



Planning Reagan's War: Conservative Strategists and America's Cold War Victory

Francis H. Marlo

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Since the mid-1990s, there has been increasing interest in reassessing the role Ronald Reagan and his administration played in ending the Cold War. A number of books have shed much-needed light on their sophisticated strategy to undermine the Soviet Union's control of its satellites and to weaken its domestic cohesion. Yet, until now, no book has explained the intellectual pedigree of the key elements of Reagan's strategy while placing him at the center of its development.

Using recently declassified National Security Council documents and interviews with key Reagan administration officials, Francis H. Marlo identifies the administration's grand strategy and its key beliefs, goals, and tools. Five key beliefs in particular defined the administration's foreign policy: rejection of both containment and détente, importance of communist ideology, centrality of superior power in dealing with the Soviet threat, importance of Soviet weaknesses, and superiority of democracy and capitalism. Two goals distinguished Reagan's team from that of his predecessors: reversing Soviet expansionism and undermining the Soviet state.

In his analysis, Marlo demonstrates the similarity between the thinking of conservative strategists and the thinking of Reagan himself, as shown in the recently revealed handwritten speeches and radio addresses he drafted, as well as in his personal diary entries. The book concludes with a discussion of how the lessons from Reagan's grand strategy can be applied to American grand strategy for the current global war on terrorism.

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