ Ronald Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries* (New York: HarperCollins, ed. Douglas Binkley, 2009) 117

⁶⁶ Shultz-Reagan "How Do We Make Use of the Zia Visit to Protect Our Strategic Interests in the Face of Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons Activities, NSA Archive, Briefing Book 377, 3

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 4

⁶⁸ Corera, *Shopping for Bombs*, 12

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*,

would only be the beginning of how the Pakistani government's nuclear program would lead to a flood of nuclear proliferation among some of the US's fiercest adversaries. The Pakistani government's nuclear program would be boosted by a Pakistani metallurgist named AQ Khan.⁷⁰

AQ Khan trained to be a metallurgist in Germany. After graduating, he got a job working for a state-owned nuclear company in the Netherlands. Taking advantage of his position as an interpreter for the company, Khan sent many secret Dutch documents back to Pakistan. A few years later, then Pakistani President Zulfikar Bhutto would recall Khan to his birth country to work on the Pakistani government's nuclear program. Not content with being one of the Pakistani government's top officials in the nuclear program, he would go on to sell nuclear material and designs to a number of regimes that had dubious reputations.⁷¹

It is possible that Khan's deal with Iran originated with Zia himself. The war in Afghanistan had seen the predominantly Shia Iran and predominantly Sunni Pakistan join forces in an unlikely alliance against the Soviet Union, although they backed different groups which began feuding with each other after the fall of Najibullah in 1991. Although it is probable that the Pakistani government only sold the Iranian government spare parts from their own nuclear program, BBC journalist Gordon Corera believes that the Pakistani aid did help the Iranians advance their nuclear ambitions and evade western sanctions.⁷² For its part, the United States also helped Iran during the 1980s with the infamous missile shipments that became a central part of the Iran-Contra scandal. Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North, who coordinated the missile shipment, would later justify his actions by stating that some of the weapons delivered to the

⁷⁰ Ibid.,

⁷¹ Ibid.,

⁷² Ibid., 76

Iranian government wound up in the hands of the *mujahideen*. A generation later, politicians in the United States would seriously consider going to war with Iran over its nuclear program.⁷³

Iran would be far from Khan and the Pakistani government's only customer. North Korea was also looking to buy material and designs from Khan. In the 1990s, after Pakistan was able to successfully detonate a nuclear bomb, Pakistani President Benazir Bhutto, the daughter of Zulfikar Bhutto, who had begun the Pakistani nuclear program, went on a visit to North Korea. Bhutto struck a deal that gave the Pakistani military the design for a North Korean long range rocket. In return, North Korea would receive parts and designs for its own nuclear program. Khan went to North Korea no less than thirteen times over five years.⁷⁴ Again, given how much the North Korean nuclear program has troubled US policymakers, these developments should not be taken lightly.⁷⁵

Finally, Khan made a deal with Gaddafi's regime in Libya. Three decades of Pakistani-Libyan cooperation reached their pinnacle. An entire generation's worth of US foreign policy regarding North and Central Africa was almost destroyed due to the American policy of ignoring Khan. Libya would eventually dismantle its nuclear program in the 2000s before the Gaddafi regime was toppled by rebels in 2011, but Khan and the Pakistani government had done their best to make sure that the Libyans developed nuclear weapons.⁷⁶

The Pakistani government's nuclear arsenal has also weakened the US position towards Pakistan itself. Pakistani politician and academic Husain Haqqani regards the nuclear weapons as

⁷³ "Trump on Iran Deal: 'Worst, Horrible, Laughable,'" BBC News, 10/11/17

⁷⁴ Corera, *Shopping for Bombs*, 91

⁷⁵ "Trump: US Would Destroy North Korea if Forced to Defend Itself," BBC News, 9/19/17

⁷⁶ Corera, *Shopping for Bombs*, 176

a main instrument of military power over the civilian government.⁷⁷ Additionally, the Pakistani government has used American concerns about non proliferation as leverage in its negotiations with the United States. Christine C. Fair writes that the United States is now committed to mediating any conflict that arises between India and Pakistan because both countries possess nuclear weapons. Finally, Fair argues that the Pakistani military is inspired to take further risks because they have nuclear weapons, raising the possibility that nuclear weapons, contrary to the MAD (mutually assured destruction) policy, actually increase the likelihood of a war between India and Pakistan.⁷⁸

How, then, could the dilemma have been alternatively resolved? The problems that Shultz cites in his memo to Reagan are valid. The Reagan administration had made the war between the *mujahideen* and the Soviet Union a priority after they had hammered Carter for letting the Soviets invade in 1979. It was not a realistic political proposition to expect the Reagan administration to throw it overboard for the Pakistani government's nuclear program. However, it is possible that neither a nuclear weapon free Pakistan or a neutral Afghanistan had to be sacrificed to achieve both goals. The Reagan administration could have engaged in talks with the Soviet Union, India and Pakistan in order to achieve an arms reduction treaty that would curtail the threat of nuclear war on the Indian subcontinent. Such an idea was mentioned by Shultz at various times between 1983-9, but it seems to have gained little traction among the other members of the Reagan administration. This happened because the ascendant moderates within the administration were too cowed by Zia to pull off a successful peace deal with the Soviets.

⁷⁷ Husain Haqqani, *Pakistan, Between Mosque and Military* (Washington D.C: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005) 201

⁷⁸ C. Christine Fair, *Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army's Way of War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) 219

Zia killed off the idea before it could take shape and the Reagan administration chose not to push the issue out of fear for the *mujahideen* aid program. Zia by that point had built up so much support within the Reagan administration that even the moderate faction composed of Shultz and Chief of Staff Howard Baker were too afraid of Zia to approach the Soviets. It certainly was not out a general dislike of the Soviets when one considers how much they were willing to negotiate with Gorbachev over nuclear nonproliferation. However, this fear may have been misguided, as the Pakistani military did show that it was willing to make certain sacrifices (the delay in nuclear testing, for example) for the sake of the Afghan aid. Regardless, it was a missed opportunity when one considers how much Reagan and Gorbachev were able to achieve in nuclear arms reduction in the late 1980s. While it cannot be proven that a coalition government in Afghanistan would have prevented the civil war that would follow the Soviet withdrawal, it at least would have made war less likely.⁷⁹

When Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in 1985 he was determined to implement a radical shift in Soviet foreign policy. He had replaced then Foreign Minister Gromyko, a major player in US-Soviet relations for over two decades, with a close political ally, a Georgian reformer named Eduard Shevernadze, however, Gromyko still got a seat on the Soviet Politburo in order to appease the Soviet hardliners.⁸⁰ Gorbachev considered his policies of *Perestroika* and *Glasnost* not as mere domestic policy reforms, but as new mentalities indicative of a shift in Soviet thinking in foreign policy as well. He was determined to seek a new understanding with the United States, as he believed that peace abroad would mean that more resources could be spent at home in the USSR.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Shultz-Armacost Memo, 3/20/87, FRUS, Vol VI, 26

⁸⁰ Mikhail Gorbachev, *Memoirs* (London: Bantam Books, 3rd ed, 1997)

⁸¹ *Ibid.*,

Chief among these new priorities was an end to Soviet involvement in Afghanistan. An accidental war to begin with, the Afghan War had grown more and more unpopular as casualties mounted, costs spiraled, and the USSR became bogged down in a conflict it was increasingly clear that it could not win. Having watched as his predecessors blundered into the war practically by mistake (Soviet forces had originally entered Afghanistan to replace a President that they felt was insufficiently loyal) Gorbachev now wanted to end the war in Afghanistan as swiftly as possible. But Reagan, Casey, and Zia were all determined to inflict the biggest possible humiliation on the Soviet Union. Reagan and Casey wanted to do this for propaganda purposes. Zia's motivation lay in increasing his power in Afghanistan through his puppets in the *mujahideen*.⁸²

Before Gorbachev took power in 1985, there was less appetite for a truce on the part of the Soviet leadership. Hardliners, chief among them the former foreign minister Anatoly Gromyko, wanted a military victory from the Soviet army as it had delivered in 1957 in Budapest, Hungary, and in 1968 in Prague, in the Czech Republic. Gromyko and the other hardliners would insist on an end to the Pakistani government's aid to the *mujahideen*, which both sides knew was really a demand that the US stop its covert operation. Considering how important the aid to the *mujahideen* was to the Reagan administration, Gromyko must have known that this would be a non-starter. This changed when Gorbachev ousted Gromyko with Shevernadze⁸³

⁸² Milt Beardon, James Risen, *The Main Enemy: The Inside Story of the CIA's Final Showdown with the KGB* (New York: Random House, 2003) Kindle Ed. Loc 3159, Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban, Militant Islam, Oil, and Central Asia* (New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 2nd ed, 2010) 183

⁸³ Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 231, 1/22/87, Minutes from a Meeting of the Politburo, Woodrow Wilson Center, Cold War International History Project, Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan Collection.

The Reagan administration was almost as militaristic as the Soviets when it came to Afghanistan. Although they did put out statements saying that they were open to negotiations with the Soviets, the Politburo doubted their sincerity and Gorbachev himself would later state that it was “in their (the Reagan administration’s) best interests” to bleed the Soviet army during the war. CIA Islamabad Station Chief Milt Beardon stated as much when he wrote that the objective was “harassing’ the Soviets.”⁸⁴

Beardon and his colleagues at the CIA were doing more than simply “harassing” the USSR, however. They were causing the moral and psychological underpinnings of Soviet society to come apart. Just as the Tsar had once used the Russian army against peasants, now Soviet citizens saw their government do the exact same thing in Afghanistan. As Soviet reporter Artyom Borovik would later write...

In Afghanistan, we bombed not only the detachments of rebels and their caravans, but our own ideals as well. With the war came the reevaluation of our moral and ethical values. In Afghanistan, the policies of the government became utterly incompatible with the inherent morality of our nation. Things could not continue in the same vein. It is hardly coincidental that the ideas of *Perestroika* took hold in 1985, the year the war reached its peak.⁸⁵

The war produced further changes in the Soviet psyche. The horrors of the war led many soldiers to turn to religion despite the fact that religion had been shunned in the USSR for so long. At a time when the Soviet Union was going through immense economic upheaval, many Soviet citizens wondered how their government could be spending so much on the war in Afghanistan when their own economy lagged at home? All of these factors created discontent in the Russian public.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ “Information on Talks Between Gromyko and Shultz,” 10/13/82, Woodrow Wilson Center, Cold War International History Project, Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan Collection Beardon, Risen, *The Main Enemy*, loc 3159

⁸⁵ Artyom Borovik, *The Hidden War: A Russian Journalist’s Account of the Soviet War in Afghanistan* (New York: Grove Press, 1990) 14

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*,

In addition, the war in Afghanistan led the Soviet high command to rethink their military strategy in other parts of the globe. When the Solidarity movement gained strength in Poland and the other Warsaw Pact countries looked ready to split from the Eastern Bloc, Soviet commanders were reluctant to send troops the way they had to the Czech Republic in 1968 and to Hungary in 1956 because they feared that the Afghan debacle might be repeated in Eastern Europe. In short, the war in Afghanistan destroyed Soviet confidence in their own military forces (which was remarkable given how fierce they appeared to be in the late 1970s). The fall of the Soviet army would have an important role in the collapse of the USSR as a whole. This is important to measure the effectiveness of the Reagan administration's policies⁸⁷

The war in Afghanistan quickened the end of the Soviet public's faith in the communist system. Borovik writes that Soviet defectors wrote that they "had no faith" in Gorbachev's reforms of *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* because they were violating those very principles on the fields of Afghanistan. Additionally, they voiced concerns that Gorbachev would not last long enough in power to see through these reforms. They saw not only the individuals that had started the Afghan conflict, but "the system" behind it as well.⁸⁸ They saw that Afghanistan defied reform, and considered it as emblematic of the worst flaws of the Soviet system. As one Soviet defector stated "there is little *Glasnost* in Afghanistan."⁸⁹

The disillusion with war (and the concurrent economic crisis) was not a phenomenon that limited itself to the Soviet Union. The United States had gone through a similar process a decade earlier. The Vietnam War and the economic crisis of the 1970s had created a similar political

⁸⁷ Victor Sebesteyen, *Revolution 1989: The Fall of the Soviet Empire* (New York: Vintage Books, 2009) xix.

⁸⁸ Borovik, *The Hidden War*, 129

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 127

situation as was taking place in the USSR. What differed between the two countries was their political systems. Democracy gave the United States public a means to change policies in order to ease their anxieties—although whether or not the economic solutions the Reagan administration implemented actually worked continues to be a matter of debate. The USSR did not have this kind of flexibility. Instead, Soviet citizens saw Gorbachev as a fig leaf for the hardliners to continue operating the “system” as they always had. Afghanistan was only one part of all this. Broader economic trends, combined with political rigidity that resulted from an autocratic system, were responsible for the fall of the Soviet Union. However, defenders of US covert warfare can say that the Afghan war most likely averted a war in Eastern Europe over the Warsaw Pact, and that it contributed to the collapse of Soviet morale.⁹⁰

So, what went wrong in Afghanistan? Was it as simple as Charlie Wilson’s statement that the US “fucked up the endgame?”⁹¹ The answer is both yes and no. The Reagan administration and the CIA made crucial mistakes both during and at the end of the Afghan war that allowed the situation in Afghanistan to spiral out of control. Then CIA Station Chief in Islamabad, Milt Beardon, admitted as much when he said the needs of the Afghan people were not a priority for the United States. Because the Soviets, Americans, and Pakistanis treated Afghanistan and the Afghan people as no more than a mere pawn in the Great Game, they turned a blind eye to the needs of the people on whose land they were fighting. Doing so would have bad consequences for all the countries involved.⁹²

⁹⁰ Sebesteyen, *Revolution 1989*, xix, Borovik, *The Hidden War*, 129

⁹¹ George Crille, *Charlie Wilson’s War: the Story of how the Wildest Man in Congress and a Rogue CIA Agent Changed the History of our Times*, (New York: Grove Press, 2003) Kindle ed. loc 252, Beardon, Risen, *The Main Enemy*, 3159

⁹² Coll, *Ghost Wars*, loc 1342

The Reagan administration missed crucial opportunities to negotiate with the Soviet Union to resolve the Afghan crisis. By trying to force a coalition government that was not really a coalition government at all, but really an alliance of the *mujahideen* groups, the Reagan administration sowed instability in a country that had already been torn apart by civil war. By 1985, when Gorbachev took power and the Soviets were ready to negotiate, the damage to the Soviet army had already been done. The very reason that Gorbachev was so eager to withdraw from Afghanistan was because he knew the damage that it was doing to the Soviet army. But the State Department and the CIA remained enthralled by Zia, who insisted that no negotiations that involved a coalition government take place. In addition, public opinion on the Afghan conflict had shifted.⁹³

Congressman Charlie Wilson had successfully pushed to raise the budget for the *mujahideen*, and had also made efforts to enlist third country support for the *mujahideen*. The bulk of this new funding went towards providing the *mujahideen* with “stinger” anti-aircraft missiles. These missiles were intended to shoot down Soviet HIND helicopters, and they accomplished that goal with great success. But they also created a political environment in both the United States and Afghanistan that caused the US government to view the complete victory of the *mujahideen* as the necessary end of the Afghan conflict.⁹⁴

Both Congressman Wilson and the CIA also obtained the support of the Saudi Arabian monarchy. Although the Saudis provided a huge amount of money to the Afghan cause, this money was only necessary if the objective was to drive the Soviets out of Afghanistan entirely, and not to simply pressure the USSR into negotiating. Meanwhile, Saudi money funded the most

⁹³ Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries*, 580, Beardon, Risen, *The Main Enemy*, 3159

⁹⁴ Crille, *Charlie Wilson's War*, 232

fundamentalist elements of the *mujahideen* and Arab fighters came to their aid. Among the most prominent of these fighters was the son of a Saudi construction millionaire named Osama bin Laden. Bin Laden would become the “middleman” that the Saudi monarchy used to funnel money between them and the *mujahideen*.⁹⁵ If the Arab fighters were truly necessary, plans for their demobilization and disarmament could have been part of a plan to end the conflict and establish a coalition government in Afghanistan. Worst of all, the United States appears to have been almost completely ignorant of the potential harm that these individuals could do to the United States. Aside from one memo that described a “hostility” towards the United States, the issue of terrorism was scarcely mentioned in the administration’s discussions of Afghanistan.⁹⁶

In the case of the Reagan administration’s aid to the Pakistani government, we see the danger in becoming too reliant on foreign dictators who act according to their interests, not those of the United States. Zia’s policies wound up causing the rise of the Taliban in the decade after the Soviet retreat from Afghanistan. However, at least there was a Soviet retreat. The Reagan administration’s aid to Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega, on the other hand, would not only see long term disaster, but a short term failure as well.⁹⁷

Panama.

⁹⁵ Coll. *Ghost Wars*, 1342

⁹⁶ Central Intelligence Agency, Directorate of Intelligence, Office of Political Analysis, “The Soviets and the Tribes of Southwest Asia,” NSA Archive, September 11th Sourcebooks, Vol II

⁹⁷ Beardon, Risen, *The Main Enemy*, 3159, Kempe, *Divorcing the Dictator*, 195



In 1986, Reagan gave a speech addressing drug addiction. Calling drug smugglers “threats to national security,” he told the American people that he would undertake new “international efforts with our partners” to root out drug trafficking.⁹⁸ In the same speech, the First Lady, Nancy Reagan, would famously make her “just say no” commandment that would define American drug policy for a generation. The United States government, under Democratic and Republican presidents, would pursue a war on drugs with “with the help of our allies.”⁹⁹ This could be understood as a reference to Noriega, among others.

But some of those same “partners” that were helping to advance US policy in some areas were actually undermining counternarcotic forces. Perhaps the most infamous example was the Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega, who organized a drug smuggling network through Central America while simultaneously aiding the Reagan administration’s support of the Contra war in Nicaragua. Noriega even had contacts in the Contras who helped him smuggle drugs.

⁹⁸ Ibid,

⁹⁹ “President Reagan’s Address to the Nation on the Campaign to End Drug Abuse 9/14/86” YouTube, Reagan Library, 8/3/11

Contra commander Eden Pastora would send his pilots to the airbase in Costa Rica to pick up Noriega's cargo, then Pastora's pilots would fly to Miami with the drugs. In Miami, Pastora's agents would sell the drugs to a local drug chief named George (AKA Jorge) Morales. The CIA eventually discovered Pastora's ties to Morales in 1985. Pastora's drug smuggling contributed to the CIA's decision to end American aid to Pastora's group. However, the Reagan administration did not end their aid to Noriega. Instead, Reagan's manager of the Contra War, Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North, continued negotiating with the Panamanian dictator, asking for his help in rebuilding the Contra southern front. The new southern front was also filled with drug traffickers, however, as North's courier Robert Owen admitted to North at the time. Noriega's illegal activities would not end until the US invasion of Panama in 1989. Like everything else about the American relationship with Noriega, the invasion was messy, careless, and reckless. The damage had been done, however. Noriega had helped to establish a major smuggling route that continues to this day.¹⁰⁰

For all that, Noriega's aid to the southern front Contras was useless, and a poor strategic choice by the Reagan administration. He provided Pastora's southern front with the supplies and money it needed to fight the Sandinistas, but Pastora and his men were not efficient fighters. The Reagan administration's decision to aid Noriega was a huge mistake that, far from being a sacrifice made for the good of the Contras, actually hindered the Contra war effort. This failure of the southern front Contras is important to note because it means that not only did the actions of the Reagan administration help create a thriving drug trade in Central and South America, but did not even accomplish its intended purpose of helping the Contras.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ "Southern Front Contras: The Contra Story," CIA ERR, 4/26/2007, Frederick Kempe, *Divorcing the Dictator: America's Bungled Affair with Noriega* (New York: G.P Putnam's Sons, 1990) 195

¹⁰¹ Kempe, *Divorcing the Dictator*, 195

In this section, I will analyze Reagan administration aid to the Noriega dictatorship in Panama. Many of these sources have come to light as a result of the investigations into the Iran-Contra Affair, and thus there is more material available for this subject than there might be for another. The CIA's accounts of Contra drug trafficking, obtained from the CIA archives, have proven to be very useful. I use the CIA's account of the affair primarily because an examination of the full story of the CIA's involvement in drug trafficking is beyond the scope of this paper. Should the reader be concerned that I am too reliant on the CIA's version of events, I remind them that I have included the Kerry report. Obtained from the NSA Archive and headed by a Democratic senator (John Kerry) who is unlikely to let the CIA off easy. I refrain from using Gary Webb's famous (or infamous?) book *Dark Alliance* primarily because of the unproven status of some of the book's claims regarding the full extent of CIA involvement in the drug trade. However, I must admit that I owe a debt to Webb for igniting the debate on Contra drug trafficking. Numerous newspaper articles, mainly from *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, have also proven helpful in piecing together Contra drug smuggling routes. Frederick Kempe's book *Divorcing the Dictator* contains many interviews with Noriega's associates that I am unable to reproduce on my own. The website "The Reagan Files," built around the source material for a book of a similar name, has helped with its collection of administration meetings. In this section, I conclude that Reagan administration aid to Noriega led to a failed experiment of another front for the Contras, while all the while Noriega used the opportunity to smuggle more drugs into the United States.¹⁰²

Meanwhile, Reagan's desire to remove the Sandinistas from power had become "an obsession" for him. He became determined to drive out the Sandinistas by any means necessary.

¹⁰² Kempe, *Divorcing the Dictator*, 195, Minutes from a NSPG Meeting, 6/25/84 Reaganfiles, Document Collections, National Security Council and National Security Planning Group Meetings, 14, "Southern Front Contras: The Contra Story," CIA ERR, 4/26/2007, Gary Webb, *Dark Alliance: The CIA, The Contras, and the Crack Cocaine Explosion* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2nd ed., 1999), "Drugs, Law Enforcement, and Foreign Policy," NSA Archive, BB 113, 62

Those means included enlisting the support of other countries, even if such support violated US law prohibiting the White House from doing so. At a NSPG meeting in June 25th, 1984, Reagan and his NSPG discussed doing exactly that. The NSPG became divided along the two factional lines between Secretary of State George Shultz and CIA director Bill Casey. The Shultz faction that was composed of State Department officials opposed the idea, fearing that it may be illegal and instead favoring continued negotiations with the Sandinistas. The Casey faction, joined in this particular meeting by Vice President George H.W. Bush, stated that the idea was legal, and that the Contras would never negotiate in good faith. Bush even went so far as to state “how can anyone object to encouraging third parties to provide help to the anti-Sandinistas?”¹⁰³ President Reagan appeared to waver, saying that he would delay the decision until Attorney General Edwin Meese determined whether such support was legal. However, Reagan would also state that if the subject of the meeting leaked “we’ll all be hanging by our thumbs in front of the White House until we find out who did it.”¹⁰⁴

The opening of the “Southern Front” was a direct contributing factor to the administration’s decision to violate American law. The “Southern Front” stretched already incredibly limited funds for the Contras still further, weakening Contra resupply efforts and pushing Casey and others to consider violating American law. It is hard to say whether or not the infamous visit to Iran would have happened had it not been for Casey’s insistence on a second front against the Sandinistas.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 21537, Minutes from a NSPG Meeting, 6/25/84 Reaganfiles, Document Collections, National Security Council and National Security Planning Group Meetings, 14

¹⁰⁴ Minutes from a NSPG Meeting, 6/25/84, Reaganfiles, Document Collections, National Security Council and National Security Planning Group Meetings, 14

¹⁰⁵ Office of the Independent Consul, Iran-Contra Final Report, 3

It is not known whether Meese actually ever made a decision on the matter. However, we do know that Reagan authorized Casey to find support for the Contras wherever he could. Reagan stated that “it was better unmentioned” which countries were aiding the Reagan administration’s Contra program.¹⁰⁶ Such ignorance allowed Reagan to claim deniability about the administration’s dealings with Noriega and the Iran-Contra scandal, but it left a massive amount of power in the hands of Casey and his allies, and gave them an incredible amount of autonomy in shaping US foreign policy. These decisions, made in secret and without the knowledge of either President Reagan or the United States Congress, made the CIA director and his allies accountable to virtually no one and allowed him to make huge mistakes that would reverberate through US policy for decades.¹⁰⁷

Those mistakes included an alliance with one of the most infamous drug smuggler in history. Casey was eager to open a second front in the Contra war. Specifically, he wanted to create a Contra force that would operate out of Costa Rica and launch attacks into Nicaragua, similar to what the “Northern Front” Contras were already doing along the Honduras-Nicaragua border. To fund and train those Contras, he needed another country close to Nicaragua to do the details. Costa Rica would not work, since it had abolished its army after a 1948 revolution. Noriega’s Panamanian Defense Forces (PDF) on the other hand, were both well trained and (at least ostensibly) friendly to the United States. Panama would become a base for the “Southern Front” Contras, providing them with training camps and guns that Noriega’s soldiers would smuggle into Costa Rica to help the Contras.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Reagan Testimony in the Trial of John Poindexter, Part II, C-Span Archives.

¹⁰⁷ Reagan Testimony in the Trial of John Poindexter, Part II, C-Span Archives, Kempe, *Divorcing the Dictator*, 195

¹⁰⁸ “Drugs, Law Enforcement, and Foreign Policy,” NSA Archive, BB 113, 62

To run this new Contra force, Casey turned to a former Sandinista named Eden Pastora. A native to southern Nicaragua, he had joined the Sandinista Revolution and made headlines, even becoming “the most famous Sandinista in the world,” according to author Kenneth E. Morris, after tearing off his ski mask during a raid on the presidential palace. Pastora craved fame, money, and power, defecting to the Contras after the revolution because he felt that the Sandinistas had not given him enough power. (Soon enough, however, Pastora would become a headache for the CIA because of his insubordination to the CIA directors of the Contra War and drug trafficking).¹⁰⁹

At first the Reagan administration was highly optimistic about Pastora. A 1983 CIA assessment of Pastora stated that he was “adroit” and that he was “clever and articulate.”¹¹⁰ The Reagan administration believed that Pastora would have additional propaganda power due to his earlier ties to the Sandinistas and the revolution. However, they did not take into account Pastora’s motives for leaving the Sandinistas. Anyone who studied Pastora’s actions during the Sandinista revolution would see that Pastora was motivated solely by personal gain. Pastora had taken any opportunity that he saw to make his name famous in the headlines of international newspapers (such as when he tore off his ski mask during a Sandinista raid, making him the most famous Sandinista in the world) and to make money off the nascent international drug trade. This ambition made him easy to turn against the Sandinistas, but it would also make him harder for the Reagan administration to control. Ambition would lead Pastora to commit insubordination towards the CIA managers of the Contra program, as he refused to unite with the “northern

¹⁰⁹ “Southern Front Contras: The Contra Story,” CIA ERR, 4/26/2007, Stephen Kinzer, *Blood of Brothers: Life and War in Nicaragua* (2nd ed, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991) 234, Kenneth E. Morris, *Unfinished Revolution: Daniel Ortega and Nicaragua’s Struggle for Liberation*, (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2010) 100

¹¹⁰CIA ERR, “First Hand Impressions of Eden Pastora,” 11/15/83.

front.” Eventually, it would turn the former Sandinista into a puppet of Manuel Noriega and Colombian drug kingpin Pablo Escobar.¹¹¹

The gun and drug smuggling routes through Central America were not new to either Pastora or Noriega. During the Sandinista revolution, Noriega’s predecessor, Omar Torrijos, had sent supplies to Pastora, who was then fighting against Somoza, using the same routes. Now Noriega used those same routes with the help of the CIA. While the CIA sent guns and built airstrips that Noriega used for the Contra program, Noriega used the aid to support his drug smuggling. Noriega sent pilots flying airplanes laden with drugs and guns to an airstrip in Costa Rica near the Nicaraguan border owned by an American expatriate and CIA asset John Hull. Once the guns had been offloaded and given to the Contras, the planes then flew on to the United States carrying the drugs. Noriega’s drug ring went as far as to recruit American expatriate and CIA asset John Hull as a member of the trafficking network.¹¹² Hull, who had arrived in northern Costa Rica from Indiana, had been recruited to the CIA by the CIA Station Chief in Costa Rica, Joe Fernandez. However, Hull owned the property where these planes landed in Costa Rica, and took part in the smuggling of drugs through the area. After the drugs arrived in Miami, Florida, Pastora and his fellow Contras had made sure that they were sold to a Miami drug kingpin named Jorge (AKA George) Morales.¹¹³

Of course, the Reagan administration denied that they had anything to do with Noriega. When Vice President Bush ran for president in the 1988 election, his Democratic opponent, Governor Michael Dukakis, accused Bush of being in league with Noriega, who by then had

¹¹¹ “Southern Front Contras: The Contra Story,” CIA ERR, 4/26/2007, . Morris, *Unfinished Revolution*, 100

¹¹² “Other Individuals Involved in the Contra Program,” Central Intelligence Agency Electronic Reading Room (CIA ERR) 4/26/07.

¹¹³ “Southern Front Contras: The Contra Story,” CIA ERR, 4/26/2007, “Drugs, Law Enforcement, and Foreign Policy,” NSA Archive, BB 113, 62,

been indicted by a US court. When Bush denied Dukakis' allegation, the *Washington Post* released a photograph that showed Bush sitting next to Noriega during a 1982 trip to Panama. Despite this revelation, Bush would win the election in a landslide. Oliver North would also state in his memoirs that "we did nothing with Noriega."¹¹⁴ Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. Other problems would soon emerge with the southern front Contras.

Eventually the CIA grew tired of Pastora's stubborn refusal to ally his forces with the Contra forces operating out of Honduras. Pastora saw these Contras as the old friends of Somoza's that they were, and knew that joining with them would undermine his brand as a former Sandinista. The CIA would cut off all aid to Pastora's forces in 1984. The fact that he was a former Sandinista also caused the Sandinista leadership to view him with alarm. On May 30th, 1984, a bomb exploded at Pastora's press conference. Pastora and number of his senior aides, as well as several European and American reporters, were injured. One American, a reporter of the *Tico Times*, a newspaper serving the American expatriate community in Costa Rica, died in the blast.¹¹⁵

For all that trouble, Eden Pastora's army was not particularly formidable. One of Noriega's intelligence aides, Jose Blandon, stated that Pastora's fighters were "café guerrillas" who fought for a short amount of time before drinking the rest of the day away.¹¹⁶ A *New York Times* report also stated that Pastora's Contras had lost major battles to the Sandinistas, losing many soldiers, and having to retreat from a large amount of territory. North and Poindexter tried to form another Contra army under the command of Fernando Jose Chamorro, a cousin of future

¹¹⁴ Oliver North, William Novak, *Under Fire: An American Story*, (Franklin, TN: Post Hill Press, 1991) Kindle Edition, loc 3871, "Manuel Noriega, from US Friend to Foe," *The Guardian*, 4/27/10

¹¹⁵ Stephen Kinzer, *Blood of Brothers: Life and War in Nicaragua* (2nd ed, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991) 234

¹¹⁶ Kempe, *Divorcing the Dictator*, 167

Nicaraguan President Violeta Chamorro, but they did not fare much better, with Blandon saying that they were not much better than Pastora's army. In addition, several of the fighters around Chamorro were drug smugglers, including one named Sebastian Gonzalez, who North's agent in Nicaragua, Robert Owen, stated was "involved in drug running out of Panama."¹¹⁷ The CIA would later state that Gonzalez was working for Noriega.¹¹⁸

Noriega also undermined the Reagan administration's anti-communist strategy in Central America. Noriega sold arms to the Salvadorian Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN). In theory, the arms sales should have made him just as much of a US enemy as the Sandinistas, as the main complaint the Reagan administration had with the Sandinistas was that they were supplying the leftist guerrillas in El Salvador. In practice, the Reagan administration turned a blind eye to Noriega's dealings while the State Department referred to him as the "rent-a-colonel."¹¹⁹ Noriega's dealings with Fidel Castro were even more complicated. The arms sales show that Noriega was actively undermining US foreign policy goals and that he was causing just as much of a problem to the US as the Sandinistas, making any pressure he exerted on the Sandinistas negligible.

Noriega's relationship with Castro had begun when Noriega was Torrijos' head of intelligence. After Noriega came into power, he supplied arms to the Cuban backed leftist July 19th Movement (M-19) rebels in Colombia. These rebels also collaborated with the Medellin Cartel, another one of Noriega's clients.¹²⁰ M-19, in collaboration with the Medellin Cartel,

¹¹⁷ Message from Robert Owen (T.C) to Oliver North (The Hammer), 4/1/85, NSA Archive, BB 2, 3

¹¹⁸ Kempe, *Divorcing the Dictator*, 167, CIA ERR, "Southern Front Contras: The Contra Story," 4/26/2007, 12, 13

¹¹⁹ Kempe, *Divorcing the Dictator*, 158

¹²⁰ "M-19" stands for "Movimiento del Diecinueve de Abril" (April 19th Movement) The Salvadorian gang MS-13 stands for "Mara Salvatrucha Trece" which means "street gang thirteen" and is unrelated. However, MS-13 began in part due to the Salvadorian Civil War fueled by the Reagan Administration. See "El Salvador: No Murders Reported for 24 Hours," BBC News, 1/13/17, "Mapping Militant Organizations, The M-19 Movement," Stanford

Noriega, and Castro, shipped drugs to the United States via Cuba and Panama. Noriega also shipped American goods to Cuba in violation of the economic embargo that the United States had placed on Cuba in 1962.¹²¹

Together with Fidel Castro, Bahamian Prime Minister Lynden Pindling, and Pablo Escobar, Noriega was a crucial link in the chain that formed the Cartel's route to the United States. The first link to appear was in the Bahamas, where the Medellin Cartel, specifically one of its more notorious smugglers named Carlos Lehder, bought one of the archipelago's many islands to use as a drug shipment point. From there, the Cartel gained the cooperation of Fidel Castro and the Cuban government, which sent guns to M-19 and armed many of the Cartel's smugglers and assassins. The Cuban government also provided the Cartel with refueling stations in Cuba for the Cartel's airplanes. When the United States started to demand that the Bahamian government crack down on the drug smugglers, the Cartel desperately tried to find an alternate route. According to Lehder, they turned to Noriega, who proceeded to launch a drug smuggling scheme that used Contra aid as a cover for his drug operations.¹²²

Noriega even sheltered the top members of the Medellin Cartel. The rising prominence of the drug cartels also brought them increasing political scrutiny on the part of the Colombian government, and Colombian Attorney General Rodrigo Lara-Bonilla launched an investigation into drug trafficking. The Medellin Cartel had Lara-Bonilla assassinated. The assassination resulted in the Colombian government putting more resources than ever before into destroying

University, retrieved from <http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/91>, on 4/2/18, Daniel Denvir, "Deporting People Made Central America's gangs. Deporting More People Won't Help," *Washington Post*, 7/20/17

¹²¹ Ibid., 170, 193

¹²² "Drugs, Law Enforcement, and Foreign Policy," 14, 62, Robert L. Jackson, "Ex-Drug Kingpin Testifies Against Noriega," *Los Angeles Times*, 11/20/1991, George Volsky, "U.S Drug Charges Cite 4 Cuban Aides," *The New York Times*, 11/6/82

the Cartel. Escobar and his associates were forced to flee to Panama, where Noriega gave them shelter until they could return to Colombia. Noriega also allowed the Cartel to build a large drug processing plant along the Colombian border. When increasing scrutiny from the US forced Noriega to shut down the plant, Escobar threatened Noriega's life. It was only through a deal brokered by Fidel Castro that Noriega was able to regain Escobar's favor.¹²³

Although Noriega made a substantial contribution to the ability of the Medellin Cartel to smuggle drugs into the United States (especially if one regards the statements made by Lehder as truth) Noriega's activities in money laundering were ultimately more important to the Cartel overall. Noriega's role in stashing Cartel drug profits was so large that prosecutor Leon B. Kellner, stated that Noriega "turned Panamanian banks into money laundering centers," and that he "provided invaluable assistance to the Cartel."¹²⁴ The Kerry report goes into further detail, describing how Noriega made drug money disappear into Panamanian banks. According to the Kerry report, the money would go to the National Bank of Panama before it reappeared in Colombia in the hands of the Medellin Cartel, who invested it into various properties and franchises in that country. Panama's status as a prime area of tax evasion continues into the present day, most notably with the "Panama Papers" scandal, which forced Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to resign. It is important to mention this because it points out how much Noriega, who the US supported, helped the narcotic industry take shape.¹²⁵

Noriega did most of his money laundering in collaboration with a Cuban-American drug smuggler named Ramon Milian-Rodriguez. Rodriguez was described by the *New York Times* as

¹²³ Kempe, *Divorcing the Dictator*, 203

¹²⁴ Philip Shenon, "Noriega Indicted By U.S for Links to Illegal Drugs," *New York Times*, 2/6/88,

¹²⁵ "Drugs, Law Enforcement, and Foreign Policy," 81, M. Ilyas Khan, "Panama Papers, Controversy Behind Ousting of Pakistan PM Nawaz Sharif," *BBC News*, 7/28/17, "Cocainomics," *Wall Street Journal*, retrieved from <https://www.wsj.com/ad/cocainomics> on 4/2/18

the Cartel's point man on money laundering. Rodriguez testified before a US court that he paid between 320 to 350 million dollars to Noriega over the course of Noriega's time in office. Rodriguez estimated that the amount of money that went through Panamanian banks on its way to Colombia was around eleven billion dollars. While most accounts of Noriega and the Medellin Cartel minimize Noriega's contribution to the Cartel, this information proves that Noriega was in fact a highly important piece of the narcotics trade in the 1980s. Just because he did not smuggle the drugs himself does not mean that he did not have an important role in the organization's strategy.¹²⁶

While the importance of Noriega's contribution to the rise of the Medellin Cartel should not be underestimated, it is important to bear in mind that Noriega and Panama were important to the drug trade. While it is certainly true that the Cartel was handling 80-90% of the international cocaine trade by the mid 1980s, and that Noriega was laundering most of the Cartel's money in Panamanian banks, one should keep in mind that the drug trade can not be reduced to a single dictator, or even a single drug cartel. When the Colombian army killed Pablo Escobar and dismantled the Medellin Cartel in 1991, another cartel, based in the neighboring city of Cali, took its place. Milian-Rodriguez also claimed that if the United States shut down Panama's money laundering banking sector, he "would have transferred our assets to Curacao (an Dutch-administered island in the Caribbean) overnight" before he began the search for a new country through which to launder money.¹²⁷ At the most basic level, the drug trade was an industry that moved itself, independently of the fates of individuals like Escobar or Noriega. However, it also

¹²⁶ Elaine Sciolino, "Accountant Says Noriega Helped Launder Billions," *New York Times*, 2/12/88

¹²⁷ C-Span Archive, "Drug Control Policy in America, Day 3," 4/6/88

meant that the Reagan administration's emphasis on drug law enforcement was ultimately fundamentally misguided.¹²⁸

When Reagan gave his "address to the nation" on September 14th, 1986, he confidently cited numbers of how many drug traders had been arrested. But, as we have seen, any attempt to curtail the drugs trade through force is futile. No amount of Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) raids can drive the profit out of the narcotics industry. As long as there is some dictatorship or other corrupt government willing to deal in drugs, and as long as there are other individuals who can make a profit in other parts of the trade, it will continue. Treatment, then, combined with a regional effort to raise income levels so that growing coca is not as profitable (so as to at least decrease the supply) is the only politically feasible solution. Legalization could also be part of the solution, but in today's political climate, where even the legalization of cannabis, never mind cocaine and heroin, is controversial, I do not believe there is the political will for carry it through Congress.¹²⁹

Just as Zia had financed the Pakistani nuclear program with funds laundered through the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI), Noriega would use the same bank to launder money for the Medellin Cartel. Noriega and the Cartel both used BCCI to launder drug money. In addition to using BCCI to fund the Cartel, Noriega would use the bank for his own money as well, eventually holding millions of dollars in BCCI accounts. The CIA would also use BCCI for its own purposes, and Oliver North used it to funnel money to the Contras. These crimes would eventually cause BCCI to be investigated by the United States. This in turn would

¹²⁸ Ibid.,

¹²⁹ "President Reagan's Address to the Nation on the Campaign to End Drug Abuse 9/14/86" YouTube, Reagan Library, 8/3/11, C-Span Archive, "Drug Control Policy in America, Day 3," 4/6/88

lead to a trial for BCCI and its employees in Tampa, Florida, where many of the allegations about the bank would come to light. Noriega too was about to have a dramatic reversal.¹³⁰

Vice President Bush looked certain to be the Republican Party's heir apparent to the "Reagan Revolution" in the 1988 presidential election. However, his past dealings with Noriega were beginning to come to light. Still an active participant in the Reagan administration's NSPG meetings, which were becoming more and more focused on Noriega's shenanigans, Bush pushed hard for an invasion of Panama to oust Noriega. Reagan himself was torn between wanting to see Noriega punished and not wanting to commit American troops to another intervention akin to the one that had seen American marines blown up in their Beirut barracks. Bush's Democratic Party opponent, Michael Dukakis, used Bush's ties with Noriega to attack the Vice President's campaign. At first, Bush denied ever meeting with Noriega. Then, when the photograph of him sitting with Noriega in Panama emerged in the *Washington Post*, he stated that he did not learn about Noriega's drug trafficking until 1987. "Reagan administration officials" denied this, however, saying that he had learned of Noriega's activities in 1985. Bush would soon move to remove Noriega once and for all¹³¹

After Bush won the 1988 election, he was determined to rid himself of his Noriega related baggage. Bush would launch "Operation Just Cause" in December 1989, an invasion of Panama that would succeed in its goal of ousting Noriega. Although it was able to create a democratic regime in Panama under the leadership of Guillermo Endara, it also resulted in a large number of civilian casualties. A report from the organization "Human Rights Watch" would state that despite the fact that the Panamanian government and the US disputed the

¹³⁰ "Drugs, Law Enforcement, and Foreign Policy," 81-2

¹³¹ Steven Engleberg, Jeff Gerth, "Bush and Noriega: Examination of Their Ties," *New York Times*, 9/28/88

number of civilian casualties, which were estimated to range from several hundred to several thousand, the number of casualties “suggest that the rule of proportionality and the duty to minimize harm to civilians” was not followed during the invasion. Bush’s desire to help himself politically by getting rid of Noriega outweighed his concern for the United States’ standing in Panama, Latin America and around the world. The US’ relationship with Noriega was a catastrophe from beginning to end.¹³²

Zaire.



By 1986, Zairian dictator Mobutu Sese Seko’s regime was in shambles. Systematic corruption and the theft of the country’s resources by Mobutu and his friends had bankrupted Zaire, destroyed the nation’s standard of living, and infuriated the Zairian people. Although the Mobutu dictatorship was a prominent ally of the United States in its efforts to prevent the spread of leftism across Eastern and Southern Africa, even the CIA admitted that the days of the

¹³² “Human Rights Watch,” “Human Rights in Post-Invasion Panama: Justice Delayed is Justice Denied,” 4/7/91

Mobutu regime were numbered.¹³³ However, the Reagan administration believed that the Mobutu dictatorship, however corrupt it was, was preferable to a leftist regime, particularly one that they feared was friendly to the man that was one of the staunchest enemies of the Reagan administration.”¹³⁴

Libyan dictator Muammar al-Gaddafi had become the prime external enemy of Mobutu during the 1980s. After Gaddafi invaded the Chadian territory of the Aozou Strip in 1978, Mobutu sent support to the Chadian government. He had most likely done this to keep the Reagan Administration happy, after all, they had just coordinated an intervention by European and Moroccan troops to repel an incursion of Zairian rebels entering the country from Angola. Mobutu’s help led Gaddafi to retaliate, giving aid to another Zairian rebel group along the border with Tanzania with the assistance of the Tanzanian government. The Reagan administration feared that this newly empowered group of rebels could assassinate Mobutu. While Reagan and his allies were not worried about a leftist government rising to power in the Zairian capital Kinshasa, they were concerned that border provinces, particularly the province of Shaba (Katanga) along the border with Angola, and Kivu, along the border with Tanzania, could fall under leftist influence.¹³⁵

Because the United States used military aid to try to keep the Congo friendly to its interests, a series of US presidents of both parties, from Nixon through Ford and Carter on to Reagan, were willing to overlook Mobutu’s growing relationship with the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Indeed, there were even times that Nixon’s National Security Adviser and later

¹³³ “Prospects for the Mobutu Regime,” CIA ERR, 11/66.

¹³⁴ President Reagan’s Address to the Nation on the Bombing of Libya 4/14/86” YouTube, Reagan Library, 5/4/16

¹³⁵ “Zaire, Challenges Ahead for Mobutu,” CIA ERR, 1/86, iv, Michela Wrong, *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz: Living on the Brink of Disaster in Mobutu’s Congo* (New York: HarperCollins, 2000) 297,.

Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, remarked that Mobutu could serve as bridge between and the US and the 1970s leadership of China, and that the Chinese government's influence in Africa could counter Soviet power on that continent.¹³⁶

I am not suggesting more “hawkish” policies towards the PRC. I am suggesting, however, that we should keep the PRC in mind just as we would with any other power of its size. I agree with Chen Jian's thesis of engaging with China through negotiation, remembering China's history of trauma inflicted upon it at the hands of imperialist powers. I feel it important to mention this in the body of this paper because to do otherwise would be to risk peddling the same type of aggressive policies that I accuse Casey and others of doing.¹³⁷

However, there were strains in the US-Mobutu relationship. Mobutu even expelled the American ambassador to Zaire in 1975 because he believed the United States to be behind an attempt to oust him from power. Much of this tension stemmed from Mobutu's decision to move closer to Maoist China in the 1970s and 1980s. US policy towards Mobutu in the 1970s appears to have been inconsistent, as Nixon, Ford, and Carter at times supported Mobutu while at other times criticized him for his alliance with the leadership in China during the 1970s and 1980s or the human rights abuses his regime committed.¹³⁸

In this section, I will analyze American aid to Mobutu during the Reagan administration. Sources on Cold War Zairian history are hard to find even for more distant periods such as the Nixon administration. For someone studying the Reagan administration's policy towards Zaire, it is that much more so. However, the CIA archives have proven to be highly useful on this subject,

¹³⁶ Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) 1969-1976, Vol E-6, 275.

¹³⁷ Perisco, *Casey*, 181, Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001) 282

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, 274

providing me with many CIA memorandums I would not otherwise have. State Department archives have also proved useful in researching the Tanzania portions of this section. Finally, the National Security Archive, particularly the “unredacted” blog, have been most helpful in researching the Reagan administration’s policy towards Libya. In this section, I will argue that a failure by the Reagan administration to negotiate with Zaire’s neighbors led to the fall of the Mobutu regime, two bloody wars in central Africa, and rising Chinese government influence in the region. Specifically, by abandoning any thought of dialogue with Tanzanian leader Julius Nyerere, the Reagan administration gave up on any hope for a negotiated settlement in the region.¹³⁹

By the 1980s, most American intelligence analysts knew that the government of Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaire was destined to fall. Policymakers tried to reign in Mobutu’s huge budget deficit by imposing austerity upon the country. However, this did little to curb Mobutu’s greed, which was the real cause of Zaire’s fiscal problems. The Reagan administration believed that Mobutu was the only person who could hold Zaire together in the face of the Libyan and Tanzanian subversion they feared. The Reagan administration’s fixation on Gaddafi obliterated any thought of other considerations that were a part of the US-Zaire relationship. By far the largest among these was Mobutu’s closeness with the then leadership of the People’s Republic of China, which the Reagan administration barely seemed to notice. Chinese government leadership in the 1970s and 1980s would use the Soviet-American rivalry in Central Africa to expand their own power in the region. Thirty years later, the amount of power they acquired would cause

¹³⁹ Van Rebrouck, *Congo*, 528, Libya: Qadhafi’s Position Since the Airstrike,” 5/17/18, NSA Archive, “Unredacted” Blog, MemCon, 8/4/77, FRUS, 1977-81, Vol XVI, 164

great alarm in the United States. Had the United States sought a negotiated solution with Tanzania and other members of the “frontline” states, this may have been prevented.¹⁴⁰

Contrary to what is often believed, the Reagan administration primarily did not aid Mobutu to help the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) in the Angolan civil war. Actually, South Africa was the administration’s major ally in the Angolan struggle.¹⁴¹ Instead, the Reagan administration’s motivation in aiding the Zairian dictator had more to do with a struggle farther to the north. At the time, Libyan leader Muammar Al Gaddafi was engaged in a geopolitical and diplomatic struggle with Egypt and its leader, Anwar Al Sadat (and later Hosni Mubarak.). In his bid to obtain political supremacy in North Africa, Gaddafi invaded neighboring Chad to the south. Eager to showcase his willingness to act as a US ally, Mobutu sent troops to aid the Chadian government. Gaddafi retaliated by funding Zairian rebels. Additionally, Mobutu and Gaddafi were on different sides of the political questions that gripped post-colonial Africa.¹⁴²

The “Front for the Liberation of the Congo” (FLNC) had been fighting Mobutu for a generation by the 1980s. They based themselves first in Angola, where they launched an incursion into the southern province of Katanga in 1977. The Angolan government was more than eager to help the FLNC attack an opponent who was shipping supplies to their rightist UNITA adversaries. The rebels advanced into Zairian territory, routing Mobutu’s forces. Panicked, Mobutu asked his European and American allies for help. France and Belgium obliged, sending in troops to force the FLNC back to Angola. While Mobutu’s regime had been

¹⁴⁰ Van Rebrouck, *Congo*, 528

¹⁴¹ Piero Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom: Havana, Washington, Pretoria, and the Struggle for Southern Africa 1976-1991* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013) 64

¹⁴² CIA ERR, “Zaire, Challenges Ahead for Mobutu, 1/86,”

saved for the moment, it was now clear just how precarious his situation was. Mobutu could no longer hold Zaire together by himself. He would need help from outside in order to maintain his rule.¹⁴³

After the 1977 invasion of Katanga, the Angolan faction of the FLNC faded. It was replaced by a new faction set up in the “Great Lakes” region,” which referred to the area around Lake Tanganyika. This faction was not supplied by the Angolans, but by the governments of Tanzania to the east and Libya to the north. They were also receiving funding indirectly from Maoist China via Tanzanian and Libyan intermediaries. Although the Chinese government had not funded the FLNC directly since the 1960s, in practice, they still contributed to the FLNC by funding the Tanzanian and Libyan armies, who, in turn, supported the FLNC. This support is particularly noteworthy because the Chinese government also provided aid to Mobutu’s army, thus giving them leverage in both sides of the conflict.¹⁴⁴ While this part of the FLNC was quite small (numbering no more than a couple hundred of fighters), American intelligence analysts feared it could tip an already unstable political and economic situation into a full blown crisis through a hypothetical assassination of Mobutu or another 1977 style incursion. This event could then lead to the Angolans renewing their assistance to the FLNC, along with a resurgence in local separatist movements. After Mobutu fell in 1996, the Congo would splinter in a fashion similar to what the CIA had predicted. The key to preventing this lay through a negotiated solution with Tanzania.¹⁴⁵ US officials had tried to impose a Westphalian concept of nationalism upon the Congo, and it ended in failure. Mobutu had tried to oblige them by forcefully controlling the

¹⁴³ CIA ERR, “Zaire: Capabilities of the National Front for the Liberation of the Congo,” 6/14/84

¹⁴⁴ Van Rebrouck, *Congo*, 528, CIA ERR, “Zaire, Challenges Ahead for Mobutu, 1/86,”

¹⁴⁵ Michela Wrong, *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz: Living on the Brink of Disaster in Mobutu’s Congo* (New York: HarperCollins, 2000) 297

territory with an iron grip and by trying to indoctrinate the “Zairian” people into a culture of “authenticite” that emphasized a black African identity, but this had fallen apart after Mobutu’s overthrow. In Central Africa, and Africa more broadly, rulers had not had the type of control over territory that the Westphalian model required. This dynamic had changed in the post independence period, as even revolutionary regimes tried to structure themselves around a strong central government necessary to keep the different ethnic groups united under colonialism together.¹⁴⁶ This in turn led to authoritarianism as these governments resorted to harsher and harsher methods to keep rebellious minorities in check. Together with African leaders, many of whom sincerely believed it was the right path for their countries, the superpowers imposed a version of the Westphalian governmental structure completely alien to the continent.¹⁴⁷

But after the Cold War ended in 1989, Mobutu became less of a priority to American geopolitical strategists. Zaire drifted out of the United States’ focus, and Mobutu had made many enemies who now saw a chance to remove him. When Mobutu sheltered many of the perpetrators of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, the governments of Rwanda and Uganda, controlled by the same people who had suffered during the genocide, launched an invasion of Zaire and murdered many innocent Hutus alongside the former genocidaires. They used the FLNC as a front to give their invasion legitimacy in the eyes of the international community. The Angolan government also joined in the fray. Zaire became a battleground in the Angolan civil war as the Angolan army fought UNITA guerrillas who had been using Zaire as a staging ground for years.

¹⁴⁶ Van Rebroeck. *Congo*, 363

¹⁴⁷ Van Rebroeck. *Congo*, 363, Mike McGovern, *Unmasking the State: Making Guinea Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012) 25

The combined foreign and rebel armies managed to overthrow Mobutu, who subsequently fled to Morocco.¹⁴⁸

Eventually, however, the Congolese tired of the occupying Rwandans and Ugandans. After Laurent Kabila, the former rebel fighter who had led the FLNC for almost forty years before the 1996 victory over Mobutu, declared that he wanted the foreign armies to leave the newly renamed “Democratic Republic of the Congo,” Rwanda and Uganda kept their armies in the Congo by force. This occupation led to a much larger proxy war as most of the Congo’s neighbors fought a war on its territory. The very situation that American intelligence analysts had so feared was now coming to pass. The Congolese Westphalian experiment had failed in the beginning of what became known as the First Congo War.¹⁴⁹

Unlike Zia’s alliance with fundamentalists and Noriega’s dealings in drugs, US diplomatic officials by and large seemed to be unconcerned with the Chinese government’s influence in Zaire. Indeed, figures like Henry Kissinger and others even looked at Mobutu’s closeness with the PRC as something that the US could exploit to gain closer ties to the PRC government. Kissinger would write in 1974, one year after the “opening to China” that Zaire presented an excellent option for further improving ties with Maoist China. Reagan would continue Nixon’s policies of openness towards the PRC, viewing China as an important counterbalance to Soviet power. In his memoirs of his time as a foreign service officer, Ambassador Brandon Grove did not seem particularly concerned by Chinese diplomatic presence in the Congo.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.,

¹⁴⁹ Van Rebroeck. *Congo*, 363

¹⁵⁰ Brandon Grove, *Behind Embassy Walls: The Life and Times of an American Diplomat* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2005) 269, MemCon, 10/10/73 FRUS, 1969-77, Vol E-6, 258

The Reagan administration's openness towards the 1980s leadership in China came even while it recognized that the 1980s Chinese government supplied Gaddafi with weapons. The Chinese government also played a role in helping the Pakistani government develop its nuclear program (but perhaps the Reagan administration was too distracted by the *mujahideen* to notice). Reagan would visit China in 1984, while the Premier of China, visited Reagan at the White House in 1985. In these visits, Reagan does not seem to regard the Chinese government with nearly the same level of suspicion that he does the Soviet Union. Perhaps this was due to Deng Xiaoping's privatization reforms during Reagan's term which pushed China away from the old Maoist economy towards one deemed more palatable by transnational corporations? Whatever the case, it is certainly true that Reagan trusted Deng and his reforms more than he trusted Gorbachev and Perestroika.¹⁵¹

Now, the US-China rivalry has grown to new levels now that the Soviet Union no longer threatens their northern border. Some diplomatic and political analysts have even wondered publicly if the United States will enter a new Cold War with China. China's growing economic power and increasing acquisition of American debt has worried politicians from both sides of the political spectrum. Given these developments, one cannot help but wonder why the Reagan administration did not pay as much attention to China as they did the USSR.¹⁵²

The Reagan administration also botched their handling of the situation with Muammar Gaddafi, the very dictator who they were seeking to stop by aiding Mobutu. Like most of the dictators mentioned in this paper, Gaddafi was only empowered by military actions against his

¹⁵¹ "The Reagans' Arrival Ceremony at the Great Hall of the People, 4/26/84, YouTube, Reagan Library. "Presidents Reagan and Li Toasts (sic) on 7/23/85," YouTube, Reagan Library.

¹⁵² "The Reagans' Arrival Ceremony at the Great Hall of the People, 4/26/84, YouTube, Reagan Library. "Presidents Reagan and Li Toasts (sic) on 7/23/85," YouTube, Reagan Library. "China Accuses US of 'Cold War Mentality Over Nuclear Policy," *BBC News*, 2/4/18

government. Gaddafi had been responsible for helping to fund several attacks by the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in Europe. These included the PLO attack on the cruise ship *Achille Lauro* and bombings at the international airport in Vienna, Austria. After a PLO militant backed by Gaddafi set off a bomb in a German discotheque, killing one US soldier, the Reagan administration decided that it had had enough, and ordered airstrikes in Libya. Similar to the 1989 invasion of Panama, the Reagan administration's 1986 bombing of Libya was marked by the disproportionate nature of its attacks. American bombing caused many civilian casualties, including a child that Gaddafi was able to use for propaganda purposes. The bombing caused the Libyan people, at the time disillusioned with Gaddafi's rule, to instead rally behind his regime. The US bombing, far from inciting the Libyan people to topple Gaddafi, actually saved his regime. Gaddafi would continue to rule for almost three more decades before being overthrown in 2011.¹⁵³

How, then, could Gaddafi have been dealt with? The Soviet Union was starting to see Gaddafi as more of a public relations liability than a true asset due to the civilians who died in his terrorist bombings. This factor means that it is possible that Gorbachev may have been open to a deal designed to curb Gaddafi's involvement with terrorists. It is possible the USSR might have tried to extract a concession in exchange for this, but Gaddafi was going to do more damage to the USSR's image over the long term than he was going to do to the United States over the short term.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ President Reagan: Speech on Airstrikes Against Libya, 4/14/86, YouTube, Reagan Library, Ian Pannell, "Fighting for the Spoils of Libya's Revolution," *BBC News*, 1/28/15

¹⁵⁴ CIA ERR, Jack Anderson, Joseph Spear, "Soviets are No Friends of Gaddafi," *Washington Post*, 4/24/86

Gaddafi's popularity in Libya was shrinking by 1985 due to what one intelligence analyst described as a worsening economy and "deteriorating standards of living."¹⁵⁵ Specifically, the report pointed to an increasingly low supply of food and other critical supplies. These shortages were causing rising resentment towards Gaddafi's rule, which in turn lay behind an increase in rebel "dissident" activity. Gaddafi reacted to this challenge to his authority by implementing harsher crackdowns on Libyans who defied his regime. He also "allied himself more firmly with the hardliners" and replaced career army officers with "young zealots."¹⁵⁶ This was also behind his funding of foreign insurgent groups like the PLO, as he no doubt believed that support for these groups would both give him an external enemy against which to rally the Libyan people (something the US would later give him with the 1986 bombing) as well as aid from allied countries in the Middle East that might be more inclined to support such causes.¹⁵⁷

The CIA further estimated that Gaddafi's restructuring of the army was likely to anger military officers who found their standing weakened by the reforms, making them more likely to rebel against Gaddafi. The agency also found that Libyan dissidents and rebels were getting increasing assistance from other powers in the region, especially Egypt and Iraq. The CIA was extremely optimistic about their ability to oust Gaddafi from power. The report put the rebels' ability to remove Gaddafi from power "better than even."¹⁵⁸

Much like the cases of American aid to Gaddafi and aid to the Afghan *mujahideen*, the covert program against Gaddafi became very much the pet project of CIA director Casey. In fact, many of the other figures in the Iran-Contra scandal would first receive experience in the

¹⁵⁵ "Libya: Qadhafi's Prospects for Survival," NSA Archive, "Unredacted" Blog,

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.,

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.,

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.,

program against Gaddafi. However, their efforts up to 1986 proved to be unsuccessful, meaning that Reagan had to resort to more extreme means of attempting to remove Gaddafi from power. In 1986, in response to Libyan involvement of the bombing of LaBelle Discotheque in Berlin, Reagan ordered a raid against Gaddafi's headquarters. The airstrike, which was an explicit attempt to assassinate the Libyan dictator, failed in that objective, but did cause a large amount of damage to several of his command structures. However, the air raid also damaged the French embassy in Tripoli, straining relations with an ally who was not only a crucial player in the North African region, but was also an important member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Despite the damage caused by the airstrike, Gaddafi was able to stay in power. Although US intelligence reports suggested that his standing was further weakened by the air strike, he was still able to stay in power for the next two and a half decades.¹⁵⁹

However, an effort at negotiation with the USSR over Gaddafi could have potentially cut off the dictator from his sources of international support. CIA reports in the 1970s indicated that ties between the Kremlin and Gaddafi had always been strained by a Gaddafi who resisted outside influence in any form and by a Soviet Union distrustful of Gaddafi's methods. Furthermore, the report suggested that the Soviets considered Libya to be of little strategic importance. With all these factors at play, it seems likely that there could have been a negotiated solution between the US and the USSR in order to limit Libyan sponsorship of militantism.¹⁶⁰

Finally, there was a third player in the political situation of Central Africa in the 1980s. Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere had been a leader who had perhaps been one of the most truly non-aligned leaders in post colonial Africa. Nyerere had played a crucial role in mediating a

¹⁵⁹ "Libya: Qadhafi's Position Since the Airstrike," 5/17/18, NSA Archive, "Unredacted" Blog,

¹⁶⁰ CIA ERR, Jack Anderson, Joseph Spear, "Soviets are No Friends of Gaddafi," *Washington Post*, 4/24/8

settlement between the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) rebels in what is now Zimbabwe, the white settler government of what was then called “Rhodesia,” and the South African backers of the “Rhodesian” government. Although Nyerere had backed the ZANU-PF forces by arming them and providing them sanctuary in Tanzanian territory, he had still played a big role in negotiating the agreement that allowed the ZANU-PF to assume power in the newly renamed country of Zimbabwe. However, this had been during Carter’s term in office.¹⁶¹

Reagan decided to take a different tack, taking a hardline against Nyerere’s “African Socialism.” That meant that there was no negotiated solution to the conflict in the Congo. If the Reagan administration valued Congolese stability, as much as it claimed, it would have made an agreement with Nyerere a higher priority. However, the fact that it allowed the Congo to undergo a vicious civil war a decade later shows how truly uncommitted American policymakers were to Central Africa.¹⁶²

Conclusion.

Reagan’s legacy as a President runs deeper than a simple list of successes and failures. Reagan’s new conservative philosophy would come to define a generation of American politicians, both democrats and republicans, indeed, the climax of Reagan’s financial deregulation reforms would happen under Democratic President Bill Clinton with the repeal of the “Glass-Steagel Act” in 1999. The covert actions of the Reagan administration in foreign policy would evolve into the overt invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan under George H.W Bush’s son, George W Bush, in the 2000s. The two wars would reverse much of the American public’s

¹⁶¹ MemCon, 8/4/77, FRUS, 1977-81, Vol XVI, 164

¹⁶² Wrong, *In the Footsteps*, 297

appetite for hawkishness in foreign policy that Reagan had generated. Globally, this trend of Reagan's conservatism would also become embodied into the governance of many Western European nations, especially the United Kingdom under Margaret Thatcher. Meanwhile, individuals like Casey, tarnished by their involvement in the Iran-Contra scandal, slipped from the scene entirely. Oliver North too, would prove to be a temporary figure. After being pardoned by HW Bush before Bush left office in 1993, North would run for a Senate seat in Virginia the following year. Despite the incredible successes of the Republican Party in the 1994 midterm elections, North would lose his election for Senate. Jeane Kirkpatrick would toy with the idea of a run for president of her own in 1988. However, she decided against it, and George HW Bush would win the Republican Party nomination and then the presidency.¹⁶³

Bush himself would have a turbulent presidency. After winning the 1988 election despite having the cloud of his involvement with Noriega follow him throughout much of the campaign, he would initially be a popular leader. Although it was widely condemned by human rights organizations, the invasion of Panama would be met with praise from a majority of the American people. Bush's popularity would reach still further heights when he launched an invasion of Kuwait in order to remove Iraqi forces who had been occupying the country for the past months. Nevertheless, Bush would lose reelection after the economy began to slow down. His son, George W Bush, would later become president in 2001, taking Reagan's neoconservatism to an even more extreme level in his "war on terror."¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ "Jeane Kirkpatrick," *The Economist*, 12/19/16, Michael Ross, Elizabeth Shogren, "ELECTIONS '94 : Robb Defeats North in Virginia's Scandal-Scarred Senate Competition," *Los Angeles Times*, 11/9/94, Sean Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan: A History* (New York: HarperPerennial, 2008) 8, Gaddis, *Strategies*, 290

¹⁶⁴ Gerth, "Bush and Noriega: Examination of Their Ties," *New York Times*, 9/28/88

What are we to make of Reagan himself? After leaving the presidency in 1989, he would retire to his California ranch, where he lived until his death in 2006. His mourners saw him as the President who brought down the Soviet Union and ushered in a new age of American dominance. His detractors would remember him as a warmonger who damaged American standing in the rest of the world. But perhaps both of these interpretations give Reagan too much credit. His lack of experience in international affairs left a dangerous void in terms of foreign policy savvy. This void would eventually be filled by Casey, Weinberger, and the other hardliners, and they would not relinquish it until the Iran-Contra scandal in 1986. Reagan was not the mythical president who brought down an “evil empire,” but the man was quite frankly far out of his depth in foreign policy.¹⁶⁵

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¹⁶⁵ Gaddis, *Strategies*,290 Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 8, 151, “Ronald Reagan Dies,” *BBC News*, 6/6/04, Kinzer, *The Brothers*, 325

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