

# REVIEWS

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AND ALL THE MEN AND WOMEN  
MERELY PLAYERS**

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# ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE, AND ALL THE MEN AND WOMEN MERELY PLAYERS

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*Kwon, Heonik and Byung-Ho Chung. North Korea: Beyond Charismatic Politics. Rowman & Littlefield. Lanham, MD, 2012. 232 Pages. ISBN 978-0742556799*

According to Kwon and Chung, the North Korean leadership has turned itself into a “theatre state,” a regime that relies on the use of rituals to perpetuate the charismatic rule of the leadership. The authors point to what Max Weber called the “routinization of charismatic authority.” What Weber meant in a nutshell was that charisma was an inherently unstable form of political authority. It cannot be easily renewed or “routinized,” and is further prone to decay and erosion; this means of course that charismatic authority usually cannot be inherited because it is usually invested in one leader alone (pp. 43-45). The authors make liberal use of the ideas of Clifford Geertz, an anthropologist who pioneered the concept of the theatre state with reference to Bali in the 19th century (pp. 44-45). They also make use of the notion of “partisan state” with reference to North Korea. The idea of North Korea being a “guerrilla state,” as the authors point out, is that of the Japanese historian Wada Haruki. Haruki is Japan’s foremost authority on Kim Il-sung’s Manchurian partisan days, as well as being a noted historian of North Korea in general. The authors make use of the theory to describe the mythology that the North Korean state relies upon, and how that mythology, i.e., of the Manchurian partisan ethos, has been actualized in state ideology (pp. 15-19).

Utilizing the “Theatre State” model, the authors stress the use of theatrical spectacles and rituals to instill a sense of loyalty amongst the North Koreans for the Manchurian partisans, especially Kim Il-sung himself. Rituals take many forms, be they mass parades, mass games or theatrical plays. The authors also stress the importance of monuments and cemeteries for the authority of Kim Il-sung, the Manchurian partisans in general and the fact that Kim Jong-il was

instrumental in creating said landmarks. The authors state that in sanctifying the Manchurian partisans, above all Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-suk (Kim Il-sung's first wife; she was also a partisan fighter), Kim Jong-il and the regime in general has been able to practice "legacy politics." This form of politics has been crucial to the regime's "routinization" of charismatic authority (pp. 43-63).

North Korea's military-first (Songun) politics is the ideological vehicle for this partisan kind of politics. Songun itself is of importance in the ways that it ties the military-dominated regime of Kim Jong-il to the legitimacy of the regime under Kim Il-sung, the military's role in protecting the legacy of Kim Il-sung helps to legitimate Kim Jong-il, as the successor to his father. The Manchurian partisan "tradition" is protected and perpetuated by Kim Jong-il's Songun Korea (pp. 71-93).

The authors also highlight the importance of the Great Leader's bestowing of gifts to his people. The act of gift giving to the leader by the peoples of the world is also of great importance to the regime. North Korea's state relies on the so-called "moral economy," in which relations between people are characterized by "general reciprocity"—i.e., generosity and gift-giving, rather than mere selfishness. The authors assert that before the famine of the 1990s, this was an operating norm within North Korean society. The gift functions as a symbol of both power—i.e., economic largess—and also as a symbol of paternal benevolence. Gifts received by the leader, from the rest of world, symbolize the love of the peoples of the world for the leader (Kim Il-sung and later Kim Jong-il, too).

The book offers some very interesting readings of North Korean ideological texts, but the employment of anthropological methods to a closed country, as noted by the authors themselves, is highly problematic. Many of the issues with the book are indicative of broader problems with academia itself: an over-reliance within certain disciplines on "discourse," i.e., words and ideas, and the elaborate but unsubstantiated analysis of said words and ideas without proper reference to how the words are actually understood by those involved and targeted.

The authors make use of second-hand reports from organisations like Good Friends in describing the social and economic situation in North Korea post-Kim Il-sung. However, they rarely if ever make use of refugee testimony when discussing the practical sources of the regime's authority. They have clearly not checked whether their metaphysical analyses of the North Korean state and their interpretations of North Korean texts actually resonate with the average North Korean. As a reader one is left with the impression that the authors have put together a very interesting theory, but have not tested it. At one point in the

book they even go so far as to assert that the ideology of Juche is a major reason why the regime did not collapse in the early 1990s (p. 128). This may indeed be the case; there are 24,000 North Korean refugees in Seoul. Surely some of them could have been asked by the authors whether North Korea is indeed a theatre state and whether so-called “legacy politics” explain why North Korea’s regime has been able to maintain itself up until present. Unfortunately, the book does not contain any sources to substantiate this assertion.

It should be noted that the modern North Korean state’s projection of authority is indeed mass-based, highly theatrical and often takes the form of dramatic display. From reading the book, it is not at all clear though that this form of authority construction—with Juche and Songun in tow—have kept the regime in power.

The definition of the North Korean state as a partisan state also is problematic. North Korea was not the only socialist state (or state in general) to be established and run by partisans. Let us not forget that Marshal Tito, former leader of Yugoslavia, was also a partisan fighter. The People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola—Labour Party (MPLA), who continue to their country to this day, were also no strangers to the use of partisan tactics. Fidel Castro and his brother were partisans before they became the leaders of Cuba. And the reformist regimes in Beijing and Hanoi were both set up by former partisans, namely Mao Zedong and Ho Chi Minh. The authors do not differentiate between a state founded by partisans and a partisan state (pp. 15-16).

The political, social and economic institutions of North Korea cannot easily be explained purely by describing North Korea as a theatre state. The systems of social control, for instance the *inminban* (people’s unit), as well as the presence of a command economy until the collapse in the 1990s, and the regime’s use of other Stalinist rituals as a means of legitimation are overlooked by the authors. Indeed, the Supreme People’s Assembly (SPA) continues to be “elected” every five years, and it continues to certify North Korea’s annual state budget. The successions from Kim Il-sung to Kim Jong-il and from Kim Jong-il to Kim Jong-un, were confirmed and certified by the 6th Party Congress and the 3rd Party Conference, respectively. These rituals confer a popular, modern political legitimacy on the regime, rather than that of theatrical symbolism. The regime’s authority does not merely rest on the charisma of its leadership, but also upon its putative democratic and representative institutions. While the authors do talk about the conference that confirmed Kim Jong-un as leader, its significance as a legitimating event is not discussed (p. 186). The leaders of North Korea have all been anointed by supposedly representative institutions of party and state, their authority does not merely come from their charisma, but also from rational-legal processes.

The authors also make reference to the “new constitutional order” of North Korea after the death of Kim Il-sung (p. 73). Kim Il-sung was constitutionally declared “eternal president” posthumously. The issue is though, what kind of legitimacy does a constitution bestow? A constitution is a legal document and therefore the leaders of North Korea seem to seek legitimacy from rational-legal sources as well as from theatrical display.

While some of the ideological elements of the regime’s authority are discussed by the authors, they have missed more classically nationalistic or state socialist ideologies that have emerged from North Korea’s official media in the last 20 years. The cult and its theatrical elements notwithstanding, it is worth recapping some of these ideological motifs that the authors of this book have largely ignored. From the late-1980s, great stress in North Korean ideological publications and news media was placed upon “Socialism in our style.” During the famine in the 1990s, “the principle of national superiority” became a popular ideological leitmotif in North Korean ideological output. Another often repeated idea was that of the “Red Flag Idea.” Leading up to the centenary of Kim Il-sung’s birth, the importance of building a “Strong and Prosperous Nation” was ubiquitous in North Korean ideological output. Throughout North Korea’s entire history, words like revolution and socialism have been ever-present in North Korean ideological publications and general propaganda output. Such ideological themes could probably have been fitted into the model and there is no reason one cannot have a theatre state with socialism and revolution. The authors neglect to discuss these elements of the regime’s ideological discourse, and one is therefore left with a rather limited understanding of North Korea.

The personality cult and its state not only has a theatrical form, but also a Stalinist content. The authors stress the human-centeredness of Juche in contrast to Marxian materialism (p. 145). North Korean ideology is indeed more focused on ideas than classical Marxism. However, Stalin did often stress the importance of ideas under state socialism.<sup>1</sup> North Korea was, until 1994, a Stalinist state. The presence of collective farms, state planning and party-state domination over society is best explained through an understanding of Stalinism in practice, not through comparing Marx with Juche.

The authors of this work, while purporting to offer a holistic model of the North Korean state, ignore its socialist contents, its political structure, and its actual socio-economic realities; instead, they focus almost exclusively on certain cultural elements of the regime and the society that it has constructed. This approach is not without merit. The role of symbols, ideological norms

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1 Erik van Ree, *The Political Thought of Joseph Stalin*, (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2002), 268-270.

and performance in the creation of legitimacy is an area that remains largely unexplored in the context of North Korea. Nonetheless, the theatre state in the form presented in this book is highly limited even when it comes to dealing with North Korean ideological publications, let alone how North Korean state and society actually work. It represents a limited model of authority creation, not a model of the entire North Korean state, its inner-workings and how state-society relations are constituted.

The survival of the North Korean state is not merely the product of a regime centered on the personality cult of two or three men, nor is the Manchurian partisan "tradition" a sufficient explanation for the survival of the state. The closed nature of North Korea leading up to the famine meant that its people could not countenance an alternative. The seemingly cohesive nature of the North Korean elite who fear change is also a major reason why the country remains intact. Institutional inertia and the general lack of dissent because of the closed, monolithic, and controlled nature of North Korean state and society explain the regime's longevity.

The cult that surrounds the Kims certainly also plays a role. The author of this review has frequently met refugees who believe much of the cult that surrounded Kim Il-sung. Almost all of them though are (and were before they left) united in their hatred of Kim Jong-il. The cult of Kim Jong-il, according to refugee testimony at least, seemingly never really took hold as a popular phenomenon in the country. It is important to remember that what actual North Koreans think and feel may be quite different from what the regime wants them to. **Y**



# FROM AMERICAN DOMINANCE TO THE RISE OF THE REST: DAMBISA MOYO'S HOW THE WEST WAS LOST

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*Moyo, Dambisa. How the West Was Lost: Fifty Years of Economic Folly—and the Stark Choices Ahead. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011. 226 pages. ISBN 978-0-374-53321-2*

Since the 2007-2008 global financial crisis began, sparked by the real estate bubble bursting in the United States, there have been profound shifts in the world economy. The shocking bankruptcies of prominent American investment banks and financial institutions (such as Bear Stearns, Lehman Brothers and AIG), coupled with the government taking over quasi-governmental companies such as Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, led the world to begin questioning whether the policies and ideologies that the so-called West had been promulgating were in fact the best ways for an economy to be run. This has led some experts to believe that the developed world is in the midst of a decline and that global power will begin tilting back to the developing world, particularly to China.

In the *New York Times* bestselling book *How the West Was Lost*, Dambisa Moyo<sup>1</sup> provides an extremely thorough, well-written account of not only the recent global financial crisis, but also the flawed economic policies and choices that have resulted in the foundations being set for a shift in global power from “West” to “East.” She delves into enough detail that readers with a basic knowl-

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1 Dambisa Moyo was born and raised in Zambia. She received a master’s degree from Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government and a PhD. in economics from Oxford University. She also has an MBA. in finance and a B.S. in chemistry. She was formerly a consultant for the World Bank and also worked as an investment banker at Goldman Sachs. Before publishing *How the West Was Lost*, in 2010 Moyo wrote *Dead Aid: Why Aid is Not Working and How There is a Better Way for Africa* (also a *New York Times* bestseller). And just recently in 2012 she released *Winner Take All: China’s Race For Resources and What It Means for the World*. In 2009 TIME Magazine named her one of the world’s 100 most influential people, and she is currently a contributor to financial journals such as *the Financial Times* and *the Wall Street Journal*.

edge of business can understand everything, while managing to avoid making explanations so shallow that those with stronger financial backgrounds will feel disinterested. However, the book attempts to cover a large variety of topics (ranging from a historical overview of economics, to the mortgage industry in the US, to political ideologies) and thus falls short of fully developing arguments at times. She also frequently makes sweeping generalizations throughout her diagnosis of the crisis, particularly regarding the loosely defined “West” and “East.” Additionally, her conclusion is quite short yet dramatic, attempting to provide a panacea for too many loosely related problems in the world today. Thus some of her arguments become too broad and run the risk of losing focus and clarity.

### **Erosion of the West’s Advantages: A Focus on Flawed Economic Policies**

The book is separated into two main parts: “The Way It Was” and “Back to the Future: From East to West and Back Again.” Moyo believes that the West’s advantages have substantially been eroded, and that there are three main reasons for this: 1) the West has alienated most emerging market countries through its political and military policies; 2) the “flatness of the world” (per Thomas Friedman) has resulted in the lowering of transaction costs, which has made the transfer of technology easier; and 3) flawed economic policies implemented over the past fifty years have directly resulted in the downfall of the world’s most advanced nations.<sup>2</sup> The third reason is the focus of this book. Moyo argues that had these flawed policies been detected and dealt with properly in advance, the financial crisis of 2008 may have never occurred, or at least may have been much less prominent.

The strongest points of the book can be found in the first few chapters, which explore her main argument: “What is clear, and what this book will demonstrate, is that deliberate (American) public policies are making things worse, exacerbating [America’s] economic step down by weakening” the three pillars of growth: capital, labor and total factor productivity (pp. 10-11). In the second chapter, Moyo gives a phenomenal explanation of how the US government, through a strategy of broad homeownership strengthened by subsidy,<sup>3</sup> has en-

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2 Thomas Friedman, *The World Is Flat 3.0: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Farrar, 2007).

3 A subsidized loan is a loan where the interest is paid by a third party. The US government offers citizens a number of incentives to purchase a home, including securing a loan with a very low (or in some cases zero) down payment, allowing for deferred payments and even by paying all of the interest on the loan. Mortgage rates are subsidized through Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac (government-sponsored enterprises). Borrowers interested in these loans must meet certain requirements, though they were not

couraged the majority of American citizens to pour their financial resources into one form of investment asset class (real estate), even when there may have been much better options available. This “has been assiduously accomplished by a dual-pronged strategy of 1) providing incentives for individuals to borrow, through subsidized debt mortgages and tax relief on mortgage interest payments, and 2) the wholly negative gift of providing guarantees to the mortgage-lending institutions” (p. 36).<sup>4</sup>

Moyo also gives a thought-provoking explanation of one of the fundamental flaws in the United States and some other developed countries: the misallocation of capital, caused by a breakdown between debt and equity holders. As a solution to these problems, she believes that “policy should be focused around weaning the financial system off guarantees for mortgage loans and removing tax benefits on mortgage debt, instead providing a subsidy for equity (cash) down payments” (p. 46). Furthermore, she draws an interesting parallel between the post-World War II United States and the recent rapid economic development of China: both countries made sure that the buyers of their products were also their debtors (i.e., the US and Europe, and China and the US). She uses ideas such as this to explain how China could become the next global superpower, in much the way that the balance of power shifted from Western Europe (particularly the United Kingdom) to the United States after WWII.

Another focal point is Moyo’s discussion on why a housing market bubble is the worst type of bubble to have (as opposed to, say, the technology boom from 1995 to 2000, which created some benefits for society despite the negative aspects). She believes that “the US government has presided over and continues to create and foment the worst kind of bubble: a bubble in an unproductive asset financed by bank debt” (p. 60). In this sense, the author feels that the US government’s policies deserve the majority of the blame for the global financial crisis. Other topics discussed include the US labor market losing its luster due to pension plans, which she humorously calls “government sponsored Ponzi schemes” (China does not have state-run pension plans).

### **Lack of Clarity, Dramatic Tones and Misquoting: Detrimental Factors**

While many of Moyo’s well-founded points are useful in terms of understanding the recent crisis, there are some faults to be found in both her arguments and logic. She generalizes repeatedly, often referring to the “developing world”

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stringent enough leading up to the financial crisis.

4 The US government offers homeowners large deductions on federal income taxes for mortgage interest payments and for state and local property taxes.

when it seems it would be better, and probably more accurate, for her to refer precisely to China. The same goes for referring to the “West” when she seems to be exclusively discussing the United States. At many points in the book I wondered, “Would this be true for developing countries in Africa or South America?” Or, “Would this be true for Scandinavian countries, which are developed but have quite different economic situations and policy prescriptions than the United States?” Harm de Blij, an expert in the field of geography and globalization, splits the world into two parts: the global core and the periphery. Moyo would have benefited from following in his path by using a more specific and relevant division of the world, rather than using the ambiguous geographic terms “East” and “West.”<sup>5</sup> De Blij believes that the “core” consists of urbanized and wealthy nations, including Western Europe, the US, Canada, Japan and Australia. Meanwhile the “periphery” consists of, roughly, South and Central Asia, Africa, and Central and South America.

One example of the generalizations can be found on page 36, when Moyo states that: “Western nations, their governments and households alike, are buried under seemingly insurmountable amounts of debt,” which is not necessarily a true statement. Yes, the US and UK have high levels of personal and government debt, but what about other developed nations? In 2008 Australia had a gross public debt of 13.9 percent, while China’s in the same year was 16.2 percent.<sup>6</sup> In order to avoid confusion, Moyo could have abstained from using the terms “East” and “West” as often, and focused more on specific countries to make her points, or opted for using terms such as those that de Blij coined in *The Power of Place*. It would also have been beneficial to include these definitions at the beginning of the book.

Meanwhile excessively dramatic tones are overused throughout the text, attempting to lead the reader to believe that if something is not done immediately, the US will collapse and China will rule the world. This gives the book a tabloid feel in some sections, such as when Moyo urges the reader to believe that time “is running out. Unless the West adopts radical solutions, many of them offered in this book, and adopts them quickly, it will be too late” (p. xiii). Opting for subtler, less biased wording would strengthen the quality of her arguments.

In some instances, it also appears that she takes quotes out of context in order to underscore her points. She quotes an anonymous mortgage advisor in the UK (sans source) as stating that his “best advice to someone hoping to buy

5 Harm de Blij, *The Power of Place: Geography, Destiny, and Globalization’s Rough Landscape* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

6 “Public debt (% of GDP),” *IndexMundi*, <http://www.indexmundi.com/g/g.aspx?c=as&v=143>.

[real estate] with a small deposit is to live on a credit card. Buy your groceries on it, go out to dinner on it, spend on it what you'd normally spend on a debit card" (p. 37). While she is trying to prove that the UK government and businesses are encouraging people to live deeply in debt rather than spending within their means, it is in fact common knowledge that consumer loan approvals of all kinds are based on one's credit history. One way to develop a good credit score is to utilize a credit card, paying it off in full and on time every month. Therefore the quote does not necessarily prove anything regarding living within one's means, or her idea that developed countries have been encouraging reckless spending by their citizens.

Another issue that struck me was Moyo's discussion on race in the United States. The US, being a country of immigrants, is accustomed to having people of different races and backgrounds living within its borders. However, in the chapter entitled "Labor Lost," Moyo notes that when looking ahead, "for America in particular...the outlook for the labor market is bleak. By most census forecasts, America's minority (non-white) populations will be the majority before too long" (p. 90). While she proceeds to discuss that these groups are statistically the least educated, the matter of race alone is not a good index of the power of the United States. The US is a country built on immigration and multiculturalism, and claiming that having a non-white majority could be a negative aspect contradicts the ideals of the nation. Furthermore, delving more deeply into the topics presented in the first several chapters and saving more general topics such as the education system for another book would have further strengthened the focus of Moyo's argument.

In her conclusion, she offers four monochromatic scenarios for the future: 1) the status quo, 2) China faltering, 3) America fighting back, and (4) America defaulting on its debt. The last one was particularly fascinating, since I had never considered it a viable option for the United States to solve its debt predicament by defaulting. Moyo was able to take a seemingly unimaginable solution—the mighty US defaulting on the internationally renowned US dollar—and make it a surprisingly rational step in the process of solving America's seemingly insurmountable debt problems.

### **Conclusion: A Solid Resource for Understanding the West's Policy Faults**

Moyo's *How the West Was Lost* is overall an excellent source of information on not only the recent global economic crisis, but even more so regarding America's problems with home mortgages and a general overview of the flawed economic policies that resulted in the crisis itself. Therefore, despite some overarching

generalizations and a lack of depth on the more crucial issues, and putting the excessively dramatic tones aside, *How the West Was Lost* is absolutely a worthwhile read for anyone interested in US/China relations, the current status of the global economy and causes of the recent global financial crisis. Moyo skillfully paints a picture of how, despite good intentions, flawed economic policies can ultimately lead to the downfall of even the strongest global superpowers. **Y**

# THREE HISTORIES OF THE END OF THE COLD WAR AND THE LESSONS LEARNED

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This review considers how the understanding of Ronald Reagan, drawn by the authors of three leading recent histories of the end of the Cold War, corresponds to the lessons drawn from the end of the Cold War. This correspondence is then compared to nuclear diplomacy on the Korean Peninsula, as discussed in the memoirs of three leading members of the George W. Bush administration: former President George W. Bush, former Vice President Dick Cheney and former Undersecretary of State and Ambassador to the UN, John Bolton.<sup>1</sup>

In considering how Reagan's approach to Gorbachev and the Soviet Union has been referenced by Bush administration officials in its handling of Kim Jong-il and the DPRK, a few key differences will be briefly noted. Firstly, the US was less concerned about, and the USSR was much less inclined towards, nuclear proliferation among other states and potentially non-state actors such as terrorists. Secondly, the disarmament proposed by Reagan and Gorbachev was mutual rather than one-sided (hence additional inducements), and the related charge of "appeasement"—anathema to Reagan, Cheney and Bolton alike—were far less significant. Thirdly, Gorbachev was an idealist, guided by moral principles and a global vision increasingly influenced by liberalism, whereas Kim Jong-il was much more a realist mostly concerned with his own security and sceptical, if not cynical, of the international order.

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<sup>1</sup> This review takes into account five works: *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended* (2004) by Jack Matlock Jr; *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan: A History of the End of the Cold War* (2009) by James Mann; *Gorbachev's Gamble: Soviet Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War* (2008) by Andrei Grachev; *Decision Points* (2011) by George W. Bush; *In My Time* (2012) by Dick Cheney; and *Surrender is Not an Option: Defending America at the United Nations and Abroad* (2008) by John Bolton. Full citations are provided in subsequent footnotes.

Reagan's intentions can be briefly understood in terms of a four part agenda: 1) to reduce the threat and use of force in international disputes; 2) to reduce stockpiles of armaments; 3) better working relationship, cooperation and understanding; and 4) human rights and humanitarian concerns.<sup>2</sup> Matlock is unequivocal that there was no tangible plan to bring about the collapse of the Soviet Union.<sup>3</sup> Gorbachev, however, was already convinced of the need for arms reduction to enable more liberal internal reform.<sup>4</sup> Hence Reagan's greatest contribution to change in the USSR was perhaps to have recognized the opportunity Gorbachev represented and through their agreements to have enhanced Gorbachev's authority to make progress with his reform agenda.<sup>5</sup>

In contrast, the Bush administration responded to the terrorist attacks of September 11th in accordance with the concepts of pre-emption and unilateralism. While referencing Reagan's early arms build-up, and echoing his belief in the possibility for dramatic change, the trust-building diplomatic method associated with his second term was arguably made less relevant by the informal nature of the terrorist threat and rendered redundant by belief in the necessity of regime change by military means.

### The Cult of Sincerity

The George W. Bush administration, modeling itself after Reagan and his approach to the Soviet Union, also placed great emphasis on his purported candor and honesty, and invests the tendency to "tell it like it is" with great potential for unpredicted positive consequences.

President Bush's memoir *Decision Points* recalls some personal contact with Reagan, but only alludes to Reagan as a model of leadership in the chapter "Freedom Agenda" where he mentions reading a book by a former Soviet prisoner who felt "inspired by hearing leaders like Ronald Reagan speak with moral clarity and call for freedom."<sup>6</sup> While much of Matlock's account of Reagan suggests implicit criticism of the younger Bush administration, his final analysis of Reagan also lends support to this notion, claiming that Reagan's greatest asset was that he "dealt with his friends, adversaries and subordinates openly and

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2 Jack Matlock Jr., *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended* (USA: Random House, 2004), 150-152.

3 Ibid., 75.

4 Andrei Grachev, *Gorbachev's Gamble: Soviet Foreign Policy & the End of the Cold War*, (USA: Polity 2008), 44-47.

5 James Mann, *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan: A History of the End of the Cold War*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 346; and Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 318.

6 George W. Bush, *Decision Points* (London: Virgin Books, 2010).

without guile,” describing a “transparency of intention so unusual among political leaders that many failed to appreciate it.”<sup>7</sup>

Matlock also shows, particularly the memorandum of Reagan’s own thoughts before first meeting with Gorbachev in Geneva, that Reagan was still selective about what was said publicly. Here Reagan regrets that “we are somewhat publicly on record about Human Rights. Front page stories that we are banging away at them on human rights abuses will get us some cheers from the bleachers but it won’t help those being abused.” Reagan also instructs his advisors that there should be “no talk of winners and losers. Even if we think we won, to say so would set us back in view of their inherent inferiority complex.”<sup>8</sup>

Clearly, for those closely involved in the first term of the George W. Bush administration, emphasis on Reagan’s candor creates a resonance between Bush’s famous description of Iraq, Iran and the DPRK as forming an “axis of evil,” and Reagan’s famous description of the Soviet Union as an “evil empire.” The phrase originally drafted as “Axis of Hatred” became “Axis of Evil” with Reagan’s “Evil Empire” in mind, and may have been intended to draw a broader parallel with the defence build-up in early part of the Reagan administration. North Korea and Iran were added to Bush’s State of the Union address at Condoleezza Rice’s suggestion to avoid focusing solely on Iraq.<sup>9</sup>

The label “evil” is only meaningful for what it portends, and although in the early 1980s both the US and USSR were continuing to lend covert support to various proxy wars in Africa, South America and the Middle East, this cannot be compared with an overt policy of regime change by the world’s sole superpower. Furthermore, in contrast to Reagan’s efforts towards mutual disarmament agreements and reducing distrust and hostility, the Bush administration sought release from international agreements which they felt undermined their military capabilities or could not be sufficiently robust in concrete terms, including the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the Rome Statute which created the International Criminal Court and Biological Weapons Convention Verification Protocol.<sup>10</sup>

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7 Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 320.

8 *Ibid.*, 153.

9 “Rumors of War,” *Newsweek*, February 19, 2007, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/17086418/site/newsweek>.

10 John Bolton, accorded authority beyond the position of Undersecretary of State after his crucial role in the result of the 2000 presidential election, in his memoir used quotation marks to reflect his contempt for the notion of “international law,” dismissing it as “just another theological exercise.” See: John Bolton, *Surrender is Not an Option: Defending America at the United Nations and Beyond* (New York: Thresholds Editions, 2007), Chapter Three.

While this threatening defense posture successfully intimidated Gaddafi into renouncing nuclear weapons, in the absence of the trust building efforts which characterised Reagan's second term, it was always likely that for some countries any possible prospect of war would be incompatible with the one-sided form of denuclearisation.

### Negotiation and Summit Dialogue

As in the Bush administration, Matlock describes how there were also those in the Reagan administration that felt that the Soviet Union must do something to deserve dialogue, and that the US would be "honoring" the Soviet Union to engage in dialogue while Soviet troops were still present in Afghanistan. But Secretary of State George Schultz, among others, argued communication on political and security issues was necessary whether or not the Soviet Union was changing and that change was much more likely with serious dialogue than without. Reagan would sometimes waver but ultimately always support dialogue.<sup>11</sup>

The notion of Reagan as a hardliner is supported by the fact that he had no meetings with the Soviet General Secretary until his second term when he met Gorbachev. However, communications now show that Reagan had been interested in meeting Gorbachev's predecessors including Yuri Andropov, during whose leadership (1982-1984) Reagan labelled the USSR an "evil empire."<sup>12</sup> Dick Cheney's famous comment that "We don't negotiate with evil, we defeat it" does not seem to be one that Reagan would have agreed with. As Reagan wrote in his diary in April 1983, "some of the NSC staff are too hard line and don't think any approach should be made to the Soviets. I think I'm hard line and will never appease. But I do want to try to let them see there is a better world if they'll show by deed that they want to get along with the free world."<sup>13</sup>

Cheney's memoir *In My Time* devotes a whole chapter to North Korean proliferation to Syria and the Six-Party Talks, concluding with a number of lessons. One of these is to "negotiate from a position of strength," a principle associated with the Reagan administration's building up of America's purportedly inferior defence capabilities before entering negotiations with the Soviet Union on disarmament; this clearly has no parallel in negotiations with the DPRK in view of the US undisputed military superiority. Cheney uses the aphorism of "mindfulness" when referring to denuclearization (as an objective) and the

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11 Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 64.

12 *Ibid.*, 65-66.

13 *Ibid.*, ix.

will to walk away from the negotiating table without an agreement. “A good model for future leaders” he helpfully suggests, (shifting between Reagan’s two presidential terms) “is Ronald Reagan’s approach at the Reykjavik Summit with Gorbachev,” which ended after Reagan refused to give up “America’s right to missile defense” (more accurately to the program’s out-of-laboratory testing, which Reagan believed essential to Congressional funding approval).<sup>14</sup> But to take Reagan at his word, he envisioned the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) as a necessary means to guarantee US and Soviet security from other nuclear states after they had abolished their nuclear weapons. Although Reagan may also have been reluctant to make an agreement in view of on-going proliferation activities, Reagan’s minimal requirements to what he was otherwise prepared to agree on was entirely different to that required by Cheney.

Bush’s Undersecretary of State and Ambassador to the UN John Bolton similarly claims in his memoirs that the continuation of the Six-Party Talks, in spite of clear evidence of North Korean assistance to Syria in constructing a nuclear reactor, “threatened to prove once and for all that Bush was no Ronald Reagan.”<sup>15</sup> This also identifies Reagan with a hard line negotiating position, but, in the quotation three paragraphs above, Reagan says he thought of himself as hard line, and was indeed not prepared to compromise what he believed to be essential for the survival of a program designed to protect the US after its nuclear disarmament. Matlock is clear that the “linkage” Reagan talked of in his first press conference was (generally) “not a rigid ‘You must do x before we do y,’ but a more general attitude that improvement of relations in one area [of his four-part agenda] could not get far ahead of improvement in others.”<sup>16</sup>

In negotiating with the Soviets, Reagan believed that the process of dialogue may in itself be a result, and before his first meeting Gorbachev recorded that agreeing to future meetings would be an important result, as it would “set up a process to avoid war in settling our differences in the future,”<sup>17</sup> whereas Bolton fears that the longer the Six-Party Talks continue the more able the DPRK is to strengthen its nuclear and missile capabilities.<sup>18</sup> Clearly this partly reflects differences of the level of development in the DPRK’s nuclear weapons program and the greater risks of and concerns about proliferation.

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14 Dick Cheney, *In My Time: A Personal and Political Memoir* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011), 490-494.

15 John Bolton, *Surrender is Not an Option*, 465.

16 Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 152.

17 *Ibid.*, 153,

18 Bolton, *Surrender is Not an Option*, 466.

While the Six-Party Talks are castigated by Cheney and Bolton, George W. Bush's memoir concludes:

In the short run, I believe the Six-Party Talks represented the best chance to maintain leverage on Kim Jong-Il and rid the Korean Peninsula of nuclear weapons. In the long run, I am convinced that the only path to meaningful change is for the North Korean people to be free.<sup>19</sup>

Contrary to Matlock and Cheney, Bush's opinion is very Reaganesque formulation.

### Empathy

Whereas emphasis on honesty may be associated with an awareness of one's own objectives and hence with hard line negotiating positions, Reagan was also fascinated by Soviet psychology and his selectivity of about what he said was based on strategic calculations informed partly by empathy for his counterpart:

We must always remember our main goal and Gorbachev's need to show his strength to the Soviet gang back in the Kremlin. Let's not limit the area where he can do that to those things that have to do with aggression outside the Soviet Union.<sup>20</sup>

After the INF Treaty had been ratified by Congress and Reagan visited Moscow, he did not hesitate to mention to the Soviet media that he had read and enjoyed Gorbachev's book *Perestroika*, that he no longer considered the USSR an evil empire and that most of the change that had taken place in the USSR was to the credit of Gorbachev, rather than himself.<sup>21</sup> This is said to have visibly increased Gorbachev's confidence and enhanced his authority in moving forward with his reform program.

Clearly this is all based on the fact that Gorbachev really was the leader of change in the direction of a more liberal society, which cannot authoritatively ever be said to have applied to Kim Jong-il. Amidst severe humanitarian and security concerns, it may be legitimately questioned whether attempts at empathy for Kim Jong-il would have been meaningful or helpful. But as stated above,

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19 Bush, *Decision Points*, 426.

20 Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 152.

21 Mann, *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan*, 304-305.

Reagan had been open in principle to meeting with Gorbachev's predecessors, including Yuri Andropov, and it seems likely that he would have displayed the same interest in understanding their psychology and challenging their beliefs.

### Trust

All three authors agree on Gorbachev's primacy role, rather than Reagan's, in bringing the Cold War to an end. Moreover, Grachev's description of the separated spheres of influence of individual members of the Politburo supports Matlock's statement that only the General Secretary himself could have liberated the Soviet Union peacefully from the Party's dictatorship. This applies just as much to the DPRK.

Matlock concludes that face to face meetings moved relations "from suspicion to trust (reinforced by promises kept)" and quotes Gorbachev saying that without trust "the slight improvement in world affairs [would have been] impossible to achieve," which echoes Reagan's identification of the "prevalent suspicion and hostility between us" as one of the "main events" to be addressed by the summit process.<sup>22</sup>

Castigating Bush's support of the Six-Party Talks as showing that he was "no Ronald Reagan," John Bolton regards the possibility of the DPRK giving up nuclear weapons program as a "chimera,"<sup>23</sup> and a nuclear DPRK as too dangerous to accept. So in some sense it follows that he advocates a policy of regime change, even though this in itself is usually considered too dangerous.

### Verification

Cheney's critique of the Six-Party Talks process emphasizes the importance of insisting on adequate verification procedures. Although Reagan did not allow himself to personally get overly immersed in the technical details of arms control, he was well known for his Russian proverb "doveryai no proveryai" (trust but verify), and the verification protocols agreed under his leadership appear to have been broadly respected. In contrast, the lack of formally agreed verification procedures the Six-Party Talks appears to have been justly criticized. In this respect, citing Reagan would have been appropriate.

Reagan believed in the importance of trust. This is embodied in his saying that "Nations don't fear each other because they are armed, they arm because the fear each other," whereas Cheney appears to focus exclusively on concrete

22 Mikhail Gorbachev, *On My Country and the World* (New York: Columbia Press, 2000), 179.

23 Bolton, *Surrender is Not an Option*, 465.

and absolute results, accusing Condaleeza Rice's State Department of allowing agreements to become an end in themselves while losing sight of the goal of "getting the North Koreans to give up their nuclear weapons program."<sup>24</sup> This contrast is consistent with Mann and Matlocks's characterization of the outlook of the older George H. W. Bush administration (in which Cheney was Defence Secretary) as fundamentally geostrategic, in contrast to Reagan's more psychological perspective.

## Conclusion

In sum, while Reagan was remembered for his honesty, manifested most conspicuously in the willingness to proclaim a foreign leadership as "evil," to address US military weaknesses, and to ensure reliable verification of any agreements, recent histories highlight how his judgement was informed by his empathy, a point that appears to have been lost on those wishing to emulate him. Contrary to widely held perceptions, it appears that he was far more strategic than his public image would suggest. Reagan expressed an opposition to appeasement similar to that of Cheney and Bolton, but this was much less significant in the context of mutual rather than one-sided disarmament.

There are numerous important differences between the USSR that Reagan encountered under Gorbachev and the DPRK that Bush's administration witnessed under Kim Jong-il. Nonetheless, the example of Reagan suggests the that empathy for the North Korean leader is not incompatible with, and indeed may be instrumental for, effectively caring for the North Korean people and ourselves. Y

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24 Cheney, *In My Time*, 490.