

2009

# Jeane Kirkpatrick and the End of the Cold War: Dictatorships, Democracy, and Human Rights

Ilan Wurman

*Claremont McKenna College*

---

## Recommended Citation

Wurman, Ilan, "Jeane Kirkpatrick and the End of the Cold War: Dictatorships, Democracy, and Human Rights" (2009). *CMC Senior Theses*. Paper 226.

[http://scholarship.claremont.edu/cmc\\_theses/226](http://scholarship.claremont.edu/cmc_theses/226)

This Open Access Senior Thesis is brought to you by Scholarship@Claremont. It has been accepted for inclusion in this collection by an authorized administrator. For more information, please contact [scholarship@cuc.claremont.edu](mailto:scholarship@cuc.claremont.edu).

**CLAREMONT McKENNA COLLEGE**

**JEANE KIRKPATRICK AND THE END OF THE COLD WAR:  
DICTATORSHIPS, DEMOCRACY, AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

SUBMITTED TO

PROFESSOR JOHN J. PITNEY JR.

AND

DEAN GREGORY HESS

BY

ILAN WURMAN

FOR

SENIOR THESIS

FALL 2008 - SPRING 2009

APRIL 27, 2009



## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	iv
Introduction.....	1
<b>Part I: An Intellectual and Political History</b>	
Chapter One: Cold War Consensus Shattered.....	8
Chapter Two: Dictatorships and Double Standards.....	33
Chapter Three: The Carter Years: Was Kirkpatrick Right?.....	45
<b>Part II: Kirkpatrick and the Reagan Administration</b>	
Chapter Four: The Kirkpatrick and Reagan Doctrines.....	69
Chapter Five: Putting Policy to Practice: Chile and El Salvador.....	89
Bibliography.....	118
Appendices.....	122

## Acknowledgments

I could not have written this thesis without the help of many people, and first and foremost without the help of my adviser and professor, John J. Pitney Jr. He guided me to a doable and exciting topic from my initial mumblings about Reagan and democratization. Without his help, this year-long endeavor would never have come to fruition.

I would also like to thank Professor Ken Miller and my fellow honors seminar students for their help and guidance along the way. Without stories to share, I'm sure many of us would have despaired long ago. My roommate, Kyle Kinneberg, also deserves some credit here: he has patiently listened as I have complained, and his company has made the project more bearable.

While this project is the capstone of my undergraduate education, my parents, Hadassah and Ze'ev, were the foundations of that education. Without two wonderful parents to keep me yearning for knowledge, and sometimes to keep me humble, my undergraduate education would not have been as successful. For that I am forever grateful.

I must also thank the people whom I interviewed for this thesis. They lived through the end of the Cold War, and were part of its story. I am honored that they took the time to talk to a college student. The ideas they gave me in our conversations helped give this thesis its final shape.

## Introduction

In 2002, President Bush announced an ambitious goal: “to create a balance of power that favors human freedom: conditions in which all nations and all societies can choose for themselves the rewards and challenges of political and economic liberty.” The strategy to achieve this end was three-pronged: “We will defend the peace by fighting terrorists and tyrants. We will preserve the peace by building good relations among the great powers. We will extend the peace by encouraging free and open societies on every continent.”<sup>1</sup> This strategy did not depend on war, but rather allowed for war to protect U.S. interests and, in the process, spread democracy—much as the Reagan Doctrine, as we shall see, did not depend on war but rather outlined when it could be used.

The scope and methods of the current conflict are novel and based on newer, different threats to the United States. But in principle what has become known as the Bush Doctrine—the idea that America must use its power to spread democracy—was relatively consistent with America’s foreign policy traditions. Though there have been both isolationist and interventionist tendencies in past American foreign policy, Franklin Roosevelt expressed the tradition of promoting democracy when he said that the United States must be an “arsenal of democracy,” as did Woodrow Wilson when he said the United States must make the world “safe for democracy.” Supporting democracy around the world has been a thread of American foreign policy since the First World War.

---

<sup>1</sup> President George W. Bush, “National Security Strategy of the United States of America” (September 2002).

The various manifestations of this foreign policy tradition in American history were much more limited in scope than the current conflict. World War I had a well-defined goal for President Wilson, namely the creation of the League of Nations. In World War II, the well-defined goals were to defeat Hitler and establish democratic governments in Germany and Japan, and during the Cold War the goal was continued containment or defeat of the Soviet Union. All three conflicts had specific endpoints and organized enemies with identifiable headquarters. Critics of the War on Terror have rightly asked, when will the conflict end? When will we know that victory has been achieved? Were President Bush's goals realistic? Such questions underlie this thesis, which explores the most recent episode in which the United States engaged in a relatively successful endeavor to spread democracy around the world. What lessons can policymakers glean, if any, from the American policies in the Cold War in its final decade? What can they learn about democratization in the Cold War era?

This thesis is not intended as a comparative history of the Cold War and the War on Terror, but I shall attempt nevertheless to draw some connections and lessons for today, at least in the conclusion or where it might be illuminating. Because the scope of this thesis does not allow it to look at the history of the Cold War exhaustively, it focuses on one key player in the Cold War scene, Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, who served as President Reagan's first Ambassador to the United Nations. More specifically, this thesis uses Kirkpatrick's famous 1979 *Commentary* essay, "Dictatorships and Double Standards," as a springboard to explore the issues of democratization, human rights, the Reagan Doctrine, and the foreign policy debates of the 1970s. Such an analysis will shed light on a foreign policy that used different methods to promote democracy in different countries;

the difficulty and complexity of democratization in general; the distinctions, if any, between Kirkpatrick's philosophy and that of the Carter administration; and criticisms of Reagan's approach to the Cold War. Finally, such an analysis will illuminate important differences between the Bush administration policies and the Kirkpatrick-Reagan policies, which Kirkpatrick herself highlighted in her opposition to the 2003 Iraq War.

Kirkpatrick's essay might appear an odd choice of springboard, but I have found it helpful in thinking about many aspects of foreign policy. Her essay explores the interplay of realism and idealism. It raises such questions as:

- Is it sensible to support anti-democratic regimes as a means to other objectives?
- Should the United States hold its allies to the same standards of internal governance and human rights as it holds its enemies?
- Might the national interest be compatible with larger goals defined by idealism?
- What does democratization require politically, economically, and culturally?

Such questions are relevant to democratization in the struggle against terrorism. Should the United States hold Egypt, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia, which have provided significant support to the United States, to the same standards as Afghanistan, Iraq, North Korea, Syria, Iran, or Libya? When do security concerns justify cooperating with undemocratic regimes in the Muslim world? Is it sensible to insist upon democratization in certain countries but not others? Is democratic government even feasible in modern-day Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, or Iraq? This thesis will explore those questions in the context of the Cold War.

This thesis has two parts. The first relates some of the history leading up to Kirkpatrick's writing of "Dictatorships and Double Standards," followed by an



interpretation of that essay and the Carter administration foreign policy that inspired it. Though the essay was a direct outgrowth of Kirkpatrick's disillusionment with President Carter's foreign policy, it also grew out of the broader foreign policy debates in the post-Vietnam era. This period witnessed the rise of a new group of traditional liberal internationalists, who would derisively become called "neoconservatives" (a term they adopted), and of which Jeane Kirkpatrick was notably a member.

The first chapter traces the history and its debates from the existence of a Cold War consensus in the 1950s and 1960s and how Vietnam shattered this consensus, to the emergence of the Coalition for a Democratic Majority and the Democratic Party split that occurred over Vietnam. This history not only provides the context and explores the events that shaped Kirkpatrick's thought, but it also reveals competing beliefs about foreign policy on the American political scene. Examining those beliefs helps us understand Kirkpatrick's and Reagan's own thoughts and arguments: it provides alternatives within which we might compare policies.

The second chapter analyzes her essay. Criticisms of Kirkpatrick have abounded over the years, particularly involving her support for "rightist" authoritarian regimes. What was the character of that support, and did she perhaps go too far in her enthusiasm for authoritarian regimes? Did the Reagan administration give these governments a "free pass" on human rights? Given Kirkpatrick's criticism of President Carter's double standard in foreign policy, were the Reagan administration and Kirkpatrick applying their own double standard?

The final chapter in this part will look at Carter's policies, which will sharpen our understanding of Kirkpatrick's philosophy and Reagan's policies by comparison, and

help to evaluate Kirkpatrick's critique of the Carter administration. We shall see that Kirkpatrick and Carter officials actually agreed on many points, including the importance of human rights broadly speaking and properly understood. Both Kirkpatrick and Carter were willing to sacrifice human rights to national security—they just disagreed on what was in the national interest. Cyrus Vance, Carter's Secretary of State, reveals best the distinction between his and Kirkpatrick's policies: the *hierarchy* of human rights. Vance wanted to distinguish between types of human rights violations, whereas Kirkpatrick wanted to distinguish between the violators. Vance believed it was imperative to stop the kidnappings, murders, and torture that occurred in rightist regimes; Kirkpatrick and other Reagan officials believed that if the United States supported those regimes in the broader struggle for freedom and against communism, then human rights would flourish and specific abuses would naturally fade away.

The second part of this thesis addresses Kirkpatrick's influence on the Reagan administration. The argument of this thesis, particularly in this part but also in the earlier chapters, is that one cannot distinguish between promoting human rights, anti-communism, and democracy in the Kirkpatrick-Reagan policies. We will find that the Reagan administration policies directly reflected Kirkpatrick's philosophy, and the goal of those policies was to encourage the spread of liberal democracy. While Kirkpatrick and the administration gave verbal and material support to rightist regimes in the broader struggle against communism, the ultimate goal was to spread democracy in both rightist and communist regimes; and spreading democracy would, in turn, promote human rights. In other words, democracy promotion and human rights were not subordinated to anti-

communism; rather, democracy was the *solution* to communism and to human rights violations.

A caveat is in order: the core of this research examines the stated policies of the administration and the accounts from Kirkpatrick's colleagues at the United Nations. I do not believe there is reason to doubt their intent, but I will in any case try to point out how the administration's rhetoric was consistent with its actions. Of course there were some inconsistencies, given the competing influences in foreign policy and disagreement among administration officials; but for the most part, the administration's rhetoric was in tune with its policies.

The final question is, did the administration succeed? The purpose of asking the others is, after all, to see whether double standards, distinguishing between authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, and balancing human rights, anti-communism, and democracy promotion ultimately succeeded in spreading liberal democracy. Empirically answering such a question is far beyond the scope of this thesis. I shall highlight some of the disagreements over the progress of democracy in the Reagan years, but there are clear indications that they did succeed. One can draw such a conclusion not only from the demise of the Soviet Union, but also the rapid spread of democracy in Latin America in the 1980s.

**PART ONE:**

**AN INTELLECTUAL AND POLITICAL HISTORY**

**Cold War Consensus Shattered:  
From Bipartisan Support to Blame America First**

In his Notre Dame commencement address in June 1977, President Jimmy Carter announced that “we are now free of that inordinate fear of communism which once led us to embrace any dictator who joined us in that fear.” For too many years, he said,

we’ve been willing to adopt the flawed and erroneous principles and tactics of our adversaries, sometimes abandoning our own values for theirs. We’ve fought fire with fire, never thinking that fire is better quenched with water. This approach failed, with Vietnam the best example of its intellectual and moral poverty. But through failure we have now found our way back to our own principles and values, and we have regained our lost confidence.... The Vietnamese war produced a profound moral crisis, sapping worldwide faith in our own policy and our system of life.<sup>2</sup>

If a Cold War consensus did exist, it fell apart over Vietnam. The disillusionment of many liberals over the Vietnam War led to a split in the Democratic Party between the New Left and more conservative Democrats, some of whom would become neoconservatives—a term that originally applied to domestic policy but later to foreign policy—and of which Jeane Kirkpatrick became a part.

Vietnam changed the American foreign policy scene and transformed the Democratic Party’s image. Only such a traumatic war could rouse a president to declare that the American people had had an “inordinate fear” of a mass movement that killed

---

<sup>2</sup> Jimmy Carter, Notre Dame Commencement Address, May 22, 1977, in John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project* [online]. Santa Barbara, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=7552>.

millions and subjugated hundreds of millions more. Kirkpatrick rebelled against this interpretation of the Vietnam experience. Her own understanding of the war solidified her belief in the inherent evil of the Soviet Union and Marxist totalitarianism.

While both Kirkpatrick and Carter believed in supporting human rights and democracy around the world, the liberal interpretation of the Vietnam War, and particularly the Carter administration policies that it informed, revealed to Kirkpatrick the continuing necessity of confronting the Soviet bloc. She contested what some liberals saw as the moral equivalence of the United States and the Soviet Union, and she reasserted the goodness of America and American power. Communism, for Jeane Kirkpatrick, was inherently evil; and therefore confronting it—even if that meant “embracing dictators”—was the best way to spread freedom and liberal democracy. One of the side stories of Vietnam and its impact on American politics is the intellectual and political history of Jeane Kirkpatrick and her fellow neoconservatives. Kirkpatrick’s thought and the Reagan administration’s Cold War policies grew out of this story.

### **The Public and Congressional Consensus**

In the early 1960s most members of Congress did not question the wisdom of the Cold War, and large majorities of the general public believed that stopping the spread of communism was an important foreign policy goal. Frank Gregorsky, who worked for Newt Gingrich and then as a House Republican Study Committee staffer from 1980-85, explains in an interview that the “Cold War consensus was still there [in the 1960s]. We had a Democratic administration, and most Republicans had gotten over their

isolationism by then.”<sup>3</sup> Majorities on both sides of the aisle still agreed that the Soviets should be on the defensive. As Gregorsky explains, Jeane Kirkpatrick’s generation came from this tradition, that of Vice President Hubert Humphrey and Washington Senator Henry “Scoop” Jackson. Most Democrats were unified as late as 1966 and 1967 in this tradition; they were internationalists, free traders, pro-military, and they were willing to use the CIA.<sup>4</sup> Both Democratic and Republican presidents up until Vietnam had been willing to use American power.

Public opinion polls reveal the extent of the consensus among the general public. Eugene Wittkopf and James McCormick find little dissent in the 1950s and 1960s on U.S. foreign policy toward communism and the Soviet Union. Citing polls from those decades, they conclude that a vast majority of respondents believed that communism was a threat to U.S. security and American freedom.<sup>5</sup> In multiple surveys an overwhelming majority of Americans thought that stopping the spread of communism was “very important,” with very few finding it unimportant.<sup>6</sup> In 1950 and 1951, two-thirds of Americans thought containing communism was more important than avoiding another war.<sup>7</sup> Wittkopf and McCormick conclude that “containing communism is an enduring theme in public perceptions of postwar American foreign policy.”<sup>8</sup>

Other authors give only qualified support to claims of consensus. One polling expert argues that public opinion was fickle; responses to questions in 1956 “only

---

<sup>3</sup> Frank Gregorsky, interview by author, Falls Church, Va., 24 August 2008.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Eugene R. Wittkopf and James M. McCormick, “The Cold War Consensus: Did It Exist?” *Polity* 22, no. 4 (summer 1990): 630, in JSTOR. [database online].

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 631.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 634.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 631.

modestly predicted answers to the same question two years later, much less in 1960.”<sup>9</sup> For example, another author explains that in 1954, only 23 percent of Americans believed the West could live in peace with the Soviet Union, but 40 percent believed so only five years later.<sup>10</sup> Other research has contested that volatility.<sup>11</sup> If a foreign policy consensus ever did accurately describe public opinion in this era, however, it was most applicable to the period between Korea and Vietnam.<sup>12</sup> One scholar summarizes the content of the consensus: the United States had a moral responsibility to secure freedom and stability around the world; it must be internationalist; the Soviet Union was the primary threat to world peace; and containment was the best approach toward the Soviets.<sup>13</sup>

Whether support in Congress was as consensus-based and bipartisan is another matter. Research shows that this consensus did largely exist in the 1940s through 1960s, and that it fell apart over Vietnam to a much greater extent than in the general public. In his 1966 article “The Two Presidencies,” Aaron Wildavsky famously proposed that there are two presidencies, one on domestic matters and one on foreign affairs. In domestic matters the presidency had much less support from Congress; in foreign affairs the presidency enjoyed wide support from Congress. Wildavsky’s research on congressional votes showed a general foreign policy consensus in support of the president.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Ole R. Holsti, *Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 32.

<sup>10</sup> William G. Mayer, *The Changing American Mind: How and Why Public Opinion Changed Between 1960 and 1980* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 55.

<sup>11</sup> Holsti, *Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy*, 40.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>13</sup> Richard A. Melanson, *Reconstructing Consensus: American Foreign Policy since the Vietnam War* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991), 4-8.

<sup>14</sup> Aaron Wildavsky, “The Two Presidencies,” *Trans-Action IV* (December 1966): 7, quoted in Lee Sigelman, “A Reassessment of the Two Presidencies Thesis,” *The Journal of Politics* 41, no. 4 (Nov. 1979):1197, in JSTOR [database online].



In 1979 Lee Sigelman improved upon Wildavsky's original research by including only "key votes." He found that the president still enjoyed wide support in foreign policy in the same years; but the president also enjoyed approximately the same level of support on key domestic issues, thereby weakening the original "two presidencies" thesis. Sigelman's data show that the president before 1973 experienced a support rate for his key foreign policy proposals over 73 percent of the time; under Republican presidents that support increased to 80 percent.<sup>15</sup>

While Sigelman's data reveal an overall consensus, it was not a completely bipartisan one. "Had only members of the opposition party voted on key roll calls between 1957 and 1972," writes Sigelman, "the views of the President would have prevailed on three of every ten domestic and four of every ten foreign and defense votes." He concludes, "This hardly amounts to 'bipartisan' congressional support for the President in foreign policy."<sup>16</sup> Sigelman is right to point out the tenuousness of the opposition's support, but he overstates its importance. If the president could rely on the support of his party nearly 90 percent of the time and the opposition party 40 percent of the time on key foreign policy votes, that still reveals a significant degree of bipartisan consensus. "Bipartisan" need not mean "unanimous."

There were, of course, some significant variations in the bipartisan consensus in the pre-Vietnam years, most notably over Korea.<sup>17</sup> As far back as Truman's 1947 military aid package for Greece and Turkey, Congress had many debates on Cold War policy.

---

<sup>15</sup> Lee Sigelman, "A Reassessment of the Two Presidencies Thesis," *The Journal of Politics* 41, no. 4 (Nov. 1979): 1200, in JSTOR [database online].

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 1202.

<sup>17</sup> James M. McCormick and Eugene R. Wittkopf, "Bipartisanship, Partisanship, and Ideology in Congressional-Executive Foreign Policy Relations, 1947-1988," *The Journal of Politics* 52, no. 4 (Nov. 1990): 1085, in JSTOR [database online].

One scholar has argued that even on the Greece and Turkey aid bill Democratic support for Truman was “erratic,” and members of Truman’s own party “did not convincingly defend the president’s foreign policy.”<sup>18</sup> Senators opposed to giving aid to undemocratic regimes also objected to Truman’s policies.<sup>19</sup> Three powerful Republican senators—Vandenberg, Lodge, and Alexander Smith—voiced concern that the aid package to Greece and Turkey did not give enough authority to the United Nations.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, the Senate approved the final bill on a 55-24 vote, with even critics describing the deliberations as bipartisan.<sup>21</sup>

There was more dissension, however, on Truman’s priorities. A group of conservatives in Congress, including Senators Joseph McCarthy, William Knowland, and Robert Taft, opposed his European policy more emphatically.<sup>22</sup> They believed that aid for supporting anti-Communist forces in East Asia rather than in Western Europe was more justifiable. They worked to include aid for Nationalist China in the Greece/Turkey aid package, which “symbolized an Asia-first approach [among congressional Republicans] that intensified in the years to come.”<sup>23</sup> Of the three, Taft and Vandenberg were the least hostile to Truman’s policies, and McCarthy was the most vehemently opposed. McCarthy’s anti-Western Europe view, however, contradicted his strident anti-communist rhetoric domestically, and his foreign policy seemed to revolve only around accusing the State Department of harboring communist spies.

---

<sup>18</sup> Robert David Johnson, *Congress and the Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 15.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

Despite internal congressional debates, the consensus seems to have held together, and one observer has summarized it thus: “Every foreign policy controversy and every foreign war in particular [in U.S. history], precipitated some degree of protest, opposition, and dissent. But as a rule, the major parties and candidates have been reluctant to exploit such divisions.”<sup>24</sup> During the Cold War, both parties “supported the basic internationalist commitment of American foreign policy.”<sup>25</sup> The tradition out of which Kirkpatrick grew was one of bipartisan, though not unanimous, consensus in Congress regarding the wisdom of the Cold War and the use of American power.

### **The Vietnam Syndrome and Moral Equivalence**

Whatever consensus did exist, Vietnam changed it. “Vietnam shattered the consensus,” says Gregorsky.<sup>26</sup> In 1975, there were 75 Democratic freshmen in Congress, which heralded the era of the Vietnam generation in the Democratic ranks.<sup>27</sup> Through his research on the Democrats’ foreign policy, which Jeane Kirkpatrick used for her 1984 “Blame America First” convention speech,<sup>28</sup> Frank Gregorsky describes what Vietnam signified for liberal and conservative Democrats and their different international outlooks. “The brilliance of Jeane’s 1984 convention speech,” says Gregorsky, “is [that it was] one of the most rhetorically clever and also one of the most profound things ever

---

<sup>24</sup> William Schneider, “Public Opinion: The Beginning of Ideology?” *Foreign Policy* 17 (Winter, 1974-1975): 89.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>26</sup> Frank Gregorsky, interview by author, Falls Church, Va., 24 August 2008.

<sup>27</sup> Paul A. Fisher, “House Turmoil Centers on Attitudes Toward Communism,” *The Wanderer* 117, no. 24 (June 14, 1984): 6.

<sup>28</sup> A letter from Newt Gingrich gives Gregorsky direct credit for the research that appeared in the speech. See “Victorious Republicans,” *Washington Post*, November 11, 1984.

done in American politics, at least in foreign policy debates.”<sup>29</sup> It was a play on the 1930s “America First” movement, whose isolationist members did not want to get involved in another world war. Kirkpatrick’s speech argued that the Vietnam generation broke from the Democratic tradition of anti-communism and blamed the United States for Vietnam and other foreign conflicts.

Gregorsky modestly claims “a little bit of credit” for the turn of phrase to “Blame America First”; his Republican Study Committee report called “What’s the Matter With Democratic Foreign Policy?” had a section called “The Blame-America Democrats.”<sup>30</sup> The report, released in a press conference with Newt Gingrich in May 1984, detailed some 150 statements from Democratic members of Congress on foreign policy. The phrase “blame-America first” actually appeared in a 1958 *Saturday Evening Post* editorial,<sup>31</sup> but it is unlikely that either Kirkpatrick or Gregorsky saw it. In any event, says Gregorsky, the point “was that every time there was a risk or a danger, from Grenada to Iran to Nicaragua,” it was always “America’s fault because we were confronting them needlessly now, we were provoking them needlessly by our warmongering, failing to learn the lessons of Vietnam.”<sup>32</sup> Kirkpatrick’s masterstroke was “taking the old Republican isolationism of ‘America First’ and [saying] that the Democrats today always ‘blame America first.’”<sup>33</sup>

In 1984 Kirkpatrick said that too many liberals saw America as morally equivalent to the Soviet Union. When the war in Vietnam erupted, they did not

---

<sup>29</sup> Frank Gregorsky, interview by author, Falls Church, Va., 24 August 2008.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Editorial, *The Saturday Evening Post* 230, 14 June 1958, p. 10.

<sup>32</sup> Frank Gregorsky, interview by author, Falls Church, Va., 24 August 2008.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

understand why another war in Asia was necessary or just; they tended to see America at fault for the destruction and evil in the world. Carter himself said in his Notre Dame commencement that “we...abandon[ed] our values for theirs.” The Democratic Platform of 1972 stated, “We believe that war is a waste of human life. We are determined to end forthwith a war which has inflicted incalculable damage to countless people.”<sup>34</sup> The platform attacked the United States for inflicting “incalculable damage to countless people,” but was silent on the damage which the North Vietnamese communists, and other totalitarians, had inflicted. The platform acknowledged “serious,”<sup>35</sup> but not fundamental, differences between the United States and Soviet Union and lacked any real moral dimension.

Vietnam War literature gives another indication of where liberal intellectuals placed the blame for the war. In the 116 novels, memoirs, books, and other accounts of the war published between 1965 and 1981,<sup>36</sup> author C.D.B. Bryan described a general narrative that is unflattering to the United States. The works all share standard parts, he wrote in June 1984.<sup>37</sup> Bryan explained that in this “General Vietnam War Narrative,” there would inevitably be a “Professor, who at some point will explain why Ho Chi Minh should never have been our enemy,” and there was always “the atrocity scene, to demonstrate that My Lai was not an isolated incident: prisoners are tortured or flung alive from helicopters, a young woman is raped, someone’s ears are cut off.”<sup>38</sup> Both elements of the literature, but particularly the persistent atrocities, reveal the extent to which these

---

<sup>34</sup> Democratic Party Platform of 1972, *The American Presidency Project*, available at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29605>.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> C.D.B. Bryan, “Barely Suppressed Screams: Getting a Bead on Vietnam War Literature,” *Harper’s* (June 1984): 67.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

authors believed that the United States was not only involved in a failed war, but also morally culpable for it.

Neoconservative Norman Podhoretz described this “Vietnam syndrome,” or “blame-America-first” mentality, in an April 1984 issue of *Commentary*. Podhoretz claimed that the literature, particularly William Shawcross’s 1979 book about Cambodia, *Sideshow*, was a locus of the blame-America-first view. “According to Shawcross,” wrote Podhoretz, “not only were the Americans responsible for bringing the war to Cambodia; they were also responsible for embittering and enraging the Cambodian Communists (Khmer Rouge) who, upon coming to power, gave vent to this bitter rage by murdering several million of their own people.”<sup>39</sup> Put simply, many intellectuals and Democrats believed that the war’s proper lesson was that the United States was morally wrong and should bear blame for much that went wrong. In the least, Podhoretz’s claim reveals how he and other neoconservatives interpreted the influence of Vietnam on many liberals.

A look at Kirkpatrick’s convention speech reveals her interpretation of the New Left and the older tradition that she defended. Harry S Truman first declared that “it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures,”<sup>40</sup> and John F. Kennedy said that every nation must know “that we shall pay any price, bear any burden...in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty.”<sup>41</sup> Kirkpatrick compared Truman and JFK with those she derisively called the “San Francisco Democrats.” She argued that when the

---

<sup>39</sup> Norman Podhoretz, “Vietnam: The Revised Standard Version,” *Commentary* 77, no.4 (April 1984): 37.

<sup>40</sup> Harry S. Truman, Special Message to Congress, March 12, 1947, in John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=12846>.

<sup>41</sup> John F. Kennedy, Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961, in John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=8032>.

U.S. invaded Grenada to protect American students and oust the Cuban-totalitarian regime; that when the U.S. sent Marines to Lebanon on a multinational peacekeeping mission, where they were murdered in their sleep; and that when the Soviet Union refused to negotiate on arms control these “San Francisco” Democrats “didn’t blame Soviet intransigence” or the terrorists, but rather the United States. When Marxist dictators violently take power in Central America, she said, “the San Francisco Democrats don’t blame the guerrillas and their Soviet allies, they blame United States policies of 100 years ago.”<sup>42</sup> But then, added Kirkpatrick after each of these explanations, “they always blame America first.”

Kirkpatrick repeated these accusations of moral equivalence the following year in an article in the publication *Society*. She emphasized the U.S. role in Grenada, with which some, including many Europeans, had drawn parallels to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. “We found it truly unbelievable,” Kirkpatrick criticized, “that countries which were themselves so recently liberated by force from the occupying troops and quisling governments of Nazi tyrants, or who participated in that liberation, would have been unable to distinguish between force used to conquer and victimize and force used to liberate.”<sup>43</sup> Her moral equivalence argument did not persuade all of her critics and her article received several responses. An MIT political science professor argued that her indictment might hold true for the “worst of our overseas critics,” namely, the European

---

<sup>42</sup>“Convention in Dallas: The Republicans; Text of Jeane J. Kirkpatrick’s Remarks at Republican Convention in Dallas,” *The New York Times*, 21 August 1984, in Nexis [database online].

<sup>43</sup> Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, “Moral Equivalence and Political Aims,” *Society* 22, no. 3 (March/April 1985): 7-8.

elites, but in general Western opinion stemmed not from moral equivalence, but from fear that Reagan's belligerent foreign policy could cause nuclear war.<sup>44</sup>

One critic, Joseph S. Nye of Harvard, argued that while Kirkpatrick was right that moral equivalence was wrong, that argument did not justify U.S. foreign policy. "The new right-wing moralism in foreign policy conflates two questions: who we are and what we do," he claimed. "Both are important, but the answer to one is not a satisfactory answer to the other. A democracy can be good and do evil—sometimes even when it is trying to do good."<sup>45</sup> He argued that while Kirkpatrick's charges against the blame-America first types might be right, that did not justify U.S. policies or characterize the entire opposition to them. He directly challenged the neoconservative take on Vietnam:

Norman Podhoretz argues in *Why We Were in Vietnam* that our involvement was moral because we were trying to save the South Vietnamese from totalitarianism. The people who led us were those who had learned from the Munich experience that totalitarian aggression must be resisted even if it is costly. If American idealism was part of the cause of our role in the Vietnam War, that same idealism tended to blind leaders to the facts of polycentric [sic] communism and local nationalism as alternative means to America's less idealistic end of preserving a balance of power in Asia. It also blinded them to the inappropriateness of involvement in a guerrilla war in an alien culture and the immoral consequences that would follow from the disproportion between our goals and our means.<sup>46</sup>

Nye added, "In a sense, American policy in the Vietnam War might be compared to a well-intentioned friend trying to bring your child home on time on an icy evening. She

---

<sup>44</sup> Lincoln P. Bloomfield, "Transvalued Values and Common Sense," *Society* 22, no. 3 (March/April 1985): 9.

<sup>45</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "Motives, Means and Consequences," *Society* 22, no. 3 (March 1985): 17.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.



speeds, the car skids off the road and your child is killed. Her motives were good, but the consequences horrible because of her inattention to means and facts.”<sup>47</sup>

In other words, good intentions were not enough to justify U.S. policy in Vietnam: the United States was blind to the limits of her means, the dangers of prosecuting a guerrilla war, and the possible alternatives to the status quo in South Vietnam. Nye argued that U.S. action in Vietnam did not have to be cast as completely morally right or wrong; there was middle ground. Indeed, this criticism of Kirkpatrick will be one of the most salient in the next chapter, which explores her support of authoritarian governments that tortured and killed. Nye argued that while in general totalitarian governments might be more repressive than authoritarian ones, that did not justify *always* supporting the authoritarian regimes, especially in cases such as Guatemala where the government violated human rights as vigorously as the worst totalitarian governments.

Another critic, University of Glasgow economics professor Alec Nove, did reveal, however, the moral equivalence that Kirkpatrick attacked. He claimed that “nowhere do I wish to suggest or imply that the Soviets are more moral than the United States,”<sup>48</sup> but he then proceeded to imply that the United States is certainly not more moral than the Soviet Union. He acknowledged that the United States did not prefer dictatorships over democracies, and also that U.S. actions in Grenada might have been justified; but then he asked whether any of that could justify the CIA funding the Contras in Nicaragua or the mining of sea-routes, which he saw Kissinger defend on television. “Imagine the text of

---

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Alec Nove, “The Scope and Scale of Good and Evil,” *Society* 22, no. 3 (March/April 1985): 14.

his or Kirkpatrick's speeches if the Soviets laid mines in international waters!"<sup>49</sup> he wrote. But that is precisely Kirkpatrick's moral equivalence argument: it *is* fundamentally different when the Soviets undertake actions to repress freedom and when the United States takes actions to promote freedom. What is more, Nove claimed that Kirkpatrick's analysis "ignores history." He asked, "How many American military interventions have there been in the region in the last hundred years? What sort of regimes did they install or support?"<sup>50</sup> Not only was Nove one of the "worst of our overseas critics," demonstrating the moral equivalence Kirkpatrick observed more widely, but he was also blaming America and its "policies of 100 years ago," to use words from Kirkpatrick's convention speech.

The 1985 *Society* issue provides a good cross-section of the points of view on U.S. foreign policy and moral equivalence; but it is worth noting that leading Democratic foreign policy experts in Congress also recognized what Jeane Kirkpatrick was articulating, even if they would not go quite as far in expressing it. Stephen Solarz, a Democrat from New York whose name was often floated as a potential candidate for Secretary of State under a Democratic president,<sup>51</sup> acknowledged the break in the Democratic Party from its foreign policy traditions. Referring to his fellow Party members, he said in 1985, "[W]e have sometimes refrained from expressing in a forthright fashion our view of the inherent immorality of the Soviet System....By appearing to yield the moral high ground, we have lost political ground as well."<sup>52</sup> His

---

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>51</sup> Christopher Madison, "Solarz's Brash Style Tempers His Quest For Influence in the Foreign Policy Arena," *National Journal*, 26 October 1985, p. 2414.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 2415.

comment echoed the sentiments of both Gregorsky and Kirkpatrick: the Democrats had stopped distinguishing between the morality of the United States and the immorality of the Soviet Union. “It is worth recalling that [in the past] American liberals...would never hesitate to contrast our own values and vision with Communist assaults on the human spirit,” he continued.<sup>53</sup> His implication, of course, was that contemporary liberals did hesitate to contrast American values with Soviet values.

One scholar has described the post-World War II congressional consensus as the “politics of acquiescence.” The anti-Fascist and then anti-communist fervor in the country allowed presidents to “take congressional consent for granted.”<sup>54</sup> The role Congress played in the story of Vietnam was the undoing of this politics of acquiescence. Though a new congressional role could be advantageous, it was also dangerous: congressional approval for the use of force undercut the one incentive mechanism President Nixon had for ensuring that North and South Vietnam would adhere to the secret Paris peace agreements.<sup>55</sup> The new congressional role also presaged a new tone in the politics of foreign policy: “With the loss of consensus...what had seemed to be a logical and sensible way to conduct foreign and military operations appeared instead to be conspiratorial, dangerous, immoral, and even unconstitutional.”<sup>56</sup>

Yet even though Vietnam eroded the traditional consensus in Congress that did not immediately translate to the moral equivalence argument Kirkpatrick was making. Politics was not divided between the blame-America-first Democrats and the Kirkpatrick

---

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> P. Edward Haley, *Congress and the Fall of South Vietnam and Cambodia* (East Brunswick, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1982), 163-164.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 164.

Democrats. We have already seen that some critics, such as Joseph S. Nye, did not morally equate the United States to the Soviet Union but still opposed U.S. policies. One Vietnam scholar has argued that the principal lesson of Vietnam “never failed to assume the inherent morality of *any* American initiative,” but was rather that “some things were practical options and other were not.”<sup>57</sup> In other words, the lesson was simply an acknowledgment of the limits of U.S. power. There were some, however, particularly among the elites and congressional leaders such as George McGovern, who did believe in the immorality of the United States policies. There was no one liberal or conservative interpretation of the war, but Kirkpatrick rebelled particularly against the liberal interpretation of McGovern and the Democrats he came to represent.

### **1972 and George McGovern**

In the 1972 primary season, the different wings of the Democratic Party came head-to-head and pitted Hubert Humphrey, Senator Scoop Jackson, and Senator George McGovern of South Dakota against one another. Two other contenders were Senator Edmund Muskie of Maine and Alabama Governor George Wallace. The diversity of the Democratic Party could not be more evident; all of these candidates had dramatically different views on both domestic and foreign policies. When it came to Vietnam, writes journalist Michael Barone, though “[a]ll agreed that the...war now needed to be wound down and ended,” they disagreed on their “attitude” toward the war: “For McGovern it was a purely immoral assertion of power; for Wallace, a patriotic cause subverted by Washington and media intellectuals; for Humphrey, a well-intentioned policy which had

---

<sup>57</sup> Geoff Simon, *Vietnam Syndrome: Impact on US Foreign Policy* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1998), 24.

proved unsuccessful; for Jackson, a war which had been strategically unwise but not supported strongly enough once it was undertaken; for Muskie, a sadly mistaken policy.”<sup>58</sup> Ben Wattenberg, a neoconservative who worked with Kirkpatrick in the Coalition for a Democratic Majority, has called the 1972 primaries “the splitting wedge in the Democratic Party and in America’s public culture.”<sup>59</sup>

The tone of some of the Democrats had changed, and represented the increased impact of the antiwar faction. George McGovern, who would become the nominee, represented the kind of Democrat that Jeane Kirkpatrick would deride in her 1984 convention speech; according to Barone, McGovern “genuinely believed that the United States was as much a threat to peace in the world and democracy in at least some countries as was the Soviet Union.”<sup>60</sup> Barone describes the mindset of many of the antiwar Democrats of the period: “To McGovern and many of his fervent antiwar followers, the continuing U.S. involvement in Vietnam from January 1969 to November 1972 was not just a mistaken policy, but a crime; the offense was...that their country continued to be embarked on a deeply immoral enterprise.” McGovern had even said that the United States Senate had “blood on its hands.”<sup>61</sup> These were the “Blame America First” Democrats that so appalled Kirkpatrick and would eventually lead her away from the Democratic Party.

One can see this mentality in Senator McGovern’s discussion of the *Pentagon Papers*. The debate over the *Papers* and American action leading up to the Vietnam War

---

<sup>58</sup> Michael Barone, *Our Country: The Shaping of America from Roosevelt to Reagan* (New York: The Free Press, 1990), 496.

<sup>59</sup> Ben J. Wattenberg, *Fighting Words: A tale of How Liberals Created Neoconservatism* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2008), 95.

<sup>60</sup> Michael Barone, *Our Country*, 505.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 507-508.

are beyond the scope of this paper; nevertheless, it is useful to examine McGovern's take on them. He wrote the in a 1972 article,

In the case of the Tonkin Gulf attacks, we learn that the decision to bring the war to the North had nothing to do with aggression from the North; it was prompted by the virtual disintegration of our client Saigon regime, which was incapable of rallying popular support against the increasing strength of the Vietcong (pp. 243, 257, 269). Unable to establish a regime which could win politically in the South, we carried the war to the North explicitly in the hope of terrorizing Hanoi into calling off the Vietcong insurgency (pp. 235, 244, 324, 390).<sup>62</sup>

In his concluding thought on this interpretation of events, he expressed his view in even starker terms: "What is revealed here is that we, the defenders of democracy and champions of law and order, explicitly resorted to bloody, ruthless war because the political decision in a distant land was not going our way."<sup>63</sup> Whatever the merits of his argument—and one really must question whether a lack of popular support justified a violent movement to impose a totalitarian regime—it appears incontrovertible that he was blaming the United States for the war rather than the Northern Vietnamese communists.

In a 1983 interview McGovern provided more support for Barone's observation that he believed the United States to be just as much a threat to world peace and democracy as the Soviet Union. In the interview, McGovern explained that the greatest threat facing mankind was annihilation due to nuclear war. "You might say, well, nobody would do anything so horrendous as that—[but] we have already done that. We have already dropped nuclear weapons on great cities."<sup>64</sup> McGovern was expressing the moral equivalence that so disenchanted Kirkpatrick and her fellow moderate and conservative

---

<sup>62</sup> George McGovern and John P. Roche, "The Pentagon Papers—A Discussion," *Political Science Quarterly* 87, no. 2 (June 1972): 175.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>64</sup> Samuel Proctor Oral History Program, Department of History, University of Florida, Interview with McGovern, 7 April 1983, p. 3, <http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/ufdc/?m=hd4J&i=33368>.

Democrats. McGovern was describing the use of nuclear weapons by any power as inherently evil: he did not distinguish between the goodness of the United States and the moral bearing of its enemies.

McGovern even more directly revealed his attitude in the context of the Cuban Missile Crisis. In the same interview, he said, “Did you ever ask yourself why the Russians would be so reckless as to put those missiles into Cuba? Was it really the fact that they intended the Cubans to use them against the United States?” In response to his own question, McGovern said that “the reason the Russians and the Cubans wanted those missiles in there was to forestall a possible follow-up to the Bay of Pigs. Keep in mind, we had invaded Cuba in the spring of 1961. Plans were under way for a second invasion.”<sup>65</sup> He continued, “There was considerable fear there, apparently, that another attack might take place.”<sup>66</sup>

In this context as well, McGovern blamed America’s aggressiveness and past actions rather than the Soviet Union’s own expansionist and aggressive tendencies. Kirkpatrick’s contention that McGovern “blamed America first” seems consistent with these statements. There is some truth to McGovern’s contention: strategically, the Soviet Union was trying to protect its interests and counterbalance the United States’ missile deployments around the world. But that did not make its policies acceptable or right. Kirkpatrick would have argued that McGovern viewed U.S.-Soviet relations through a lens of moral equivalence. Whatever truth there is to his contention, it is easy to see how she and other disaffected liberals could interpret McGovern’s words as assigning blame to the United States while absolving the Soviet Union of it entirely.

---

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

### **The CDM and the Election of Jimmy Carter**

When McGovern lost the general election, there was a backlash among more moderate and conservative Democrats, including Kirkpatrick, who formed the Coalition for a Democratic Majority (CDM). “The point of the name at that time,” says Joshua Muravchik, one of the executive directors of the organization, “was if the Democrats are McGovernites, they’ll keep losing like McGovern lost. And if they want to win and be the majority party they have to move back to the center.”<sup>67</sup> The honorary co-chairs were Senators Humphrey and Jackson, the former to be replaced a few years later by Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Ben Wattenberg was then Chairman of the Executive Committee, of which Jeane Kirkpatrick was also a member.<sup>68</sup> Carl Gershman, who was Kirkpatrick’s Senior Counselor at the United Nations and later became president of the National Endowment for Democracy, notes that these intellectuals wanted to “fight against what they saw as the takeover of the Democratic Party and also the intellectual establishment” by “people associated with George McGovern,” and what was then referred to as the “New Politics.”<sup>69</sup>

The Coalition for a Democratic Majority voiced its concerns with the McGovern loss in an advertisement appearing after the 1972 elections. In that advertisement, the group wrote, “We see the 1972 election...as a clear signal to the Democratic Party to return to the great tradition through which it had come to represent the wishes and hopes of a majority of the American people.”<sup>70</sup> That tradition, they wrote, was the tradition of

---

<sup>67</sup> Joshua Muravchik, interview by author, Claremont, Ca., 17 October 2008.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Carl Gershman, interview by author, Washington, D.C., 25 August 2008.

<sup>70</sup> “The McGovern Catalyst: The Neoconservative Response, 1972,” *World Affairs* 153, no 2. (1990): 81



Roosevelt, Truman, Adlai Stevenson, Kennedy, Johnson, and Humphrey—every nominee until McGovern. McGovern’s primary victory, in other words, was nearly the final straw for many Democrats. The Coalition was describing how dramatically McGovern was breaking from the traditional views of the Democratic Party. In summarizing this “New Politics” that led to McGovern’s nomination, the CDM wrote that the “belief that America is a great nation seeking to correct major inequities has been challenged by the idea that American society is sick and guilty, morally bankrupt and inherently corrupt.”<sup>71</sup> They were foreshadowing Kirkpatrick’s “Blame America First” speech at the convention.

Henry Jackson, the CDM co-founder, again sought the presidency in 1976 but lost to Jimmy Carter. Muravchik recalls that the CDM members thought they could work with a Carter administration. “We were disappointed,” he says about the loss, “but we didn’t feel so bad. We thought that Carter would be a centrist; he wasn’t as hard-line as we were but he wasn’t a McGovernite liberal either and we could live with that.”<sup>72</sup> Moreover, Jeane Kirkpatrick and Ben Wattenberg were Jackson’s representatives to the Democratic Platform Committee, and “we won most of the arguments in the platform,” explains Muravchik; “we were very happy. Even some of the liberals complained that we had got the better, so we were alright; with Jimmy Carter we would have half a loaf or maybe a little more.”<sup>73</sup> Or, as *Washington Post* reporter Stephen Rosenfeld wrote, “Sen. Henry Jackson (D.-Wash.) may have lost the battle for the Democratic presidential nomination but—to judge by the foreign and defense chapters of the Democratic platform worked out

---

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>72</sup> Joshua Muravchik, interview by author, Claremont, Ca., 17 October 2008.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

in Washington this week—he has largely won the policy war.”<sup>74</sup> Had Jimmy Carter ensured that some of the CDM goals contributed to his administration, he might have succeeded in sewing the party’s factions back together.

But President Carter did not even consider the CDM’s policy goals. As Gershman says, “It became clear shortly after Carter’s election that indeed...CDM people would get no real place in his administration.”<sup>75</sup> When Carter was elected, says Muravchik, “immediately he appointed all McGovernites to all national security positions. We felt trapped and betrayed.”<sup>76</sup> A liberal observer explains the sense of betrayal thus:

neoconservatives

were not much happier about the national security policies of the candidates in 1976, and when the winner, Jimmy Carter, rejected all fifty-three of the names proposed by the CPD [Committee on Present Danger] (in conjunction with the CDM and the AFL-CIO) for the national security bureaucracy, its adherents on the Democratic side were all the more alienated from their party. Some remained Democrats, while others gravitated toward the Republicans, but most were attracted to...Ronald Reagan [who] became the lodestar for a Cold War revival in which McGovern’s opponents from 1972, reborn as neoconservatives, played an indispensable role.<sup>77</sup>

Thus President Carter cemented the rift between the traditional liberal internationalists and the New Left immediately upon taking office. President Carter now wholly rejected these individuals who had worked to codify their foreign policy views in their Party’s platform.

---

<sup>74</sup> Joshua Muravchik, *The Uncertain Crusade: Jimmy Carter and the Dilemmas of Human Rights Policy* (New York: Hamilton Press, 1986), 8.

<sup>75</sup> Carl Gershman, interview by author, Washington, D.C., 25 August 2008.

<sup>76</sup> Joshua Muravchik, interview by author, Claremont, Ca., 17 October 2008.

<sup>77</sup> Bruce Miroff, *The Liberals’ Moment: The McGovern Insurgency and the Identity Crisis of the Democratic Party* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 265.

## Conclusion

Kirkpatrick had her own things to say about the differences between the traditional Democrats and the “new liberals” whom McGovern and Carter represented. She wrote in 1979 in the Republican journal *Commonsense*, in an article entitled “Why We Do Not Become Republicans”—she had not yet switched parties—that the main differences were on Vietnam, but not on whether the U.S. should be involved in Vietnam. Rather, the question was whether “that involvement was immoral, imperialistic, and genocidal.” It became clear, she wrote, “that the disagreements extended to...the interpretation and evaluation of the American experience.”<sup>78</sup> While Kirkpatrick and the traditional liberals “affirmed the validity of the American dream and the morality of the American society,” the “new liberals...described the U.S. as a sick society drunk on technology and materialism.”<sup>79</sup> Though Kirkpatrick still remained in the party of her parents, uncles, aunts, and grandparents,<sup>80</sup> she had fundamental differences with the new liberals. In one sense, it foreshadowed the argument she would make more poignantly five years later at the convention: that America was fundamentally good, and that America should share its goodness with the rest of the world.

Kirkpatrick explained her interpretation of McGovern’s nomination and the election of Jimmy Carter specifically. “After ‘the movement’ captured the Democratic Party and made George McGovern the Party’s presidential nominee, we—the traditional liberals—sought to reclaim the Democratic Party from the anti-war, anti-growth, anti-business, anti-labor activists who controlled the Party’s label and resources,” she wrote.

---

<sup>78</sup> Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, “Why We Do Not Become Republicans,” *Commonsense* 2, no. 3 (Fall 1979): 28.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 33

“It seemed clear to us that the new Democratic liberals were extremist, masochistic, and mistaken about almost everything.”<sup>81</sup> But “the movement” still controlled the party in 1979 with Jimmy Carter as president at the time Kirkpatrick was writing: “traditional liberals—like those of us who in 1972 formed the Coalition for a Democratic Majority (CDM)—remain very dissatisfied with the policies of the ‘new liberals’ who won control of the national Democratic party in 1972 and have effectively dominated the presidential Party ever since.”<sup>82</sup> And it was Carter’s foreign policy, informed by the McGovernites and the new liberals, that would finally force Kirkpatrick to write her 1979 *Commentary* essay and drive her out of the Democratic Party.

Vietnam did not teach Jeane Kirkpatrick and her fellow neoconservatives the same lessons the “New Left” learned. Vietnam taught them that while projecting American power to far reaches of the globe was costly and not ideal, it was necessary for the protection of the American way of life and for freedom and democracy more broadly. They came out of Vietnam believing that America was still morally good; that the traditional liberal internationalists, who helped form the Cold War consensus with conservatives in the 1950s and 1960s, were right. They believed that the battle for democracy was inseparable from the battle against communism. In the remainder of the 1970s, the liberal left, encapsulated particularly in Carter’s foreign policy, showed Kirkpatrick that when America shied away from containing communism wherever it spread, democracy and human rights regressed around the world. It is to Kirkpatrick’s most famous critique of that liberal world view, as represented by the Carter

---

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 28

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 27-28

administration, that we now turn. That critique would eventually inform Reagan's foreign policy and shape the final years of the Cold War.

## **Dictatorships and Double Standards**

In November 1979, Jeane J. Kirkpatrick wrote an article in *Commentary* that caught the attention of Ronald Reagan's future national security adviser, Richard Allen.<sup>83</sup> The article led to her appointment as Ambassador to the United Nations. In the article, Kirkpatrick argued that the Carter administration's foreign policy was harming American interests abroad. Her article put forth a rough formula for what would become Reagan's Cold War policies, and the intellectual roots of what would become known as the Reagan Doctrine. It demonstrated the differences that had arisen between traditional liberal internationalists and the antiwar faction of the Democratic Party over the Vietnam War; it also foreshadowed the large migration of these traditional liberal internationalists, or neoconservatives, into the Reagan administration and finally the Republican Party.

In "Dictatorships and Double Standards," Kirkpatrick contrasted the Carter policies with ingredients of a successful foreign policy through three major themes: democracy promotion; a double standard in the administration's application of its policy; and the fundamental differences between the modern totalitarian regime and the traditional autocratic regime. Kirkpatrick also discussed the philosophy of history behind much of the administration's thinking. All of these themes would later inform the Reagan

---

<sup>83</sup> Carl Gershman, interview by author, Washington, D.C., 25 August 2008. See also "A Policy is Born," *World Affairs* 153, no. 2 (Fall 1990): 62, and Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clarke, *America Alone: The Neo-Conservatives and the Global Order* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 46.

administration's approach to foreign policy and shape the American endgame in the Cold War.

### **Finding Democratic Alternatives**

The crux of Kirkpatrick's argument was that President Carter's attempt to allow the apparent "will of the people" to prevail in autocratic countries such as Iran and Nicaragua helped give rise to governments that were worse than those preceding them. The administration's support of leftist "democracy" movements hindered the progress of democracy because the leftist regimes that took power often became even more repressive. In both Iran and Nicaragua, Kirkpatrick wrote, "the Carter administration not only failed to prevent the undesired outcome, it actively collaborated in the replacement of moderate autocrats friendly to American interests with less friendly autocrats of extremist persuasion."<sup>84</sup> The error of the Carter administration's policy lay in misunderstanding democratization, and inadvertently hindering its progress.

In Iran, wrote Kirkpatrick, the Carter administration refused to support the Shah and thereby assisted in his removal. She criticized President Carter's claim that the decision over the Shah's future was "for the Iranian people to make." Kirkpatrick believed the United States government should have supported both the Shah and Nicaragua's Somoza because they were, according to her, autocratic but moderate. Both had tolerated "limited apposition, including opposition newspapers and political parties, but both were also confronted by radical, violent opponents bent on social and political revolution." Two themes emerge here: the moderate nature of those autocratic

---

<sup>84</sup> Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, "Dictatorships and Double Standards," *Commentary* (November 1979): 34-45.

governments, and the “violent” and “revolutionary” character of the alternatives. When the Shah’s “ideologically extreme opposition” wrested power, Iranian society became even more repressive, and the Carter administration had done nothing to stop it.<sup>85</sup>

In Nicaragua, the U.S. more actively supported the leftist Sandinistas. After Somoza’s forces defeated the rebels at first, the U.S. imposed sanctions on his regime and halted all aid to Nicaragua, and the new U.S. ambassador refused to submit his credentials to Somoza. All the while, the Carter administration was assuring the public that Nicaraguans “have no intention of seeing Nicaragua turned into a second Cuba.” Contrary to such assurance, the Sandinista rebels soon consolidated power, took control over communications, and banned political opposition. In contrast to his Iran policy, Carter did not even practice nonintervention; rather, he actively cut off military sales to Somoza and spoke about his need to step aside. At the same time, the Soviet bloc was not similarly motivated, and continued to aid the Sandinistas: “a Cuban secret-police official, Julian Lopez, was frequently present in the Sandinista headquarters” and “Cuban military advisers were present in Sandinista ranks.”<sup>86</sup> In these circumstances, even nonintervention would have assisted, and did assist, in Somoza’s overthrow. Thus, Kirkpatrick argued, by actively or passively supporting political revolution, which it confused with democracy and popular support, “the American effort to impose liberalization and democratization...actually assisted the coming to power of new regimes in which ordinary people enjoy fewer freedoms and less personal security than under the previous autocracy.”<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.



What led the Carter administration down this path? Carter at that time believed that the opposition in Iran and Nicaragua was “moderate” and that democratization would be inevitable. Kirkpatrick attacked that view:

Although most governments in the world are, as they always have been, autocracies of one kind or another, no idea holds greater sway in the mind of educated Americans than the belief that it is possible to democratize governments, anytime, anywhere, under any circumstances. This notion is belied by an enormous body of evidence based on the experience of dozens of countries which have attempted with more or less (usually less) success to move from autocratic to democratic government. Many of the wisest political scientists of this and previous centuries agree that democratic institutions are especially difficult to establish and maintain—because they make heavy demands on all portions of a population and because they depend on complex social, cultural, and economic conditions.<sup>88</sup>

Thus the Carter administration misunderstood the difficulty of democratizing and misidentified opportunities for democratization. This misunderstanding led the administration to support opposition groups that it believed were democratic, but were not so in fact. In her article, Kirkpatrick did not make a case against democratization, but rather argued that if the U.S. mistakenly assumed that the opposition in an autocratic country was democratic, it could precipitate the rise of a more repressive regime.

Kirkpatrick was encouraged by democratization in Spain, Portugal, and Brazil. Those kinds of autocracies “do sometimes evolve into democracies,” she wrote, “given time, propitious economic, social, and political circumstances, talented leaders, and a strong indigenous demand for representative government.”<sup>89</sup> Such democratization could have even occurred in Iran and Nicaragua if the Carter administration had not pushed out

---

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

the right-wing autocrats too quickly and had political participation expanded more gradually in those countries.

One can see that Kirkpatrick was not supportive of friendly autocrats unconditionally; her writing suggests a belief that supporting them would lead to a slower but more genuine democratization process. Indeed, the Reagan Doctrine and Reagan's foreign policy more broadly would center on promoting democracy in both communist and non-communist countries, but with more appreciation for the difficulty of the process. Democracy promotion would be the driving force of the Reagan administration's policy, but that would not translate to the administration's, or Kirkpatrick's, support of democratization by American influence at any time and place. In sum, Kirkpatrick argued that the Carter administration's key error lay not in its faith in democracy, but in its underestimation of the difficulty of democratizing and in its misunderstanding of the nature of the opposition. Many critics would attack the Reagan administration for its supposed, and real, support of right-wing dictators. Properly identifying and supporting truly democratic opposition groups, however, which the Carter administration failed to do, would become a defining characteristic of Reagan's policies.

### **History and Double Standards**

Kirkpatrick argued that the failure of Carter's policies followed from his "relatively full-blown philosophy of history" resting on the belief that all change would be progressive. Like all philosophies of history, the "Carter administration's doctrine predicts progress."<sup>90</sup> Kirkpatrick said that the central concern of the Carter

---

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

administration's foreign policy was the modernization of the developing world, which it saw as an inexorable "force" that no individual could influence. As Carter's National Security Adviser said, for example, "We recognize that the world is changing under the influence of forces no government can control."<sup>91</sup> Immediately one can sense what Kirkpatrick saw as a contradiction: through its belief that government cannot exert influence over inevitable "change," the administration actually *did* influence the outcome in Iran and Nicaragua, and in a way contrary to U.S. interests. Nonintervention did not mean non-influence.

In response to similar statements from administration officials, Kirkpatrick asked, "What can a U.S. President faced with such complicated, inexorable, impersonal processes do? The answer, offered again and again by the President and his top officials, is, not much." In both Iran and Nicaragua, this progressive historical view informed the administration's decision to get on the side of "change" and let it come. "Change," however, was whatever upset the status quo, which meant that usually it was being pushed by communist guerrillas because the Soviet Union was the world's expansionist power. Moscow "is the aggressive, expansionist power today, [and so] it is more often than not insurgents, encouraged and armed by the Soviet Union, who challenge the status quo," she wrote.<sup>92</sup> Thus, not only did the administration influence events through veiled nonintervention, but it tended to aid the Soviet Union in the process.

Furthermore, Kirkpatrick argued, the Carter administration did more than side with "change" when revolutionary guerrillas opposed existing regimes: it selectively

---

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

applied this principle when it refused to enforce change in communist countries.

Kirkpatrick wrote,

How does an administration that desires to let people work out their own destinies get involved in determined efforts at reform in South Africa, Zaire, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and elsewhere? How can an administration committed to nonintervention in Cambodia and Vietnam announce that it “will not be deterred” from righting wrongs in South Africa?...The contrast is as striking as that between the administration’s frenzied speed in recognizing the new dictatorship in Nicaragua and its continuing refusal to recognize the elected government of Zimbabwe Rhodesia, or its refusal to maintain any presence in Zimbabwe Rhodesia while staffing a U.S. Information Office in Cuba. Not only are there ideology and a double standard at work here, the ideology neither fits nor explains reality, and the double standard involves the administration in the wholesale contradiction of its own principles.<sup>93</sup>

Carter’s policies indeed seemed contradictory. When leftist revolutionaries challenged autocratic governments, his administration was willing to side with “change” through “nonintervention” that in fact had significant impact. It was also willing to promote change actively in countries such as apartheid South Africa, but not in communist or Marxist-Leninist revolutionary governments. In hindsight, however, it is not clear that the Carter administration intended to employ a double standard. In communist countries, as Kirkpatrick herself admitted, there was no instance, at the time, of a Communist society democratizing. Because of the brutality and totality of the communist regimes, there were simply fewer opposition groups to support. The Soviet Union and China were also far more powerful than Iran, Nicaragua, or South Africa; while the administration could pressure the Shah, Somoza, or the white oligarchs in South Africa by eliminating aid, there was no equally potent or effective “stick” to employ with communist countries. As Carter’s National Security Adviser explained at the end of Carter’s term, “We had more

---

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

impact in the Americas, Indonesia, and the Philippines than we had in...Russia. But then that stands to reason.”<sup>94</sup>

Indeed, the Carter administration sought to pressure the Soviet Union in its first year but with little success. As we shall see, Carter did not support friendly autocrats because he could more forcibly pressure them on human rights, whereas he believed that maintaining cordiality and the SALT talks with the Soviet Union—and thereby sacrificing pressure on human rights—was in the United States’ interest. Whatever the Carter administration’s motivations, Kirkpatrick laid out the consequences of its selectively applied policy. In effect, it was one of pressuring right-wing autocrats friendly to the United States, because doing so put the administration on the side of “change” and “progress.” Such pressure, however, ultimately led to their replacement by revolutionary forces. Finally, the policy applied an apparent double standard that left communist regimes alone.

### **Totalitarianism vs. Authoritarianism**

The final element of interest in Kirkpatrick’s piece, which has also underpinned her other arguments, was her distinction between authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. As already mentioned, Kirkpatrick believed that one key difference was that while traditional authoritarian regimes had democratized in the past, and some were democratizing at the time of her writing, no communist country had ever democratized. “Although there is no instance of a revolutionary ‘socialist’ or Communist society being democratized,” she wrote, “right-wing autocracies do sometimes evolve into

---

<sup>94</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, Exit Interview, 20 February 1981, Jimmy Carter Library. <http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.org/library/exitInt/exitBrzski.pdf>

democracies—given time, propitious economic, social, and political circumstances, talented leaders, and a strong indigenous demand for representative government.” This distinction implied a fundamental difference between totalitarian and traditional autocratic regimes; and, Kirkpatrick explained, this difference could not be ignored: “The foreign policy of the Carter administration fails not for lack of good intentions but for lack of realism about the nature of traditional versus revolutionary autocracies and the relation of each to the American national interest.”<sup>95</sup>

The difference between these types of regimes, said Kirkpatrick, was that “traditional authoritarian governments are less repressive than revolutionary autocracies, that they are more susceptible [to] liberalization, and that they are more compatible with U.S. interests.”<sup>96</sup> As evidence of their repressiveness, Kirkpatrick cited China, North Korea, Vietnam, and Cambodia. Kirkpatrick claimed that traditional autocracies “tolerate social inequities, brutality, and poverty,” whereas “revolutionary autocracies create them.” More specifically, traditional autocrats

leave in place existing allocation of wealth, power, status, and other resources which in most traditional societies favor an affluent few and maintain masses in poverty. But they worship traditional gods and observe traditional taboos. They do not disturb the habitual rhythms of work and leisure, habitual places of residence, habitual patterns of family and personal relations.

With revolutionary Communist regimes, “precisely the opposite is true.” In contrast, they

create refugees by the million because they claim jurisdiction over the whole life of society and make demands for change that so violate internalized values and habits that inhabitants flee by the tens of thousands in the remarkable expectation that their attitudes, values, and goals will ‘fit’ better in a foreign country than in their native land.<sup>97</sup>

---

<sup>95</sup> Kirkpatrick, “Dictatorships and Double Standards,” *Commentary*, 34-45.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

In sum, traditional autocrats just wish to maintain power: they generally leave social norms intact and let their citizens lead their lives in their own ways. Totalitarian regimes, however, attempt to control the totality of society; as a result, they are naturally more repressive and brutal. Further, as Kirkpatrick said, there was no example of such a regime ever democratizing because they maintained such firm grips on society.

Understanding that revolutionary totalitarian governments created these problems was even more important in light of the expansionist tendencies of these regimes. But the Carter administration was not necessarily blind to this fundamental difference between regimes: Carter's national security adviser authored the very book, which the next chapter explores, that was influential in recognizing the distinctions between totalitarian and autocratic governments. He would not, however, translate those distinctions into tangible policies. It was precisely the international strength and internal stranglehold of the communist regimes that discouraged Carter from pressuring them. Kirkpatrick's and Reagan's belief in this distinction, on the other hand, would lead the Reagan administration to support authoritarian regimes more generously (though not unconditionally) than the Carter administration had.

### **Criticisms**

Kirkpatrick's arguments did not persuade all foreign policy experts. Many faulted her distinction between authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, and argued that in the cases she documented of authoritarian regimes confronted by violent internal opposition—Iran, Nicaragua, Angola, Vietnam, for example—the autocrats were hardly moderate. One

critic even challenged Kirkpatrick “to add together the numbers killed on political grounds in the last twenty-five years in the USSR, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, East Germany, and...Cuba” and compare it to the “number of victims of police, soldiers, and various death squads” in rightist dictatorial countries,<sup>98</sup> directly assaulting Kirkpatrick’s claim that “Marxist-style liberation” is harder to bear than the abuses of right-wing authoritarians.<sup>99</sup> It is noteworthy, however, that this critic neglected to include Nicaragua, Vietnam, and Cambodia in his challenge.

Others have argued that totalitarian regimes can liberalize, citing Yugoslavia as a past totalitarian state that had by 1985 “a consociational government and certain liberties.”<sup>100</sup> But until the collapse of the Soviet Union itself, there really was no other example, and the exception, in this case, did not disprove the general rule. Conversely, some have argued that authoritarian regimes do not always preserve traditional societal bonds as Kirkpatrick claimed. Joseph S. Nye has argued that just because Kirkpatrick’s intent was good—she wanted to maintain governments that were less repressive—that did not justify a policy that always supported repressive governments if they were authoritarian. He argued that some authoritarian regimes were as repressive as totalitarian ones, and that Kirkpatrick should not have supported those regimes. This argument that the totalitarian-authoritarian distinction was spurious was by far the most recurring and important source of dissension.

It will become clear, however, that the administration by no means gave right-wing autocrats free reign. Perhaps Kirkpatrick did lend her support to autocrats too

---

<sup>98</sup> Alec Nove, “The Scope and Scale of Good and Evil,” *Society* (March 1985): 12.

<sup>99</sup> Kirkpatrick, “Dictatorships and Double Standards,” *Commentary*, 34-45.

<sup>100</sup> Joseph S. Nye Jr., “Motives, Means and Consequences,” *Society* (March 1985): 19.



unconditionally, as Nye argued, thereby subjecting her moderate argument of *relative* desirability to charges of extremist, unbridled support for authoritarian governments. But this notion of relative desirability does temper the criticism of most of her critics, who overlooked Kirkpatrick's key point: degree of repressiveness *did* matter. Nowhere in "Dictatorships and Double Standards" did she deny that the Shah or Somoza, for instance, had violated human rights, nor did she claim that all autocratic regimes liberalize. She failed, however, to qualify her statement that authoritarians preserved the status quo in society; as a general rule they did, but, as critics have pointed out, they did not always.

The next chapter will compare Kirkpatrick's arguments to those of the Carter administration, and evaluate these criticisms. The next three chapters will show that Kirkpatrick did not express unbridled support for authoritarian regimes. Ultimately, they will show that both Kirkpatrick and Reagan, on the basis of the arguments in Kirkpatrick's article, promoted policies that pursued not merely anti-communism, but also liberal democracy and human rights.

## **The Carter Years: Was Kirkpatrick Right?**

### **Iran, Nicaragua, and Carter's Soviet Policy**

We have seen up to now that the major point of contention surrounding the Carter administration's application of its human rights policy was its apparent double standard that contradicted American interests. In her article, Kirkpatrick focused on Nicaragua and Iran, so those two countries will receive some attention here alongside Carter's Soviet policy more broadly. What were the goals and motivations of Carter's policies, and do they square with Kirkpatrick's criticisms?

In an interview, Joshua Muravchik explains that he agrees with Kirkpatrick's argument about the double standard that Carter applied in his foreign policy, but that she was not "quite fair in saying that they went after rightist regimes and not leftist regimes....[I]t was more nuanced than that."<sup>101</sup> Muravchik agrees with her assessment of the contradiction, but not the motivation behind it. "They went after the weaker regimes. They went after Guatemala and Mozambique and not China and Saudi Arabia," he says. "[S]he overstated that part of it."<sup>102</sup> That is, Muravchik disagrees that the Carter administration intentionally pressured only right-wing regimes and not communist regimes because it had a preference for leftist regimes; he believes that the administration pressured only the regimes which it could pressure successfully—that is, the weaker

---

<sup>101</sup> Joshua Muravchik, interview by author, Claremont, Ca., 17 October 2008.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

regimes. These weaker regimes tended to be authoritarian governments, whereas the totalitarian regimes had a stronger grip on power and more international weight as part of the Soviet Union's sphere of influence.

One empirical study has shown that, as a general rule, the Carter administration did not significantly reduce aid to friendly authoritarian regimes. David Carleton and Michael Stohl use human rights indices from Amnesty International, the State Department, and Freedom House to analyze the relationship between human rights abuses in 59 non-communist authoritarian countries and U.S. foreign assistance under both Reagan and Carter; they find that there were in fact positive correlations between aid assistance and human rights violations in many countries, contrary to what one would expect based on Carter's rhetoric and the examples Kirkpatrick drew upon in her article.<sup>103</sup> Significantly, the administration cut off security assistance in only eight countries, all in Latin America; five of those countries chose to reject U.S. Security aid after the State Department published critical human rights reports, and economic assistance continued either way.<sup>104</sup>

The authors conclude that the Carter administration "did *not* significantly withdraw material support from repressive United States friends," and that the overriding concern was national security,<sup>105</sup> as Muravchik also claimed. Only in the "absence of any perceived security risks" was the Carter administration "willing to emphasize human rights."<sup>106</sup> While Carleton and Stohl's findings temper Kirkpatrick's criticism, the choice

---

<sup>103</sup> David Carleton and Michael Stohl, "The Foreign Policy of Human Rights: Rhetoric and Reality: From Jimmy Carter to Ronald Reagan," *Human Rights Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (May 1985): 215.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 215-216.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 216, 224.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 224.

of foreign assistance is of course limiting; it does not consider the delegitimization which Carter's rhetoric could cause, as with Kirkpatrick's example of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia, Iran, and South Africa. Further, that list of course neglects the refusal to help allied countries, such as Iran, when they needed assistance. In any event the countries over which the administration did exert influence had significant costs to U.S. national security.

Though Carter and his top foreign policy advisers, National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski and Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, did not necessarily wish to treat rightist regimes more harshly than communist regimes, Muravchik argues anecdotally in a book on this subject that many other political appointees in the foreign policy departments did have express intent to overthrow rightist regimes in particular. Carter's chief human rights official, Patricia Derian, did not appear to be sympathetic to communism, but she still viewed a revolutionary opposition as better than right-wing authoritarian governments.<sup>107</sup> Derian had said that "the citizenry, faced with official terrorism, and guerrilla terrorism, wisely decides to go with something that hasn't got the force of law behind it."<sup>108</sup> Derian explicitly denied what Kirkpatrick believed to be true, that the revolutionary guerrillas invariably became more repressive than the authoritarian regimes they replaced.

Two other officials with similar intentions were Derian's principal deputy, Mark Schneider, and the other deputy assistant secretary in the human rights bureau, Stephen Cohen. According to Muravchik,

---

<sup>107</sup> Joshua Muravchik, *The Uncertain Crusade: Jimmy Carter and the Dilemmas of Human Rights Policy* (New York: Hamilton Press, 1986), 11.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

Schneider and Cohen, as well as John Salzberg, who came to the Human Rights Bureau in 1979...were mentioned by Carter's Under Secretary of State David Newsom as among those 'people at the Bureau of Human Rights who, I don't think it is putting it too strongly, came into the Department dedicated to the idea of seeing the overthrow' of rightist dictators in such countries as Indonesia, Nicaragua, Iran and the Philippines.<sup>109</sup>

When Carter rejected all the names which the CDM and its partner organizations put forth for national security posts, he instead composed his foreign policy team of individuals who "shared a 'McGovernite' or 'left-liberal' worldview and whose human rights passions were focused on the depredations of rightist regimes."<sup>110</sup>

Secretary Vance and President Carter helped put into effect this double standard with their posture toward the Soviet Union. When the State Department issued a statement in response to threats against dissident Andrei Sakharov, Carter and Vance backtracked when the Soviet ambassador protested. "Any attempt by the Soviet authorities to intimidate Mr. Sakharov will...conflict with accepted standards of human rights," the statement said.<sup>111</sup> When asked about the statement, Carter implied that it had not been cleared with him,<sup>112</sup> and Vance said he had not seen it either.<sup>113</sup> But while they were distancing themselves from the statement and trying to appease the Soviet Union, they continued to criticize Ian Smith of Rhodesia. Vance said that he wanted "to reemphasize our opposition to the maintenance of minority-imposed control of the government of Rhodesia."<sup>114</sup> The double standard being applied was not lost on observers at the time, including CBS correspondent Marvin Kalb, who said the administration

---

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>111</sup> Robert A. Strong, *Working in the World: Jimmy Carter and the Making of American Foreign Policy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press), 79.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>113</sup> Joshua Muravchik, *The Uncertain Crusade*, 14.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 25.

risked setting up a “double standard” in the way they responded “to violations of human rights in the Soviet Union and in smaller countries where there is not a direct, vital interest conflict.”<sup>115</sup>

But the administration did continue responding to Soviet violations of human rights, including expelling a Soviet correspondent when Russia expelled an Associate Press reporter, and writing a response letter to Andrei Sakharov after he managed to smuggle a letter to the United States for President Carter. Secretary Vance also expressed the administration’s concerns over the arrest of another dissident, and when he received no reply, the State Department issued a statement calling the arrest “a matter of profound concern for all Americans.”<sup>116</sup> One Carter scholar has argued that Soviet protests did not change Carter’s stance toward the Soviet Union.<sup>117</sup>

Vance, however, would again try to appease the Soviet anger over the State Department’s statements and accusations, because, as Muravchik explains, an administration priority was to reach a new arms agreement.<sup>118</sup> According to Muravchik, both Vance and Carter did not want to jeopardize Soviet cooperation in the SALT negotiations. One can conclude, then, that the administration was concerned with human rights abuses in the Soviet Union, but it believed easing tensions with the Soviet Union was a more important security concern. Muravchik summarizes the approach: “It would protest Soviet misbehavior...but it would not make any other aspect of U.S.-Soviet relations conditional on improvements in Soviet behavior.”<sup>119</sup> With authoritarian regimes

---

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>117</sup> Strong, *Working in the World*, 82.

<sup>118</sup> Joshua Muravchik, *The Uncertain Crusade*, 29.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 31.

in the third world, that concern was moot: “The difference was that the Russians had a big stick—they could and did threaten not to cooperate in reaching a SALT agreement, thereby depriving Carter of the central goal of his foreign policy. The Latins, on the other hand, could only fume and reject American aid.”<sup>120</sup>

Indeed, in his memoirs Vance devotes essentially his entire first chapter, named “Our Legacy,” to the issue of arms control and the SALT II Treaty,<sup>121</sup> which seems to have preoccupied the administration: “There existed areas, especially in nuclear arms control, where cooperation with the Soviet Union was possible because our interests coincided with theirs. When cooperation could enhance our security, as in limiting the nuclear arms race, it should be pursued without attempting to link it to other issues.”<sup>122</sup> The only problem was that the Soviets *were* linking arms control to other issues; they threatened to scuttle negotiations over issues including human rights. In a sense, then, Vance and the administration did link it to other issues, in that they sacrificed those issues for the sake of arms control negotiations. President Carter explained his approach to SALT thus: “My intention was to cooperate with the Soviets whenever possible, and I saw a successful effort in controlling nuclear weapons as the best tool for improving our relations.”<sup>123</sup>

Vance did believe, however, that the Soviet Union was “a powerful potential adversary with growing global interests.”<sup>124</sup> He was aware of the threat posed by the communists and the Soviet Union; he merely believed in a less confrontational approach

---

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>121</sup> Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices: Critical years in America's Foreign Policy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 17-25.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>123</sup> Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), 218.

<sup>124</sup> Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices*, 28.

than Kirkpatrick advocated. He did doubt, however, which Kirkpatrick did not, that “there was a Soviet master plan for world domination.”<sup>125</sup> Perhaps such a conclusion led him and the administration to argue that Nicaragua would not turn into a second Cuba.

Brzezinski’s recollection of the administration’s goals toward the Soviet Union also tempers Kirkpatrick’s critique. Describing the contents of a 43-page foreign policy memo that outlined the administration’s goals and priorities in his memoirs, he writes, “[W]e wanted to rebuff Soviet incursions both by supporting our friends and by ameliorating the sources of conflict which the Soviets exploit. We wanted to match Soviet ideological expansion by a more affirmative American posture on global human rights, while seeking consistently to make détente both more comprehensive and more reciprocal.”<sup>126</sup> Brzezinski highlights the good intentions behind the administration’s policy that even Kirkpatrick recognized, but he goes farther in expressing that they were concerned about Soviet expansion.

It is perhaps curious, however, that in light of events in Nicaragua Brzezinski makes only two mentions of the country in his memoirs, and even then only in passing; Somoza and the Sandinistas are not mentioned at all. Kirkpatrick would argue that the Sandinista takeover of Nicaragua was precisely the kind of incursion that Brzezinski claimed the administration was against. To his credit, however, Brzezinski did recognize the problems with emphasizing the SALT Treaty. “I felt strongly that we were making a fundamental mistake in concentrating so heavily on SALT, without engaging the Soviets

---

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1983), 54.



in a broader strategic dialogue,” he writes.<sup>127</sup> He explains that Carter and Vance “hoped to use SALT as the opening wedge for developing a broader relationship,” but he, on the other hand, felt “that Soviet actions around the world required a firmer response.”<sup>128</sup> Or as he writes later, “I felt that State was excessively deferential to the Soviets.”<sup>129</sup> In these statements, Brzezinski pinpoints just the criticism that Kirkpatrick would also have of the Carter administration: because it saw détente and improving U.S.-Soviet relations as the center of its policy, the administration would be too “deferential” to the Soviets while being hypocritically tough on Somoza, the Shah, and other right-wing dictators.

It seems that the Carter administration had a rather similar approach to Kirkpatrick’s desired approach—but Carter just got it backward. Like her, Carter and his administration did not want to emphasize human rights when it was not in the United States’ interest to do so, as was the case with SALT; Carter and Vance believed that the agreement was the overriding concern to the national interest. The difference between Kirkpatrick and Carter was that what Carter and his advisers believed to be the national interest translated to appeasing the Soviet Union; Kirkpatrick believed that it translated to supporting authoritarian rightist regimes while continuing to pressure the Soviet Union and other communist countries. The Carter administration was willing to pressure other countries on the issue of human rights, but only the weaker, authoritarian countries. In other words, *both* Kirkpatrick’s and Carter’s approaches required a double standard—they just disagreed on to whom it should apply.

---

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 317.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 318.

The case of Iran, finally, is also instructive. It reveals the competing beliefs among Carter's top officials, as well as the administration's general belief on the process of democratization. Vance, in his memoirs, writes that the character of the Shah's opposition—to which Kirkpatrick had accused the administration of being blind—was actually evident: "It was becoming clear that the antiregime demonstrations were being orchestrated by the fundamentalist wing of the clerics."<sup>130</sup> Vance, furthermore, explains that Carter telephoned the Shah "to reaffirm our support and to find out how the shah planned to restore order."<sup>131</sup> He even explains how right before the climax of the crisis, they instructed the ambassador in Iran to assure the Shah that the U.S. supported him "without reservation."<sup>132</sup> Further, "[p]ressures from the White House to encourage the shah to use the army to smash opposition were becoming intense."<sup>133</sup> Vance himself did not believe in using the army in this manner, and all of the assurances were backed with very little muscle. "In mid-November," says Vance, "our State Department advisers urged a clearer policy to protect U.S. interests as best we could in the face of certain and imminent change."<sup>134</sup> Vance also describes earlier how officials at State already believed that the Shah would have to give up power, and that it was to whom and how much that was the open question. Vance's position and statements on Iran lend credence to Kirkpatrick's charge that he and the administration got on the side of "change" when it was not in fact inevitable.

---

<sup>130</sup> Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices*, 325.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 326.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 329.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 330.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 329.

Brzezinski highlights the internal disagreements over Iran in his memoirs. He believes that the U.S. actions that helped precipitate the collapse of the Shah's government were misinformed and disastrous. Brzezinski writes that there was intense disagreement over how to maintain, and encourage by outside pressure, "political stability in a traditional but rapidly modernizing state, in which the ruler's absolute personal power was being challenged by an escalating revolutionary situation."<sup>135</sup> Brzezinski believed that "successful revolutions were historical rarities."<sup>136</sup> He understood, as Kirkpatrick did, that the process of democratization required many cultural and political prerequisites. The State Department believed otherwise, according to Brzezinski, and what Vance has written supports that contention. The Department believed that it could create a coalition out of the Iranians factions; however, as Brzezinski notes, these factions were "not motivated by a spirit of compromise" but rather by "homicidal hatred."<sup>137</sup> Brzezinski recognized the nature of the revolutionary opposition facing the Shah, as Vance claims he also did. He probably would have agreed with Kirkpatrick's assessment in *Commentary*.

Brzezinski's recollections of Iran show the importance of individuals in the national security bureaucracy, from which Carter excluded the CDM and its preferences, and the internal disagreements in the bureaucracy. He explains how William Sullivan, the U.S. Ambassador to Iran, opposed the transfer of crowd-control devices to the Iranian government, "since that presumably would have inhibited the needed process of reconciliation." He goes on to say, "As the crisis unfolded, it became evident to me that

---

<sup>135</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 354.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 355.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

lower echelons at State, notably the head of the Iran Desk, Henry Precht, were motivated by doctrinal dislike of the Shah and simply wanted him out of power altogether.”<sup>138</sup>

Brzezinski thus demonstrates how the United States “actively assisted in the Shah’s departure,” as Kirkpatrick alleged.<sup>139</sup> Despite President Carter’s rhetoric, however, which Brzezinski claimed was more in tune with his own views, the State Department and the ambassador conveyed administration policy in “vaguer, more diluted formulas.”<sup>140</sup>

Brzezinski reveals just how important the national security bureaucracy was to the administration’s policy, and how that policy brought about consequences which were, according to Brzezinski, “disastrous strategically for the United States.”<sup>141</sup> Kirkpatrick would have, of course, agreed. The disparate accounts of the Iranian situation in Brzezinski’s and Vance’s memoirs demonstrate how crippling the internal debates were to the administration and how they helped precipitate the regime change.

### **Cyrus Vance and Human Rights**

We see from accounts of the Carter administration’s deliberations on Iran and Soviet policy, particularly from Vance’s and Brzezinski’s memoirs, that Kirkpatrick was correct about the consequences of the administration policies but that she might have exaggerated the double standards claim; it appears the administration pressured right-wing regimes simply because they were weaker regimes. Cyrus Vance wrote an illuminating critique of Kirkpatrick in the 1980s that sheds more light on his—and thereby Carter’s—approach to foreign policy. His critique focuses on human rights and

---

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Kirkpatrick, “Dictatorships and Double Standards,” *Commentary*, 34-45.

<sup>140</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 356.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 354.

the totalitarian-authoritarian distinction, and is useful for sharpening the differences and similarities between the Carter policies and the Kirkpatrick-Reagan. Vance believed that the United States should distinguish between types of human rights violations, not between the types of regimes that perpetrate them.

In 1986, Vance, writing in *Foreign Policy*, said that the “last 5 years [under Reagan] have not been easy for those who believe that a commitment to human rights must be a central tenet of American foreign policy. The concept and definition of human rights have been twisted almost beyond recognition.”<sup>142</sup> Vance attacked Kirkpatrick’s distinction between authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, and his argument is worth quoting at length:

A second illusion that must be exposed is one pushed by many critics of Carter’s human rights focus. Wrapping themselves in a rhetorical cloak of democracy and freedom, these critics pursue a curious logic that leads them to support governments and groups that deny democracy and abuse freedom. They insist on drawing a distinction for foreign-policy purposes between “authoritarian” countries that are friendly toward the United States and “totalitarian” states seen as hostile.

Vance continued,

Sadly, this specious distinction, rooted in America’s former U.N. representative Jeane Kirkpatrick’s November 1979 *Commentary* article “Dictatorships and Double Standards,” became a central element of the new human rights policy set forth at the start of the Reagan administration....The implication that such a distinction provides a basis for condoning terror and brutality if committed by authoritarian governments friendly to the United States is mind boggling. The suggestion that America should turn a blind eye to human rights violations by autocrats of any stripe is unacceptable. Such thinking is morally bankrupt and badly serves U.S. national interests....In short, a sound and balanced human rights policy requires condemnation of such conduct, no matter who the perpetrator is.<sup>143</sup>

---

<sup>142</sup> Cyrus R. Vance, “The Human Rights Imperative,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 63 (summer 1986): 3.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10.

While Vance was Secretary of State, he was advocating “condemnation” of human rights abuses that Somoza and the Shah perpetrated. But that condemnation, and the subsequent U.S. government actions, ultimately led to more repressive regimes. Kirkpatrick might have been too easy on “moderate” autocrats, but the Carter administration policy of withdrawing aid from those autocrats led to more human rights violations.

It is also interesting that Vance did not see a distinction between autocratic governments “friendly” toward the United States and totalitarian governments that were “hostile.” Kirkpatrick believed that in foreign policy, all else being equal, governments that are friendly should be treated better than those that are hostile.<sup>144</sup> The distinction seems natural. It is also interesting that Vance did not deny that Kirkpatrick described totalitarian regimes accurately; he merely argued that in spite of the differences between regime types, the United States should not draw any distinction when it comes to human rights.

Carleton and Stohl criticize the totalitarian-authoritarian distinction on different grounds, but their criticisms are also open to debate. They echo Nye’s argument and claim that the evidence “is not convincing” that authoritarian and totalitarian regimes are actually as Kirkpatrick described them. They write that religious institutions in Poland, the black market in Cuba, and political dissent in Nicaragua demonstrate that totalitarian regimes “do not control all social institutions.”<sup>145</sup> The Sandinistas, however, hardly constituted a totalitarian regime that had solidified its grip; indeed, the political dissent that did exist in totalitarian-communist regimes would be the key to implementing the

---

<sup>144</sup> Joshua Muravchik, interview by author, Claremont, Ca., 17 October 2008.

<sup>145</sup> Carleton and Stohl, “The Foreign Policy of Human Rights,” *Human Rights Quarterly* (May 1985): 220.

Reagan Doctrine. Carleton and Stohl are right to point to degrees of freedom and repression even within the authoritarian and totalitarian umbrellas, but that does not discount the distinction applied generally.

Conversely, they argue that authoritarian regimes hardly leave the social patterns in place; they point to the scorching of entire villages in Guatemala, ethnic cleansing in Indonesia, assassinations of religious figures in El Salvador, and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of blacks in South Africa. “Time and again [these regimes] disturb each of the other social institutions” in addition to the political institutions.<sup>146</sup> Reagan critic Walter Lafeber makes the same arguments: authoritarians in Latin America “did not always preserve traditional societies,” he writes, and Somoza in Nicaragua as well as Salvadoran oligarchs and Guatemalan generals “had destroyed the bonds that held their societies together.”<sup>147</sup>

Indeed, perhaps in Kirkpatrick’s attempt to look at the broader struggle for freedom and democracy, she and the Reagan administration were willing to accept serious human rights violations occurring in authoritarian regimes. But Kirkpatrick never condoned those violations. She said in late 1981 that “it is neither fair nor reasonable to single out for harsh criticism the human rights violations of some nations while ignoring entirely the gross abuses of others.”<sup>148</sup> She attacked the United Nations for condemning El Salvador, Guatemala, Chile, and Bolivia for human rights abuses not because she thought these regimes did not commit them or should get away with them, but rather

---

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Walter Lafeber, “The Reagan Administration and Revolutions in Central America,” *Political Science Quarterly* 99, no. 1 (spring 1984): 6.

<sup>148</sup> Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, *The Reagan Phenomenon—And Other Speeches On Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1983), 48.

because “the moral standing of their judges is undermined by their studious unconcern with the much larger violations of human liberty elsewhere in Latin America, by the government of Cuba.”<sup>149</sup> That government, she said, had created over one million refugees and incarcerated more political prisoners than any other Latin American nation. In any event these criticisms do not undo the totalitarian-authoritarian distinction, even if they blur it somewhat. Totalitarian regimes still are, as a general rule, more repressive. Kirkpatrick’s critics do make legitimate claims that she might have understated the repressiveness of some authoritarian regimes; but one should not confuse serious but haphazard human rights violations with the systematic and sustained elimination of human rights and the breakdown of existing social structures that characterizes totalitarian countries.

Vance articulated a hierarchy of human rights earlier in his piece, drawing alternative distinctions that the U.S. could apply to foreign policy. He wrote that the most important human rights are those that “protect the security of the person”; the second most important are “rights affecting the fulfillment of such vital needs as food, clothing, shelter, health care, and education”; the third most important is the right “to enjoy civil and political liberties”; and finally, he added, “there is a basic human right to freedom from discrimination because of race, religion, color, or gender.”<sup>150</sup> The last human right was an obvious reference to South Africa, and will be set aside for this discussion. Vance cited political and civil liberties as third most important, after personal and economic security. Vance was using the term “security of the person” to mean safety from kidnapping, torture, and murder at the hands of the state.

---

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>150</sup> Vance, “The Human Rights Imperative, *Foreign Policy*, 4.



But can the security of the person really be distinct from political and civil liberties? For Kirkpatrick, it was more important to support those autocratic regimes that history had demonstrated could liberalize with more ease than totalitarian governments. If political liberty existed in such states, then the security of the person from government abuse would follow naturally. Moreover, one must ask if Vance ignored the magnitude of “security of the person” violations in communist countries. Had he not ignored it, he might have more readily agreed with Kirkpatrick’s distinction between authoritarian and communist regimes. As Kirkpatrick wrote,

There is a damning contrast between the number of refugees created by Marxist regimes and those created by other autocracies: more than a million Cubans have left their homeland since Castro's rise (one refugee for every nine inhabitants) as compared to about 35,000 each from Argentina, Brazil, and Chile. In Africa more than five times as many refugees have fled Guinea and Guinea Bissau as have left Zimbabwe Rhodesia, suggesting that civil war and racial discrimination are easier for most people to bear than Marxist-style liberation.<sup>151</sup>

Therefore, Vance’s own human rights priorities should have led him to draw the same distinction that Kirkpatrick drew between authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, because each of his first three categories of human rights generally suffers more in totalitarian regimes.

Nevertheless, there is a legitimate criticism in Vance’s critique and a benefit to his hierarchy. As mentioned above, Kirkpatrick probably understated the abuse in authoritarian regimes. While in the long-run anti-communism and democracy promotion may promote human rights, observers have noted that Carter’s policies had direct and tangible benefits to the victims of human rights abuses whereas those benefits were more limited under Reagan, though by no means nonexistent. “While the Carter policy clearly

---

<sup>151</sup> Kirkpatrick, “Dictatorships and Double Standards,” *Commentary*, 34-45.

had its limitations,” argue Carleton and Stohl, “the release of significant numbers of individual political prisoners may reasonably be attributed to the Carter human rights policy.”<sup>152</sup> In contrast, there was less evidence that security of the person violations had diminished under Reagan’s watch,<sup>153</sup> and Tamar Jacoby of the *New York Times* has pointed out that between Reagan’s election and inauguration, human rights abuses actually increased in some countries because rightist dictators believed Reagan would allow them wider latitude.<sup>154</sup> Reagan’s rhetoric and policies, which Kirkpatrick’s article informed, did not have immediate, tangible human rights victories in terms of security of the person violations. The unanswered question, with which Kirkpatrick might have countered these claims, is how many people did the Reagan policies save by preventing more repressive regimes from coming to power?

In his piece Vance still advocated a double standard in the application of his human rights prescriptions. Vance argued that the Reagan Doctrine “commits America to supporting anticommunist revolution wherever it arises. By implication, the doctrine offers no such assistance to opponents of other tyrannies.”<sup>155</sup> He continued to say that this policy “is both wrong and potentially dangerous to America’s interests,”<sup>156</sup> and that “[s]o systematically ignoring the principles of sovereignty and nonintervention is not in America’s national interest.”<sup>157</sup> Supporting anticommunist revolution, however, does not preclude supporting opponents of other tyrannies; in fact at that time, as will be argued

---

<sup>152</sup> Carleton and Stohl, “The Foreign Policy of Human Rights,” *Human Rights Quarterly*, 225.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.

<sup>154</sup> Tamar Jacoby, “The Reagan Turnaround on Human Rights,” *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1986), in Nexis [database online].

<sup>155</sup> Vance, “The Human Rights Imperative,” *Foreign Policy*, 11.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

here, the Reagan administration was supporting democratic opposition in Chile and El Salvador.

Vance once again argued for “nonintervention,” but only for communist regimes. Vance acknowledged that if the United States wanted to act against countries such as Chile, “many tools are available,” including quiet diplomacy, public pronouncements, and withholding economic and military assistance.<sup>158</sup> He praised Felice Gaer, the executive director of the International League for Human Rights, who said, and Vance quoted, “The United States needs to do more than make declarations and to provide free transport for fleeing dictators....The U.S. Government has the leverage to use—if it chooses to use it. It has the power to persuade governments.”<sup>159</sup> Vance seemed ready to use intervention, but only selectively. His attack on Kirkpatrick and Reagan’s disregard for nonintervention was inconsistent, and adds weight to Kirkpatrick’s original assertion of a double standard.

### **Zbigniew Brzezinski and the Totalitarian-Authoritarian Distinction**

Carter’s National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, along with an academic colleague, Carl Friedrich, was one of the intellectual sources of the totalitarian-authoritarian distinction. In their 1956 book *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, Friedrich and Brzezinski laid out the fundamental differences between totalitarian regimes and traditional autocracies. They wrote that totalitarian regimes were unique to the modern age and distinct from the autocracies of the past. In particular, they were acquisitive and expansionist: fascist totalitarians wished to establish the world dominance

---

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 13.

of a particular nation, and communist totalitarians sought a world revolution of the proletariat.<sup>160</sup> “These virulent world-revolutionary appeals are an innate part of totalitarian dictatorship.”<sup>161</sup> One of their dangers, therefore, is their propensity to create conflict; and without external enemies their system would not maintain the “fanatical devotion” required of the people. The totalitarian attack is therefore a “continuing one”; it “takes the form of organizing subversive activities within the communities abroad, based upon the ideology of the movement.”<sup>162</sup> Those ideologies consist of “an official body of doctrine covering all vital aspects of man’s existence.”<sup>163</sup> In Kirkpatrick’s words, they attempted to control the totality of society. She highlighted these characteristics in “Dictatorships and Double Standards.”

The natural question to ask, then, is how did Brzezinski think the distinction between totalitarian and authoritarian governments ought to apply to foreign policy? If totalitarians were expansionist and acquisitive, and tried to export their revolutionary activities subversively, should the Carter administration not have seen them as more immediate threats to the United States? Should it not have been more of a priority to confront them? If their ideology was as “total” and destructive as he described, did it not stand to reason that human rights violations were worse in totalitarian countries than authoritarian ones?

Though Brzezinski’s book laid the intellectual foundations for Kirkpatrick’s distinction between authoritarian and totalitarian governments, he did not draw the same

---

<sup>160</sup> Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), 7.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

policy conclusions that Kirkpatrick did. In a 1981 human rights symposium in *Commentary*, Brzezinski specifically criticized the Reagan administration's and Kirkpatrick's use of the distinction. The answer to the question of the role of human rights in American policy "is certainly not to be found in some turgid academic distinctions between authoritarian and totalitarian governments," he wrote,<sup>164</sup> thereby consigning his earlier work to the intellectual sphere only, whereas Kirkpatrick believed it could guide policy.

Brzezinski was nevertheless more practical than Vance. He wrote that human rights concerns must balance with strategic relationships; he was more in tune with Kirkpatrick's thought than perhaps he would admit. He implied that the United States should neither abandon its strategic relationship with China over its human rights violations, nor jeopardize arms control agreements with the Soviet Union over the issue. "In brief, it is necessary to make relative judgments, but these judgments have nothing to do with governmental typologies," Brzezinski wrote.<sup>165</sup> Brzezinski denied the usefulness of applying to policy the regime distinctions that he himself had pioneered. He confirmed that the administration was willing to sacrifice human rights for national security purposes, but that it disagreed on what was important for national security.

## **Conclusion**

In his memoirs, Jimmy Carter claimed that he understood the justification for supporting rightist dictatorships. "At least within those countries," he wrote, "it was not

---

<sup>164</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Human Rights and American Foreign Policy: A Symposium," *Commentary* 72, no. 5 (Nov. 1981): 29.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

possible to conceal all the abuses of human rights. World condemnation and our influence could be much more effective there than in communist countries, where repression was so complete that it could not easily be observed or rooted out.”<sup>166</sup> Though he seemingly acknowledged a difference between totalitarian and authoritarian governments, Carter explained that the lesson of such a distinction was that the United States should pressure rightist regimes on human rights because it could do so successfully.

He did not advocate overthrowing these governments: “I was determined to combine support for our more authoritarian allies and friends with the effective promotion of human rights within their countries,” he wrote. “By inducing them to change their repressive policies, we would be enhancing freedom and democracy, and helping to remove the reasons for revolutions that often erupt among those who suffer from persecution. We might therefore accomplish our purposes without replacing a rightist totalitarian regime with a leftist one of the same oppressive character.”<sup>167</sup> Jeane Kirkpatrick argued that though Carter did not wish to see the overthrow of these governments, his administration pressured them too much on human rights and refused to provide them support when necessary. His policies did end up replacing rightist oppressive regimes with leftist ones, but those regimes were not merely “of the same oppressive character”—they were worse.

In “Dictatorships and Double Standards,” Kirkpatrick correctly laid out the consequences of Carter’s foreign policy, though she was not entirely correct about his administration’s reasoning and goals. The Carter administration’s approach to Iran,

---

<sup>166</sup> Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 143.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

Nicaragua, and the Soviet Union, reveal the importance of the State Department bureaucracy to policy outcomes, and that both Kirkpatrick and Carter advocated a double standard, but they disagreed on which double standard was in the national interest. Cyrus Vance reveals how distinguishing between types of human rights violations rather than the types of violators can lead to a different foreign policy approach.

When critics have attacked the totalitarian-authoritarian distinction and the de-emphasis of human rights as compared to Carter, they have generally failed to acknowledge the nuance in Kirkpatrick's approach. She never did give friendly regimes a free pass; she only wanted to treat them more like friends because they were not as repressive or belligerent as expansionist, Marxist-Leninist states. Brzezinski's and Vance's own words reveal that Kirkpatrick was correct in her evaluation of the Carter human rights policies, though their pressuring right-wing autocrats was more due to the weakness of those regime's and the administration's ability to influence them.

Whatever the motivations of the Carter policies, Kirkpatrick believed that their consequences impeded the progress of human rights. A 1990 *World Affairs* article affirmed Kirkpatrick's different approach to human rights: "American support for authoritarian governments may occasionally be necessary, not because they are desirable and admirable, but because they are *relatively* better than a totalitarian alternative,"<sup>168</sup> it said. What is more, the authoritarian alternative is more likely to democratize, and therefore "backing an authoritarian is not an end in itself: a concern for better government and American national interest requires working to reform the regime."<sup>169</sup> To encourage democracy, the article argued, Kirkpatrick "spells out...a proactive policy to inculcate

---

<sup>168</sup> "A Policy is Born," *World Affairs* 153, no. 2 (fall 1990): 62.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

democratic ideas in other nations.”<sup>170</sup> *World Affairs* recognized that for Kirkpatrick, the endgame was democracy.

Kirkpatrick spoke dozens of times after the publication of her essay on the importance not only of democracy promotion, but also of human rights; while Vance distinguished between the two, they can, of course, go hand in hand. Through the Reagan administration’s internal debates and policies and the enunciation of the Reagan Doctrine, to which we now turn, one can see that Kirkpatrick supported not only anti-communism, but also human rights and democracy.

---

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.



**PART TWO:**  
**KIRKPATRICK AND THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION**

### **The Kirkpatrick and Reagan Doctrines**

“[A]ll that was left for [Ronald Reagan] to turn on its head was accepted thinking on geopolitics,” said conservative pundit Charles Krauthammer in April 1985, speaking about the president’s political achievements. “Now he has done that too. He has produced the Reagan Doctrine.”<sup>171</sup> Krauthammer was the first to coin the term Reagan Doctrine, which would refer to a set of policies that proclaimed “overt and unabashed American support for anti-Communist revolutions.”<sup>172</sup> The core policies of Reagan’s Cold War strategy finally had a name. That name, however, could be deceiving. The “Reagan Doctrine” refers to very specific, though central, aspects of Reagan’s foreign policy, namely those related to countries in which there were anticommunist insurgencies fighting against externally supported communist governments. The Doctrine had specific criteria for its application to a given country: the existence of democratic resistance; the denial of political participation; and external Soviet support for the government. Reagan scholar James M. Scott has numbered the applications of the Reagan Doctrine to six countries only.<sup>173</sup> Reagan’s Cold War policies, however, went beyond merely the Doctrine, and one can see Kirkpatrick’s thought coursing through them as a whole.

---

<sup>171</sup> Charles Krauthammer, “The Reagan Doctrine,” *Time* (April 1, 1985), 54, quoted in James M. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene: The Reagan Doctrine and American Foreign Policy* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996), 1.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> James M. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene: The Reagan Doctrine and American Foreign Policy* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996), 31.

I shall try, then, to consider foreign policy through a lens that goes beyond simply the Reagan Doctrine, though I shall argue that the Doctrine itself was also a natural extension of Kirkpatrick's thought; the lens will be that of comparing the roles of human rights, democracy, and anti-communism in the Reagan policies. In particular, the meaningful distinction between totalitarian and authoritarian regimes that Kirkpatrick described, along with a more astute understanding of opposition groups in specific countries, did not translate to unbridled support of right-wing dictatorships as some critics believed, and it did not translate to supporting democratic movements only when they formed against leftist regimes. The goal of both the Reagan Doctrine and the "Kirkpatrick Doctrine"—supporting authoritarian regimes against leftist insurgents—and of the Reagan policies more broadly was always to promote democracy and human rights.

### **The Reagan Doctrine**

Soon after National Security Adviser Richard Allen brought Kirkpatrick aboard the Reagan campaign, she was offered the position of permanent ambassador to the United Nations. At the United Nations, Kirkpatrick could put the tenets of her thesis in "Dictatorships and Double Standards" into practice and influence the foreign policy of the new administration. As in many administrations, however, there were several differing views on what the administration's foreign policy should be. One can see this difficulty with the example of Latin America policy, with which Kirkpatrick would often be associated and which will thus be the focus here. In addition to Kirkpatrick's writing, other documents helped formulate the Reagan administration's policies in the region, including the chapter "The Soft Underbelly," from Richard Nixon's book *The Real War*;

the Heritage Foundation's 1980 "Mandate for Leadership"; and the Santa Fe Committee report of the Council for Inter-American Security.<sup>174</sup>

Reagan himself came into office with strong views on foreign policy for Latin America, and in 1977 he had articulated the same concerns that Kirkpatrick would in 1979. "If human rights around the world are going to be our principal concern, then we must adhere to a single, not a double standard in our policy," he said. "Can we, on humanitarian grounds, carry on a constant drumbeat of criticism toward South Africa and Rhodesia at the same time we talk of recognizing a regime in Cambodia that has butchered as much as a third of its population?"<sup>175</sup> Reagan came to office with strong convictions and influenced policy in his own right.

Personalities inside the White House and State Department also influenced the policies.<sup>176</sup> These included James Baker and Michael Deaver inside the White House; the Vice President, who was more moderate on foreign policy issues; Secretary of State Alexander Haig; and the State Department bureaucracy itself. Ultimately, Howard J. Wiarda divides the Reagan era into four periods: a hard-line period between 1981 and 1983; a more moderate period through 1985; a return to more hard-line policies from 1985-1987; and then the "triumph of moderation" in the last years of the administration.<sup>177</sup> Beth A. Fischer also describes a "reversal" of policy toward the Soviet Union more broadly that occurred around January 1984, which she ascribes to nuclear "near misses" that moved Reagan to reconsider his harsh rhetoric toward the Soviet

---

<sup>174</sup> Howard J. Wiarda, *American Foreign Policy Toward Latin America in the 80s and 90s: Issues and Controversies from Reagan to Bush* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 21.

<sup>175</sup> Ronald Reagan, *A Time for Choosing: The Speeches of Ronald Reagan 1961-1982* (Chicago: Regnery Gateway, 1983), 206.

<sup>176</sup> Wiarda, *American Foreign Policy Toward Latin America*, 21. See also James M. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene*, passim.

<sup>177</sup> Howard J. Wiarda, *American Foreign Policy Toward Latin America*, 23-32.

Union.<sup>178</sup> While these divisions are meaningful, they do not completely describe the evolving policies of the administration. The rhetoric might have changed toward the Soviet Union around 1984 and the administration might have been more willing to pursue arms reduction and dialogue,<sup>179</sup> but as we shall see that did not change the administration's policy toward Latin American dictators or the Reagan Doctrine. The administration did become "more moderate," but that resulted from changing conditions in particular countries, and changing rhetoric, rather than a changing administration policy.

In terms of the Reagan Doctrine, the Santa Fe Committee report was likely very influential in its initial formulations. The report warned that containment was no longer an option in Central America, that Soviet-backed regimes in the Western Hemisphere presented significant threats to the United States, and that the U.S. government must therefore be more proactive in confronting these satellite states.<sup>180</sup> Some have credited the director of central intelligence, William Casey, as being the author of the Doctrine. In March 1981, Casey proposed several covert aid programs to anticommunist resistance movements in Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Cuba, Grenada, Iran, Laos, Libya, and Nicaragua.<sup>181</sup> National Security Decision Directive 75, signed in January 1983, consolidated these initial proposals into a policy that would seek to "weaken and, where possible, undermine the existing links between [Soviet Third World allies] and the Soviet

---

<sup>178</sup> Beth A. Fischer, *The Reagan Reversal: Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1997), 16-50, 102-143.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 35-36.

<sup>180</sup> James M. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene*, 19.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-20.

Union. US policy will include active efforts to encourage democratic movements and forces to bring about political change inside these countries.”<sup>182</sup>

James M. Scott numbers the application of the Reagan Doctrine to the following six countries: Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Nicaragua.<sup>183</sup> But he himself acknowledges that the criteria of the Doctrine were open to interpretation; what qualified as democratic resistance, denial of political participation, and external support required judgment. Nevertheless, those six countries all had some sort of Soviet-backed government facing domestic opposition. Scott points out as well that the application was inconsistent: sometimes it included direct military aid to the opposition (Afghanistan and Nicaragua), sometimes only financial aid (Cambodia), and sometimes diplomacy or other means replaced aid altogether (Mozambique).<sup>184</sup>

While Scott does not credit Kirkpatrick with the development of the Reagan Doctrine, Kirkpatrick’s writing on what would become known as the Reagan Doctrine and deeper consideration of its rationale demonstrate the specific influence of her thought. In the lead essay in *Right v. Might: International Law and the Use of Force*, Kirkpatrick wrote with another U.N. colleague, Allan Gerson, perhaps the clearest enunciation of the Doctrine and demonstrated its similarity to her formulations in “Dictatorships and Double Standards.” The goal of the essay was to clarify the guiding principles of the Doctrine and examples of their application during the Reagan years.

Early in the essay Kirkpatrick and Gerson explained,

The Reagan Doctrine, as we understand it, is above all concerned with the moral legitimacy of U.S. support—including military support—for

---

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

insurgencies under certain circumstances: where there are indigenous opponents to a government that is maintained by force, rather than popular consent; where such a government depends on arms supplied by the Soviet Union, the Soviet bloc, or other foreign sources; and where the people are denied a choice regarding their affiliations and future.<sup>185</sup>

We see first that there must be an indigenous opposition to a non-democratically elected government that is also maintained by force. The Doctrine, therefore, only applied to governments backed by the Soviet Union or the Soviet bloc, which maintained external client states; there was no mention of supporting indigenous groups against pro-American authoritarian regimes, such as in Chile or El Salvador. Indeed, Kirkpatrick and Gerson described the Doctrine as modest because it was limited to governments maintained by “externally supplied” forces, and where “insurgencies have arisen” in response.<sup>186</sup> The use of the word external was no accident, and its significance went beyond limiting the scope of the Doctrine: it again implied the difference between rightist authoritarian regimes, which supported themselves, and communist totalitarian regimes, most of which not only received external support from the Soviet Union or its satellites, but which by their very nature worked to export their revolution to other countries. In one sense, then, the Reagan Doctrine was a natural extension of Kirkpatrick’s 1979 article, in which she made these same distinctions.

The Reagan Doctrine emphasizes democracy and popular consent, even though its application is limited. Even critics acknowledge that the administration, at least in rhetoric, cloaked the Reagan Doctrine in democratic justifications. Scott explains that Attorney General Edwin Meese understood supporting anticommunist insurgencies as a

---

<sup>185</sup> Jeane J. Kirkpatrick and Allan Gerson, “The Reagan Doctrine, Human Rights, and International Law,” *Right v. Might: International Law and the Use of Force* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1991), 20.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

“crusade for freedom.”<sup>187</sup> In speeches to the British Parliament and to the Heritage Foundation in 1982 and 1983, Reagan underlined the “aspirations for freedom and democracy” that were growing in the world, and that the United States must have a “forward strategy for freedom.”<sup>188</sup> Kirkpatrick and Gerson reiterated the identity of democracy and anti-communism toward the end of their essay: “The Soviets intervene to deny the free expression of self-determination: the only choice a people has is a variation upon the theme of socialism and one-party rule,” they wrote. “The United States counterintervenes to preserve and promote freedom.”<sup>189</sup> Democracy, as far as the Reagan Doctrine was concerned, was the solution to communism; democracy promotion was not distinct from anti-communism, but rather the two were one and the same policy.

The Reagan Doctrine only concerned itself with supporting insurgencies against Soviet-backed regimes; the Kirkpatrick Doctrine, on the other hand, advocated supporting *existing* governments against leftist insurgencies. Did the administration pursue democracy in these regimes even while sustaining them against insurgencies? And how did the administration react to authoritarian countries faced with *democratic* opposition? There are three scenarios, then, to consider: a rightist or democratic insurgency against a communist government, to which the Reagan Doctrine applied; a leftist insurgency against a rightist government, to which the Kirkpatrick Doctrine applied; and an authoritarian government faced with genuinely democratic opposition. This third scenario could evolve from an application of the Kirkpatrick Doctrine, when a government previously faced with communist opposition no longer faces the leftist threat

---

<sup>187</sup> James M. Scott, 22.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Kirkpatrick and Gerson, *Right v. Might*, 33.



(such as in Chile). Kirkpatrick's arguments in "Dictatorships and Double Standards" keep open the possibility of supporting democratic opposition in authoritarian countries, which I shall argue the administration did in Chile, and which demonstrates the importance of evaluating the Reagan Doctrine in light of Reagan's foreign policy as a whole.

In sum, the Reagan Doctrine was a specific policy for specific situations in a broader policy of promoting democracy around the world and curbing the spread of communism, though the Doctrine itself still emphasized self-determination. Looking at the Doctrine too narrowly belies the administration's efforts in countries such as Chile and El Salvador, to which the Kirkpatrick Doctrine applied and which the next chapter addresses. Chile and El Salvador paint a broader picture of the relationship between human rights, democracy, and anti-communism in the administration's policies.

### **The Kirkpatrick Doctrine: Human Rights, Democracy, or anti-Communism?**

Despite the shifting foreign policy which Wiarda describes and the anti-communist focus of the Reagan Doctrine formulations, we have seen that the Reagan Doctrine specifically emphasized the importance of self-determination. The theme of democratization, moreover, was always present in foreign policy decision-making throughout the Reagan years in rhetoric as well as policy outside the scope of the Reagan Doctrine, including within the scope of the Kirkpatrick Doctrine. One former State Department lawyer argues that democracy promotion was the preeminent goal of U.S. foreign policy in Latin America, and not the larger struggle against communism:

During the same years that democracy was spreading through Latin America, the United States government made democracy the principal stated goal of its Latin America policy. Throughout the 1980s, in

innumerable speeches and press conferences, President Reagan and his advisers declared that the United States was committed to promoting the emergence and maintenance of democratic governments throughout Latin America. All other U.S. policy goals, including anticommunism, economic development, and peace, were expressed as subsidiaries of the central goal of democracy promotion.<sup>190</sup>

Whether democracy promotion was more “rhetorical” or “real” is the question explored here; but the central place of democracy promotion “in the public formulation of the policy is unquestionable,”<sup>191</sup> and by the end of the 1980s democracies had proliferated all over Latin America. As Elliott Abrams, the assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs, said,

An extraordinary development has unfolded during the Reagan years. A democratic revolution is underway. One country after another has joined the ranks of democratic states. The political map of Latin America and the Caribbean has been transformed, and today more than 90 percent of the people in the region live in societies that are, or are moving to, democracy. Here was a rare opportunity for American statecraft to respond to a historic opening as it was happening. We in the Reagan Administration gave it our full support. No mere spectator in this revolution, we did more than just welcome the trend rhetorically. Democracy became the organizing principle of our policy. It encompassed the divergent interests of this country within a unifying and coherent framework.<sup>192</sup>

At least in rhetoric, administration officials were not pronouncing unbridled support for right-wing authoritarians as critics of the Kirkpatrick Doctrine claimed; they were supporting democratization. Abrams further claimed that they did not merely sit on the sidelines, but rather they actively supported the process through real policy.

Interestingly, though Abrams says that the goal of the administration was democratization, he is not entirely convinced that democratization directly translated

---

<sup>190</sup> Thomas Carothers, *In the Name of Democracy: U.S. Policy Toward Latin America in the Reagan Years* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1991), 3.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

from Kirkpatrick's approach. He argues that the Reagan policy shifted over time, much as Wiarda describes. When asked in an interview whether the Reagan administration erred on the side of Kirkpatrick in that it wanted to maintain and support authoritarian regimes in general, Abrams responded,

I don't want to be unfair to her but it seems to me that the administration moved over those eight years toward pressure to get rid of these military governments, and that the policy that [George] Shultz [Reagan's second Secretary of State] carried through moved beyond Jeane [Kirkpatrick]. I think Argentina is probably another example of that. Obviously she was a Democrat and wanted all these countries to be ruled by elected officials and not by armies...[S]he was I don't know what you would say—she had less faith in the civilians or she had less faith in our ability to maneuver it successfully. I don't know the answer to that. But she was far less supportive than say Shultz of moving in this direction.<sup>193</sup>

Abrams argues that the entire administration indeed supported democratization efforts, but that the argument occurred over when and how much to pressure regimes in that direction. Abrams believes that Kirkpatrick's emphasis, as seen in her article in particular, was to maintain the authoritarian regime as a general rule and be very cautious about when to support opposition.

Abrams's statement expresses the similar thinking of some critics of the administration's more "hard-line" approach. Tamar Jacoby of *The New York Times*, for example, agreed with Abrams assessment back in 1986. In a *Foreign Affairs* article titled "The Reagan Turnaround on Human Rights," she wrote that Reagan seemed to have completely reversed his position, "picking up the pieces of human rights policy he tried very hard to dismantle in his first days as president."<sup>194</sup> Jacoby claimed that America's help in driving out of power Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines and Jean-Claude

---

<sup>193</sup> Elliott Abrams, phone interview by author, Bethesda, Md., 22 August 2008.

<sup>194</sup> Tamar Jacoby, "The Reagan Turnaround on Human Rights," *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1986), in Nexis [database online].

Duvalier in Haiti, both rightist American allies with “egregious human rights record,” was a response to pressure from Congress and the human rights community. There was a change in the administration’s policies on human rights, she explained, “a 150- if not a 180-degree change.”<sup>195</sup> Tying Reagan’s earlier policies directly to Kirkpatrick, Jacoby wrote, “Still others hailed [the changes] as a reversal of the Reagan Administration’s adherence to the so-called Kirkpatrick doctrine, with its contention that ‘totalitarian’ Marxist regimes should be treated differently than ‘authoritarian’ dictatorships of the right, which were said to be less repressive, more susceptible to change and better for American interests.”<sup>196</sup> Carleton and Stohl support Jacoby’s claim, arguing that the administration’s “rhetorical arguments ran into political opposition that required that they be played down.”<sup>197</sup>

Carleton and Stohl, however, recognize that changing the rhetoric did not necessarily translate to a change in actual policy; and one should note that Jacoby’s contention that Reagan’s policies toward the Philippines and Haiti somehow dissolved the authoritarian-totalitarian distinction does not follow logically. Simply because the administration pressured both kinds of regimes does not mean it did not see a distinction between the two. But perhaps the administration’s critics, and the flagrant human rights abuses still occurring under friendly regimes, did cause the administration to take a firmer approach toward authoritarian countries on human rights. George Shultz, however, gives little indication in his memoirs that the general approach to rightist regimes shifted under his watch. “The governments of El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala contained and

---

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Carleton and Stohl, “The Foreign Policy of Human Rights,” *Human Rights Quarterly* (May 1985), 221.

tolerated many unsavory characters. Still, serious people in those governments were engaged in a stalwart effort to move toward democracy,” he writes.<sup>198</sup> Shultz argues that the administration had to navigate between concerns over communist takeovers and the outrageous behavior of rightist governments.<sup>199</sup>

Kirkpatrick’s associates at the United Nations also dispute the contentions that Kirkpatrick lost influence and that the practical policy shifted. They argue that her approach was always one of democratization, and that the rhetoric did shift but that the shift did not represent a fundamental change in policy. If anything, explains Carl Gershman, her Senior Counselor at the United Nations, Kirkpatrick’s team at the U.N. encountered friction from the State Department which wanted to be more pragmatic than she did. “I think...there was a real division between people in the administration who somehow shared a particular intellectual perspective and wanted to be powerful advocates for a vigorous pro-freedom anti-communist point of view,” says Gershman, “and then others who you might think of as more pragmatic, more realpolitik types of people. The [U.N.] mission and the people she gathered around her at the mission became a center for a kind of strong pro-freedom, anti-communist intellectual point of view.”<sup>200</sup> In contrast, the State Department “is always more interested in being more pragmatic: these are professional Foreign Service officers. They don’t really understand the intellectual battles out of which she emerged, out of which we all emerged,” he

---

<sup>198</sup> George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1993), 291.

<sup>199</sup> George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 285-292.

<sup>200</sup> Carl Gershman, interview by author, Washington, D.C., 25 August 2008.

contends.<sup>201</sup> Gershman further argues that democracy promotion was always, from day one, Kirkpatrick's foreign policy objective.

Another Kirkpatrick associate at the United Nations agrees, explaining that the apparent shift in foreign policy was entirely consistent with Kirkpatrick's approach and that the shift was rhetorical. Jose Sorzano, Kirkpatrick's deputy permanent representative at the United Nations and a former student of hers at Georgetown, explains, "We began to argue against the threat of communist take over in Central America with the Sandinistas and so forth," but

it became evident that trying to sell anti-communism was not going well. It became evident that we needed to change the argument and the symbolic environment of our policies. So it became also evident to those of us who were professors that human rights is good, but human rights is essentially a part of something much larger, much more desirable: and that is democracy. In other words, it is possible to allow say a monarchy that respects human rights, but it is much more likely that a democratic system will respect human rights because the workings of a democratic system presupposes all kinds of things, which are incorporated into our notion of human rights.<sup>202</sup>

Thus, Sorzano says, the argument "shifted not to promoting anti-communism but to promoting democracy," which, he explains, "was essentially the same thing." If you are promoting democracy, you are still anti-communist; but what is more, the new argument "was not only a more satisfying intellectual construct, but also an easier sell."<sup>203</sup>

Summarizing his rebuttal to the critics, Sorzano says, "[P]romoting democracy and human rights became the policy of the Reagan administration. It was not to set aside human rights but essentially to encapsulate them within a larger and much more desirable

---

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Jose Sorzano, phone interview by author, Bethesda, Md., 27 August 2008.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

goal, which was to make [a specific country] a stable, prosperous democracy.”<sup>204</sup>

Sorzano’s explanation is also a critique of Cyrus Vance’s human rights hierarchy: political and civil liberties, which Vance ranked as only thirdly important, would ensure the other human rights.

One need not rely on the word of Kirkpatrick’s colleagues at the United Nations to see that critics like Jacoby, who distinguish between “hard-line” and more “moderate” foreign policy eras in Reagan’s term, are probably simplifying the explanation for the administration’s shift. There was disagreement among Reagan’s advisers as to how to articulate the administration’s foreign policy—which the eventual shift to emphasizing “democracy” over “anti-communism” demonstrates—but in October of 1981, a policy memorandum sent to Secretary of State Alexander Haig highlighted the importance of human rights. The memorandum said, “‘Human rights’ is not something we tack on to our foreign policy but is its very purpose: the defense and promotion of freedom in the world.”<sup>205</sup> Thus, it seems that even if there was a dispute between Kirkpatrick and those who wanted to take a “softer” line, it was short lived: by October of the first year, the administration was already articulating a foreign policy based on democracy promotion and human rights as well as anti-communism. The memorandum echoed Kirkpatrick’s “Dictatorships and Double Standards” approach: “We must take into account the pressures a regime faces and the nature of its enemies,” it declared. “Human rights [are] not advanced by replacing a bad regime with a worse one, or a corrupt dictator with a zealous Communist politburo.”<sup>206</sup>

---

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> “A Policy is Born,” *World Affairs* 153, no. 2 (fall 1990): 65.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

The *World Affairs* article introduced in the previous chapter explains that the policies in the October 1981 memorandum, as well as those expressed in a 1981 State Department report on human rights, became known as the “Kirkpatrick Doctrine” and informed the policies of the Reagan administration. The themes of democracy promotion, human rights, and anti-communism all worked together and “are all present in the statements of President Reagan, Haig and his successor George Shultz, Kirkpatrick, Abrams, and others after October 1981, and they were applied around the world.”<sup>207</sup> The difference between Reagan’s policies, informed by Kirkpatrick’s “Dictatorships and Double Standards” thesis, and the Carter policies Kirkpatrick criticized in her article, was not over whether human rights would be included. The difference was that in addition to including human rights, the Reagan administration also tried to cultivate democracy in the countries which abused them rather than merely focus on stopping the specific abuses.

Put another way, Kirkpatrick would reverse Cyrus Vance’s placement of the “security of the person” human right and the “civil and political liberties” human right in his hierarchy. She, and the Reagan administration, did not consider civil and political liberties as merely of third importance; they were of primary importance. From political and civil liberties would flow security of the person and the other rights which Vance enumerated. Kirkpatrick explained her belief in the salutary effect of democracy on other human rights in this way: “...there are no ‘trade offs’ between democracy and equality, between democracy and law, between democracy and development because only

---

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 66.



democracy finally ensures respect for human rights, the rule of law, and opportunity for all.”<sup>208</sup>

In the same *Commentary* human rights symposium in which Brzezinski wrote his criticism of Kirkpatrick’s use of the totalitarian-authoritarian distinction, Kirkpatrick responded to critics such as Brzezinski and Vance on the question of human rights. She revealed the importance of human rights to the Reagan policies and her own thinking. “[N]ot only should human rights play a central role in U.S. foreign policy, no U.S. foreign policy can possibly succeed that does not accord them a central role,”<sup>209</sup> she wrote. The more important questions, she reiterated, are “which type of regime in fact imprisons, enslaves, tortures, [and] kills [the] most people?” Which type of regime “is most susceptible [to] liberalization and democratization?” Is the establishment of a Marxist government in America’s national interest?<sup>210</sup> In sum, she herself emphasized the importance of human rights, but questioned whether Vance’s hierarchy, and its lack of distinguishing between types of human rights *violators*, benefited human rights more than her alternative.

### **The Democratization Process and the National Interest**

That the administration viewed democracy as the solution to communism is why, according to Gershman and Sorzano from the United Nations and Elliot Abrams from the State Department, the administration pressured Pinochet out of power and supported

---

<sup>208</sup> Forward by Jeane Kirkpatrick in Joshua Muravchik, *The Uncertain Crusade: Jimmy Carter and the Dilemmas of Human Rights Policy* (New York: Hamilton Press, 1986), xiv.

<sup>209</sup> Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, “Human Rights and American Foreign Policy: A Symposium,” *Commentary* 72, no. 5 (Nov. 1981): 42.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*

democratic opposition in Chile.<sup>211</sup> But before moving on to a closer examination of the case of Chile, as well as to the case of El Salvador, it is worth reiterating another element of Kirkpatrick's thought in "Dictatorships and Double Standards," which perhaps has more immediate parallels to the War on Terror: democratization is notoriously difficult. Even though the underlying principle of the Reagan Doctrine and the Reagan policies more broadly, at least in rhetoric, was to support democracy, that did not translate to imposing democracy anytime anywhere.

In her posthumously published book, *Making War to Keep Peace*, Kirkpatrick's own explanation for the conflict in Haiti, which occurred during Clinton's presidency and which constitutes a chapter in her book, provides some of her insight into democratization. "In the case of Haiti," she wrote, "the U.S. government adopted the notion that democracy is a human right, and that the United States is responsible for protecting or restoring it around the world, regardless of the costs or whether American interests are at stake." She pointed out this folly: "This experience showed the danger of assuming—naively, with insufficient planning and resources—that democracy can be imposed on a historically lawless and chaotic nation."<sup>212</sup> She later added,

The operation proposed for Haiti would not just replace on ruler with another; it would also aim to build a modern democratic state. But nation building requires a long-term commitment, intimate familiarity with the country, and deep cultural affinities. The United States and the Clinton administration clearly had few of the fundamental requisites for successful nation building in Haiti.<sup>213</sup>

---

<sup>211</sup> Carl Gershman, interview by author, Washington, D.C., 25 August 2008.; Jose Sorzano, phone interview by author, Bethesda, Md., 27 August 2008; Elliott Abrams, phone interview by author, Bethesda, Md., 22 August 2008.

<sup>212</sup> Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, *Making War to Keep Peace* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 113-114.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

Her main concern echoed her ideas in “Dictatorships and Double Standards,” in which she wrote that many political scientists have acknowledged the difficulty of establishing and maintaining democratic institutions because of the demands on the populace and the social, cultural, and economic factors. That is, democracy cannot be imposed anytime, anywhere. As Abrams explains, Kirkpatrick, as well as others in the administration, would have preferred to see democratic governments everywhere; but Kirkpatrick demonstrated her prudence in the application of democracy promotion, or at least her deeper skepticism to which Abrams earlier alluded, and which would later manifest itself in her opposition to the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

The case of Haiti illuminates a final factor of Kirkpatrick’s foreign policy thought I shall address: she believed that even if democratization had been possible, the U.S. had no business in supporting it militarily in Haiti. An invasion of Haiti, she wrote,

would be incompatible with American interests. Haiti was not a menace to the United States or the hemisphere. It was not then a center of Caribbean drug trafficking. . . . It did not provide a base for a hostile power. It did not export subversion and revolution. It had not declared open season on Americans, as Manuel Noriega did earlier, nor held Americans hostage, as had Grenada’s revolutionary Committee of Safety. It had not engaged in terrorist plots against Americans, as Libya did.<sup>214</sup>

Her opposition to democratization in Haiti does not, of course, imply that she and the Reagan administration opposed all democratization efforts; only, again, that prudence was necessary, and that given their limited nature the military resources of the United States should be applied where there were overriding security concerns.

Many have accused Kirkpatrick of ignoring human rights in favor of national security concerns, and while she did not support *military* solutions to impose democracy

---

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

unless there was a direct security interest, this chapter has already shown that she thought democracy broadly speaking was desirable. To clarify her position, one can contrast her statement on Haiti to a 1985 statement she made on Namibia, which, she wrote, was *not* a “vital interest to the United States.” Yet, she added, “[W]e simply believe Namibia’s right to independence should be achieved in a negotiated settlement rather than through the imposition of solutions by force.”<sup>215</sup> Allan Gerson explained it thus: Kirkpatrick “never saw a legitimate basis for the direct use of U.S. force in support of democracy. Rather, the use of force was legitimate when it was wielded to support indigenous insurgents in opposition to a government maintained by force and not democratic consent.”<sup>216</sup> That is, the use of force was not legitimate and necessary always, but it was so in the context of the Reagan Doctrine. “As such, the Reagan Doctrine was one that expressed solidarity with democracy, but was prudent and conservative in the use of military force to support democracy.”<sup>217</sup>

Chile and El Salvador are two case studies on the question of the totalitarian-authoritarian distinction and on the importance of democracy and human rights versus anti-communism. Neither is an example of the Reagan Doctrine. In Chile, though it had a friendly authoritarian government, the Reagan administration pursued democratization. Kirkpatrick’s U.N. colleagues claim that supporting democracy in Chile was part of the broader policy of anti-communism, but Kirkpatrick herself was largely silent on the issue even though the prospects for democratic reform were real. Indeed, perhaps Kirkpatrick’s flaw was that while she supported democratic development all over Central and South

---

<sup>215</sup> Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, “Moral Equivalence and Political Aims,” *Society* (March/April 1985), 4.

<sup>216</sup> Allan Gerson, postscript to *Making War to Keep Peace*, 307.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, 308.

America, she believed that the administration was moving too fast on Chile; she had less faith, as Abrams said, in the country's ability to democratize. Perhaps when it came to democratization in Chile the administration did move away from her, but it does not seem the administration moved away from her on ideology or principle, only on application.

U.S. El Salvador policies also provide a test for the rhetoric this and previous chapters have explored. In El Salvador, the United States' immediate priority was defeating the leftist insurgents, which required supporting the military regime; however, the Reagan administration consistently attempted to create a centrist coalition even within the military government that could evolve into a democracy. With his election and his actual consolidation of power, Christian Democrat Napoleon Duarte demonstrated the success of the administration's policies. While not succumbing to the leftist insurgents, the Reagan administration helped El Salvadoran political and military leaders maneuver between the exigencies of the war and the importance of democratic development. Both Chile and El Salvador will reveal the extent to which the administration's rhetoric was in tune with the reality of its policies.

## **Putting Policy to Practice: Chile and El Salvador**

### **Chile: Democratizing an Authoritarian Regime**

The United States' foreign policy toward Chile, with which Kirkpatrick would be closely associated, was not constant throughout Reagan's tenure in the 1980s; rather, it evolved from an increasingly friendly foreign policy in the first years of his administration to a complete reversal by 1986. An examination of the administration's policy toward Chile reveals the intricacies of the Reagan policies, and should dispel myths about the administration's support of General Augusto Pinochet. Though Chile was not an application of the Reagan Doctrine as Kirkpatrick and others defined it, because there was no external communist influence supporting the regime, there was actually a democratic opposition and good prospects for a successful democracy, and therefore the opposition received the Reagan administration's support. It is noteworthy, however, the Kirkpatrick herself was largely silent on the issue of Chile, which perhaps provides more support for the contention that she was less enthusiastic about pressuring the Pinochet regime than other Reagan officials.

During his first two years in office, Reagan reversed many of the Carter-era policies toward Chile. Reagan allowed American development banks to lend to Chile, which Carter had prohibited; he replaced the ambassador with a more conservative one; and, for the first time, he began voting against UN resolutions condemning Chile for

human rights violations.<sup>218</sup> “Rather than publicly criticize Chile,” argues one Chile expert, “Reagan advocated a policy of ‘quiet diplomacy’ toward Santiago in hope of nudging Pinochet into adopting more liberal domestic policy.”<sup>219</sup> According to this account, Reagan was not giving free reign to the authoritarian government of Chile—he was quietly promoting democratization. Pinochet did, however, face “a large communist opposition, including an active guerrilla movement,”<sup>220</sup> and so the administration wanted to normalize relations with him as much as possible.

Latin America scholar and Princeton political scientist Paul E. Sigmund puts Reagan’s Chile policy in the direct framework of Kirkpatrick’s “Dictatorships and Double Standards” article. Reagan and his advisers, he argues, accepted Kirkpatrick’s argument that public pressure on authoritarian regimes friendly to the United States violated U.S. interests.<sup>221</sup> Sigmund argues that the Reagan approach to democratization was prompted by the overall Cold War strategy of the administration. The “first priority of the administration’s Latin American policy was the effort to oppose the spread of the left in Central America,” and part of that strategy was to stress the ideological differences between communism and democracy. As the administration would begin to stress liberal democracy over the communist alternative—as Sorzano described earlier—“it was to affect the new policy toward the Pinochet regime—and at the beginning of the second Reagan administration, to reverse it—so that by 1985 the U.S. government was engaged

---

<sup>218</sup> William F Sater, *Chile and the United States: Empires in Conflict* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 196.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>220</sup> Carothers, *In the Name of Democracy*, 150.

<sup>221</sup> Paul E. Sigmund, *The United States and Democracy in Chile* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1993), 132.

in public criticism of, and economic pressure upon, the Chilean government.”<sup>222</sup> By early 1986, the Reagan administration would take the lead in introducing resolutions at the U.N. which were critical of Chile. Thus, his policy evolved over time: at first he was more supportive of Pinochet because he thought Pinochet provided a safeguard against communism, and only later began to pressure Chile in the direction of democracy.

Sigmund cites a number of reasons for this shift in policy. One key reason was the evolution in the internal situation in Chile, particularly “the continued intransigence of Pinochet *and the emergence of a viable non-Communist opposition coalition*” (emphasis added).<sup>223</sup> It cannot be overstated that a key moment in U.S. foreign policy toward Chile occurred when it became more obvious that such a centrist and viable opposition existed. Such viable alternatives to the existing governments did not exist in Iran or Nicaragua a few years earlier. In early 1983, this viable opposition coalition emerged in Chile from various centrist parties and established the Project for National Development “to offer an alternative to the Pinochet government.”<sup>224</sup> On March 15, a “Democratic Manifesto” was signed by leaders and members of the Christian Democratic, Radical, Socialist, Social Democratic, and the late Liberal and Conservative parties, which became the basis for the Democratic Alliance, a coalition comprising political parties that ranged from “moderate socialist to ex-conservatives.”<sup>225</sup> One Latin America expert and former Reagan official put it this way: “The policy shift was also facilitated by events in Chile. In August 1985, a group of major opposition parties in Chile signed the Accord for a Full Transition to Democracy...in which they said they would accept the constitutionally mandated

---

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 132-133.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., 142-143.



transition process.”<sup>226</sup> In other words, “Chile did have a viable centrist alternative, [and] the United States was not faced with a stark choice between Pinochet and the communists.”<sup>227</sup>

In part because of these developments, a series of protests against the Pinochet regime occurred. Pinochet cracked down, and the State Department issued a series of statements in protest, including a particularly strong statement following the arrest of three opposition leaders in July. There was a new critical tone at the State Department, and the ambassador to Chile began meeting more with labor and political leaders; “there was speculation that the United States was attempting to promote a center-right alliance and advance the date for possible civilian elections.” In an interview, the ambassador told Chilean magazine *Cosas* that the U.S. supported the restoration of “full and stable democracy in Chile.”<sup>228</sup>

Pinochet did make some concessions with increased U.S. pressure. In August 1983, he ended the state of emergency that had existed since 1977. Pinochet further “promised to permit exiles to return to Chile, to ease censorship, and to allow more political activity.”<sup>229</sup> In October 1984, however, Pinochet re-imposed the state of emergency as anti-government protests increased. The United State denounced this move, and high-ranking officials, including Secretary of State George Shultz and President Reagan himself, protested Pinochet’s actions.<sup>230</sup> Ultimately, Reagan’s economic pressures forced Pinochet’s hand. In May and June of 1985 Chile needed two billion

---

<sup>226</sup> Carothers, *In the Name of Democracy*, 154.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>228</sup> Sigmund, *The United States and Democracy in Chile*, 144.

<sup>229</sup> William F Sater, *Chile and the United States*, 197.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

dollars in new loans for its development agenda over the following two years, but those loans depended on guarantees from the World Bank. The U.S. government announced that it would only support these loans if certain conditions had been met. As Sigmund argues, the “lifting of the state of siege was directly related to U.S. pressure.”<sup>231</sup>

In 1988, the Reagan administration began funding projects and organizations that “substantially assisted the opposition” in Chile: the U.S. Agency for International Development allocated \$1.2 million in late 1987 to a program which channeled money into a private Chilean foundation that created the Crusade for Citizen Participation, or the Civic Crusade. Using churches and rock concerts to spread its message, the Civic Crusade helped 7.2 million Chileans register to vote.<sup>232</sup> The National Endowment for Democracy supported seminars on democracy with Chilean leaders, helped develop election-monitoring skills in Chile, and commissioned public opinion polls. The Endowment also helped fund the Christian Democratic newspaper.<sup>233</sup> Under mounting pressure, Pinochet finally agreed to put his continued rule to a vote: a plebiscite would be held on October 5, 1988. If the people voted in support of Pinochet, he would remain in power until 1997. On Thursday, October 6, Pinochet conceded the election after a resounding “No” vote.<sup>234</sup>

Sigmund summarizes the U.S. role in the events leading up to the plebiscite:

If intervention is defined as the use of outside power to force other countries to do something they would not otherwise do, the U.S. role can be defended, since the funding of the opposition made it possible for a very broad range of Chilean public opinion to express itself freely in circumstances in which free expression was limited by an authoritarian

---

<sup>231</sup> Paul E. Sigmund, *The United States and Democracy in Chile*, 151.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, 172, 177.

government with considerable resources at its disposal to influence the electoral outcome. In addition, in contrast to the earlier covert aid from the CIA, all NED and AID assistance was public knowledge and subject to accountability to the U.S. Congress.<sup>235</sup>

Undoubtedly, Reagan's strategy worked, and it was a strategy of democracy and human rights. While the removal of Pinochet from power cannot be totally attributed to his government's policies, they played an important (and evolving) role as the internal circumstances in Chile allowed them to be effective.

So we can learn from Chile what we learned from the statements of the Reagan officials and Kirkpatrick colleagues interviewed here: that the Kirkpatrick Doctrine of distinguishing between totalitarian and authoritarian governments, and the Reagan policies which it informed, were not merely anti-communist. They were pro-democracy and pro-human rights doctrines. Wiarda was correct to a certain extent on Chile: the policies did evolve over time. But he understated the importance of the change that was occurring in Chile that changed the dynamics in Washington. When no longer faced with a choice of either authoritarian government or communist government, the administration sought a middle road. It is noteworthy, however, that Kirkpatrick did not write or speak extensively about Chile; in fact, she barely mentioned Chile in any speeches and did not write about the situation in Chile in her 1981 *Commentary* essay "U.S. Security in Latin America," or the expanded essay which made a chapter in her 1982 book, *Dictatorships and Double Standards: Rationalism and Reason in Politics*.<sup>236</sup> Chile did not seem to be a crucial country on her agenda at the United Nations either; in Allan Gerson's 300-page

---

<sup>235</sup> Ibid., 178.

<sup>236</sup> Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, *Dictatorships and Double Standards: Rationalism and Reason in Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982).

account of their four years at the United Nations, he makes not a single mention of Chile or Pinochet.<sup>237</sup>

Does this omission lend support to Abrams's assertion that the administration moved away from Kirkpatrick's views, at least on Chile? Kirkpatrick's counselor from the United Nations, Carl Gershman, does not think so. In an interview, he explains that between communist, authoritarian, and democratic government, "our preference is to have a democratic government." But, says Gershman, "We shouldn't throw out the existing option, namely the authoritarian government, unless we're sure we're not going to get the third option which could be communist government.... Instead of just saying we should criticize them, let's try to help them find a way to develop democratic alternatives."<sup>238</sup> And that is precisely what Kirkpatrick and the Reagan administration did in Chile, says Gershman. He continues,

Carl Gershman: That ultimately is what happened in Central America, which was the point of sharpest contention, where you are helping democrats to emerge and offering democratic alternatives to various kinds of leftists, radicals, authoritarianism, so the only alternative would not be a right-wing autocratic alternative. That's what it was all about and I think that was a conscious point of view that the Reagan administration was pushing.

Ilan Wurman: And that was in tune with a lot of what Kirkpatrick was saying?

Carl Gershman: Exactly, it was exactly in tune with it. And I guess it was a step beyond it because a lot of the contention between Kirkpatrick and the human rights community was that she was defending the authoritarian government against the communist government and therefore she was from their point of view an apologist for the authoritarians. The fact is when the Reagan administration got under way and was able to articulate what it was all about, it was really saying that we want to encourage the

---

<sup>237</sup> Allan Gerson, *The Kirkpatrick Mission: Diplomacy Without Apology: American at the United Nations, 1981-1985* (New York: The Free Press, 1991).

<sup>238</sup> Carl Gershman, interview by author, Washington, D.C., 25 August 2008.

evolution of these authoritarian governments. The change we want to help create is democratic alternatives. And that is indeed what happened in quite a remarkable way.<sup>239</sup>

Thus, Gershman says there was a conscious effort in the Reagan administration as well as the United Nations mission to promote democracy actively, even in authoritarian regimes such as Chile. Gershman says that Chile was certainly more complicated, because it “took place over a longer period of time”; but the U.N. mission and the administration were always “trying to craft an alternative, trying to craft a transition. And in our early documents when we expressed what we were trying to do it was encouraging democratic transition.”<sup>240</sup> It was not merely a matter of supporting every right-wing authoritarian. “We did not allow ourselves to be trapped in this debate [which was cast as] somehow supporting a right-wing dictator against a leftist threat.”<sup>241</sup> It is still unclear how enthusiastic Kirkpatrick was about the pace of the administration’s approach to Chile. Whether or not she disagreed with the administration on specific measures, however, her general foreign policy doctrine was in accord with the rest of the administration: it was to promote not only anti-communism, but also democracy.

### **El Salvador: Democracy over Military, but Military over Marxists**

United States’ involvement in El Salvador supports the view presented here, but it also opens up the administration to more criticism than its involvement in Chile. General Pinochet was, after 1983, under no serious threat from leftist revolutionaries; he was not in Somoza’s position any longer. Kirkpatrick and the administration enthusiastically

---

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

supported Pinochet particularly in the first years as a bulwark against communism; but when it became clear that a genuine democratic alternative existed to the military government, the administration began to pull its weight in its favor. The military government in El Salvador, however, systematically faced a leftist insurgency. The United States' reaction to the situation in El Salvador reveals the administration's preference for authoritarian regimes faced with leftist opposition, as Kirkpatrick's article outlined; one can also see, however, that officials did desire democratic government, though it appears that their first priority was the elimination of the insurgency.

In October 1979, a reformist coup removed General Carlos Humberto Romero from power in El Salvador. The coup kept the military in power, but aimed at removing oligarchic elements in the government in order to promote economic and political change, particularly agrarian land reform. U.S. policy documents expressed at the time that the coup was meant to pre-empt another Nicaragua: "the new government will be leftist during its early days, and attempt to destroy the influence of the El Salvadoran oligarchy over the government and the economy....The military will, however, maintain control at all times to ensure that the government will not become extreme leftist."<sup>242</sup> According to two El Salvador experts, the officers in charge of the coup "proclaimed human rights guarantees that would allow for free elections, free speech, political parties, and labor organizations," but ultimately they were not strong enough "to purge the hardliners from the military" and to break the oligarchy and the death squads.<sup>243</sup> Though

---

<sup>242</sup> Hugh Byrne, *El Salvador's Civil War: A Study of Revolution* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996), 53.

<sup>243</sup> Martin Diskin and Kenneth Sharpe, *The Impact of U.S. Policy in El Salvador, 1979-1985* (Berkeley, CA: Institute of International Studies, 1986), 11.

the Carter administration supported the coup, state repression increased against leftists in the following weeks.<sup>244</sup>

Before the October coup, the National Liberation Front (FMLN) had already organized a guerrilla insurgency to bring down the military government, and armed struggle had been sporadic since 1970. By the 1980s, the FMLN “developed into what U.S. analysts called the strongest guerrilla army in Latin American history and engaged the United States in its largest counterinsurgency effort since Vietnam.”<sup>245</sup> Most FMLN members had their roots in traditional Marxism-Leninism.<sup>246</sup> They became politically involved over their opposition to the dictatorship in El Salvador, their concerns over the lack of democracy, and economic conditions. But since the earliest FMLN groups formed in the 1970s, they took a “Moscow-oriented political line” and insisted that only a socialist revolution could “create the conditions for socialist transformation.”<sup>247</sup> Though many branches of opposition existed at the time, after the failure of the reformist coup in 1979 most groups joined the FMLN in its armed struggle.

The military government was violent and repressive. In the 1970s, the government conducted “frequent massacres of unarmed civilians.”<sup>248</sup> Death squads murdered priests, students, and union leaders.<sup>249</sup> In the first two-and-a-half months in 1980, there were 689 political assassinations, and in March the Archbishop in El Salvador was killed.<sup>250</sup> Estimates put the total number of people killed in 1980 at 15,000,

---

<sup>244</sup> Byrne, *El Salvador's Civil War*, 54.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>249</sup> Diskin & Sharpe, *The Impact of U.S. Policy in El Salvador*, 9.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-13.

with 10,000 killed at the hand of the government.<sup>251</sup> It is hard to deny the claim that the “increasing violence of the Romero regime spurred increased guerrilla activity and greater mobilization by the popular organizations,”<sup>252</sup> and that the “lack of open political activity” encouraged the FMLN to seek military conflict.<sup>253</sup> Further, economic deprivation played a role. One critic of the Reagan policies argues that the “overwhelming number of Central Americans were in rebellion because their children starved, not because they knew or cared anything about Marxism.”<sup>254</sup>

While not denying the role of repression and economic deprivation in El Salvador in encouraging armed violence against the government, it is important to understand that one violent regime replacing another is exactly what happened in Nicaragua and Iran. The situation in El Salvador was similar, and the administration would react to them as Kirkpatrick reacted to the former two. The FMLN’s affiliation with violent Marxism was no secret, and they would receive financial and military support from Cuba and Nicaragua, despite some claims that they cared little for Marxism itself. The insurgents, after the 1979 coup, even issued “a manifesto calling for the establishment of a Marxist, totalitarian government in El Salvador.”<sup>255</sup> Whatever the stated goal of the armed insurgency, its immediate effect was to escalate the violence.

Alexander Haig, Reagan’s first Secretary of State, explains the situation in his memoirs thus: “Merely by taking up arms...[w]hat the rebels had done in fact was to add murder, terrorism, and inestimable sorrow to the miseries of the people [of El Salvador].

---

<sup>251</sup> Byrne, *El Salvador’s Civil War*, 63.

<sup>252</sup> Diskin and Sharpe, *Impact of U.S. Policy in El Salvador*, 9.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>254</sup> Walter Lafeber, “The Reagan Administration and Revolutions in Central America,” *Political Science Quarterly* 99, no. 1 (spring 1984): 2.

<sup>255</sup> Alexander Haig Jr., *Caveat: Realism, Reagan, and Foreign Policy* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1984), 126.



In the first year of the rebellion [1980], 10,000 soldiers and civilians were killed, with the guerrillas claiming to have slain 6,000 of that number.”<sup>256</sup> It was not at all clear to the highest officials in the Reagan administration that the insurgency was less violent or repressive toward civilians. Haig also points to the Soviet influence: “There could not be the slightest doubt that Cuba was at once the source of supply and the catechist of the Salvadoran insurgency.”<sup>257</sup> By 1979,

Cuban intermediaries had integrated the four separate Salvadoran leftist movements into a coordinated front under the domination of the Communist element. The head of the Communist party of El Salvador had traveled to Moscow for consultations and had then gone to Hanoi, where North Vietnamese officials promised to provide 60 tons of captures American arms....The Soviets had shipped arms through Cuba to the guerrillas; many of these weapons had subsequently passed into El Salvador concealed in secret compartments in cargo trucks and by air and sea. In 1980 alone, the Cubans trained up to 1,200 guerrillas for the fighting in El Salvador.<sup>258</sup>

Haig saw the conflict in terms of “Cuban adventurism” and “Soviet strategic ambition.”<sup>259</sup> The evidence continued to mount that the conflict in El Salvador was reminiscent of Nicaragua and a Soviet projection of power in the region.

What had been clear to Kirkpatrick was that such conflicts invariably ended with the replacement of repressive yet moderate regimes with even more repressive revolutionary regimes. Kirkpatrick expressed similar thinking to Haig, and claimed that the FMLN in El Salvador was *more* repressive and violent than the military government. She argued before a United Nations committee in 1981 that the violence in El Salvador continued because “the insurgency has penetrated the population and attempts to hide

---

<sup>256</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid., 125.

itself within it—so that fighting violent insurgents spills over into the society.”<sup>260</sup> Further, the FMLN, according to Kirkpatrick, killed 6,000 El Salvadorans in 1980 alone, and it

assassinated ordinary citizens, imposed bloody reprisals against villagers unwilling to assist them, and decimated peasant cooperatives in their determined efforts to sabotage the land-reform program. They have bombed restaurants, buses, theaters, factories, food-storage facilities, marketplaces, public utilities, bridges, and public buildings. They have occupied eight foreign embassies, kidnapped and killed diplomats, executed hundreds of presumed “informers,” and until quite recently...have taken no prisoners.<sup>261</sup>

The FMLN had behaved, she summarized, “not as chivalrous Robin Hoods emerging from a Central American Sherwood Forest to comfort the oppressed, but as well-armed political freebooters inspired by an antidemocratic ideology, a consuming will to power and no inhibitions about the use of violence.”<sup>262</sup> Kirkpatrick and Haig believed not only that the Soviet bloc sustained the insurgents, but also that the insurgents were the main cause of violence.

Not everyone has bought Kirkpatrick and Haig’s version of the story, however. One critic of Reagan’s El Salvador policies, Walter Lafeber, argues that “few outside the administration believed that the Soviet bloc provided most of the arms” to Central American revolutionaries—they were instead provided by an international arms market and dead government soldiers—or that “international communism rather than nationalism actually fueled the revolutions.”<sup>263</sup> He argues that journalistic accounts in the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Post*, among others, discredited an administration White Paper that outlined Soviet and Cuban involvement in El Salvador. The “attacks shredded

---

<sup>260</sup> Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, *The Reagan Phenomenon*, 56.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>263</sup> Lafeber, *Revolutions in Central America*, 3-4.

the White Paper's claim that Cuban and Soviet officials guided the revolutionaries, and that large Soviet bloc arms shipments enabled the rebels to expand their control."<sup>264</sup>

These attacks claimed that the White Paper was based on fabricated reports from captured rebels, but recently a study by political scientist Robert P. Hager Jr. has shown that "[t]here is little to support the allegation that the captured documents used to support the 'White Paper's' [sic] case were fabrications."<sup>265</sup> Hager argues that the White Paper "arguably presented a valid picture of external involvement in El Salvador's civil strife,"<sup>266</sup> that no one ever proved that the documents were forged. They also contained inside information corroborated by insurgent leaders that made them unlikely to be false.<sup>267</sup> The White Paper did contain some translation errors, which the administration later admitted, but that did not change the general content or accuracy of the information.<sup>268</sup> Even if Lafeber's claims were true, they did not discount that a relationship did exist between certain rebels and the Soviet bloc, and that those particular rebels were the ones likely to consolidate power through their own repression.

The United States supported the military government against the insurgency; however, democracy was always a central concern for the administration in El Salvador both in rhetoric and reality. George Shultz, Reagan's Secretary of State from mid-1982 onward, explained the administration's balancing act: "We had to find the way to nourish democracy in El Salvador, improve the army's ability to deal effectively with the guerrillas, and, at the same time, persuade the army leaders and their right-wing

---

<sup>264</sup> Lafeberg, 3.

<sup>265</sup> Robert P. Hager Jr., "Soviet bloc involvement in the Salvadoran civil war : The US State Department's 1981 'white paper' reconsidered," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 28, no. 4 (December 1995), 439.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*, 440.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*, 441.

supporters that violations of human rights by them would not be tolerated. This was no easy task.”<sup>269</sup> The Carter administration had also supported the military government in fear of making the same mistakes it made in Nicaragua, and it hoped that its support would strengthen moderates and encourage the military to stop its dirty war tactics.<sup>270</sup>

The Reagan administration followed the same general approach: support the government so that it could defeat the insurgency, but keep the extreme right in check so that Congress would continue to support aid and so that democratic prerequisites could strengthen.

In the June 1981 integrated assessment of security assistance for El Salvador, the United States laid out its goals: preventing the Communist guerrillas from taking over a friendly (though authoritarian) government; and maintaining in El Salvador “a government which shares our ideal of democracy” and “change through reform and institutional modification rather than by further revolution and destruction.”<sup>271</sup> Some critics have argued that the administration was only succumbing to congressional and public criticism after it had refused to agree to FMLN requests to negotiate and otherwise took a strict hard-line on defeating the insurgents.<sup>272</sup> While that suggests that the administration was insistent on its defeat of the insurgents, it does not suggest the administration had not desired democratic reforms before such criticisms. One can see the parallels to Chile: *internally* democratizing the regime, if possible, was preferable to violent revolution.

---

<sup>269</sup> George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 130.

<sup>270</sup> Bryne, *El Salvador's Civil War*, 60.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>272</sup> Diskin and Sharpe, *Impact of U.S. Policy in El Salvador*, 18-19.

Haig believed that “the military was the guarantor of a democratic solution in El Salvador,”<sup>273</sup> and had to be included in the government. He believed that supporting the civilian president Duarte, who was a “genuine Christian Democrat”<sup>274</sup> and whose government “included military officers as well as civilians who represented every political tendency in the country except those of the far right and violent left,” was the “only hope for the transfer of power by democratic means.”<sup>275</sup> Critics, however, have argued that while the U.S. might publicly claim that El Salvador “was run by a moderate reformist government battling extremists from the insurgent left and the death-squad right,” it underestimated the strength of the right-wing elements in the Duarte government over which Duarte had no control.<sup>276</sup> Two critics have written that, for the administration’s strategy to work, “it required the backing of a relatively strong reformist government in El Salvador.” But,

there really were two governments in the country: a reformist and relatively powerless civilian government led by Duarte, whose primary ‘popular support’ was the U.S. Embassy, and a repressive and increasingly powerful military government led by Defense Minister Garcia. The civilians around Duarte had no control over the military, whose continued repression had made land reform difficult and fair elections impossible.<sup>277</sup>

Such criticisms are legitimate. The Reagan administration may have underestimated the strength of the right-wing officers; but even Haig has acknowledged that the administration was aware that the military element of the government was still convulsed with “political terrorism” and “incidents of repression.”<sup>278</sup> That did not change the

---

<sup>273</sup> Haig, *Caveat*, 126.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>276</sup> Diskin & Sharpe, *Impact of U.S. Policy in El Salvador*, 19-20.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>278</sup> Haig, *Caveat*, 126.

strategy: in order for the government to defeat the leftist guerrillas, the military had to receive American support; in order to ensure the evolution of democratic government after that happened, the centrists in the civilian government also required that support.

Kirkpatrick explained the parallel to Nicaragua, and one can see parallels to Chile, in her 1985 *Society* article about moral equivalence. “We know that there existed in both [Nicaragua and El Salvador] neglect, unmet needs, unfulfilled hopes, and that these gave rise to movements for reform and revolution. We understand, broadly speaking, how it happened,” she wrote. In both countries, three political currents existed: traditional oligarchs, who had most of the economic resources; a “large group of the middle class, farmers, trade unionists, businessmen, who wanted to get rid of the dictator and establish a democratic government”; and a “small group of Marxist-Leninists tied to Havana and Moscow, trained, as they themselves have told us, in Havana, in the Middle East with the PLO, or elsewhere in the Soviet bloc; armed and advised by their Soviet sponsors.”<sup>279</sup>

In Nicaragua, she explained, the democrats and revolutionaries joined together to overthrow Somoza, but then the revolutionaries formed a one-party state and threw out the democrats, many of whom became the contras. In El Salvador, on the other hand, “where the same three-sided contest existed,” the democratic forces came to power under Duarte after the 1979 coup. Duarte “immediately undertook to democratize the government, nationalize credit, and instigate sweeping land reforms,” while “the guerrillas and the traditional armed Right took up armed struggle against the government.”<sup>280</sup> One can see, thus, the tension between democracy promotion and human rights on the one hand and anticommunism on the other in the administration’s policies,

---

<sup>279</sup> Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, “Moral Equivalence and Political Aims,” *Society* (March/April 1985), 5.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*

but also their coexistence. In El Salvador, the issue at hand was empowering the center, while disabling the left; the latter action, however, required strengthening the right-wing military elements as well as the center. While human rights might have suffered in the short-term as the administration overlooked the military repression, it was not clear that the leftist insurgents would be less repressive, and in any event the long run endgame was human rights as an extension of democracy.

While the administration may have understated the salience of the far-right in the Duarte government, even critics at the time did not deny the administration's efforts to rein it in. Martin Diskin and Kenneth Sharpe, two vehement critics of the Reagan policies in the country, acknowledged that in 1981, "the Reagan administration sought in a number of ways to tame right-wing violence and quell the business sector's harsh criticism of Duarte."<sup>281</sup> After the 1982 elections, worried that a coalition in the Assembly could select an "ultra-rightist" as provisional president, the administration successfully pressured the Defense Minister to resist such a selection. Diskin and Sharpe argue that the move was sheer hypocrisy, given Reagan's democratic rhetoric; but they seem impossible to please. They criticize Reagan for supporting the military government but then accuse him of hypocrisy when he tries to rein it in. Walter Lafeber makes similar claims.<sup>282</sup> It merely demonstrates, however, that Reagan had little affinity for extremists of either the left or the right, and one would think that it should have placated critics of his administration's support of right-wing dictators. The move demonstrated the administration's commitment to human rights: it was willing to stop democracy in the

---

<sup>281</sup> Diskin and Sharpe, *Impact of U.S. Policy in El Salvador*, 22.

<sup>282</sup> Lafeber, "Revolutions in Central America," 14.

short-term in order to maintain a government with moderate elements, because only moderates would ensure genuine democracy in the end.

Diskin and Sharpe claimed additionally that the U.S.-backed elections in 1982 were ineffectual because it excluded the left. “The center-left groups in the FDR”—another FMLN group—“that might have made a strong showing—and whose support the Christian Democrats would have needed in any post-electoral alliance against the right—boycotted the election.”<sup>283</sup> The Reagan administration interpreted the boycott as “proof of its anti-democratic character,” but Diskin and Sharpe argued that “from the FDR’s perspective, participation would have been dangerous and irrational”<sup>284</sup> because of the physical risks of political participation. However, the FMLN fought the government for another several years after Duarte’s second election in 1984, despite the dramatically improving economic and political situation in the country and the elimination of the death squads, thus reinforcing the U.S. description of the violent and undemocratic character of the revolutionary group. Diskin and Sharpe also neglect to comment on the significance of the Christian Democrats winning a 40-percent plurality despite the boycott.<sup>285</sup> They were also at risk from government assassins, but voted and won a plurality anyway; some have even argued that the left’s refusal to participate in earlier elections in the 1970s enabled the military rightists to retain power.<sup>286</sup> As Kirkpatrick said regarding the elections, the Salvadoran people had “cast their votes in favor of democracy in El Salvador. In a hundred ways, the people of El Salvador continue to demonstrate their lack

---

<sup>283</sup> Diskin and Sharpe, *Impact of U.S. Policy in El Salvador*, 22.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>286</sup> Hager, “White Paper Reconsidered,” 442.



of support for the guerrillas whose violence has not won the hearts or minds of the Salvadorans.”<sup>287</sup>

In the end, even Diskin and Sharpe acknowledged the importance of a viable, non-extremist, democratic alternative—such as the one that existed in Chile—to the Reagan administration. “The administration understood the importance of a Duarte victory in 1984,” they wrote. “For those in the U.S. Embassy and State Department truly committed to a middle way, a Duarte victory over [the extreme right] was a necessary condition for any nonextremist alternative to survive.”<sup>288</sup> A victory would have the added benefit of guaranteeing congressional support for the war against the insurgents. The administration, therefore, spent \$10 million to finance international observers and technology for the elections, and it also “funneled almost \$1 million through the CIA to support Duarte’s campaign.”<sup>289</sup> The administration thus recognized that the middle-way was the best way for democracy, and that it would also help defeat the insurgents. The administration saw democracy as both the means and the end; it was desirable in itself and was the ultimate goal of the administration’s policies, and it would keep at bay the leftist insurgents who were the immediate security threat.

While it is not possible here to discuss the full fluctuations, nuances, and ramifications of the Reagan administration’s El Salvador policies, democracy, in addition to the defeat of the Marxist revolutionaries, was undeniably the goal. Duarte’s election in 1984 “helped further legitimate a process of ‘democratization’ in El Salvador,” one

---

<sup>287</sup> Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, “Moral Equivalence and Political Aims,” *Society* (March 1985), 6.

<sup>288</sup> Diskin and Sharpe, *Impact of U.S. Policy in El Salvador*, 31.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*

expert has written.<sup>290</sup> The economy began to stabilize and human rights violations declined dramatically from 1980-82 levels.<sup>291</sup> Death squads were disbanded, and union leaders “were handled relatively peacefully by the security forces.”<sup>292</sup> The United States strategy in this period “lay in building a legitimate political system resulting from free elections and supported by the Salvadoran people, reinforced by a growing economy.”<sup>293</sup> With Duarte that strategy seemed to work. The United States supported a Duarte government when it became evident that he was a “genuine Christian Democrat.” When he governed like a democrat, the United States continued to support him.

Critics have attacked the Reagan policies because of their support for a repressive military government. But those policies clearly achieved Reagan’s goals: defeat the insurgents and promote a centrist, democratic government. Was there an alternative to U.S. policy in El Salvador that could have succeeded in the same way, without supporting the military government? The critics, including Lafeber, Diskin, and Sharpe, argue that the United States had the opportunity to negotiate a political settlement to the conflict. After a failed rebel offensive in January 1981, writes Lafeber, Reagan “had a sudden opportunity to negotiate a settlement of the bloody revolution.” Instead of taking advantage of this opportunity, he rejected negotiations and sought “total military victory.”<sup>294</sup> In October 1981, the rebels again “offered to negotiate ‘without preconditions,’” but the State Department “flatly rejected the overture.”<sup>295</sup> Captured rebel documents showed that the revolutionaries hoped to use the negotiations to stall for time.

---

<sup>290</sup> Byrne, *El Salvador’s Civil War*, 122.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>292</sup> Diskin and Sharpe, *Impact of U.S. Policy in El Salvador*, 40.

<sup>293</sup> Byrne, *El Salvador’s Civil War*, 122-123.

<sup>294</sup> Lafeber, “Revolutions in Central America,” 10-11.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

“A revolutionary spokesman did not disavow the documents,” writes Lafeber. “He did emphasize, however, that the program in the documents was optional, and that the issues could be negotiated. The State Department apparently did not press to test the spokesman's sincerity.”<sup>296</sup> The programs may have been “optional” and “could be negotiated,” but that would require negotiating—precisely the tactic the rebels wanted to use for stalling. It is unclear why Lafeber gives the rebels the benefit of the doubt.

More generally, however, the liberal criticism of the administration's policies was that the rebels did have “a genuine base of political support in El Salvador and represented a part of the political spectrum that must be incorporated into any political solution.”<sup>297</sup> We have already seen, however, that rebels were not necessarily serious about a negotiated settlement. We have also seen that the rebels continued to fight despite the election of a moderate Christian Democrat, which questioned their commitment to democracy. Ultimately, the Reagan administration rejected a settlement because including the leftists in the political process would result in exactly what Kirkpatrick and others feared—totalitarian influences in the government rather than the moderate, centrist government the Reagan administration sought and actually achieved.

### **Conclusion: Evaluating Success and Lessons for the War on Terror**

It is not possible here to prove empirically that the United States under Reagan and Kirkpatrick's policies helped the spread of democracy in Latin America; scholars still dispute the question. They generally fall into one of three camps: the United States had an overall negative impact on democracy promotion in Latin America through its support of

---

<sup>296</sup> Ibid.

<sup>297</sup> Carothers, *In the Name of Democracy*, 22.

dictatorial governments; it had a positive impact through supporting political reform and “helping head off dangerous extremes”; or it did not have any particular impact on the development of democracy on the continent.<sup>298</sup>

Samuel P. Huntington, in one of his many influential works, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, provided a good summary of the different means the United States government used to promote democracy in the 1970s onward, and the positive impact those efforts had. Huntington claimed that Reagan’s policies did influence democratization around the world. “President Reagan’s endorsement of ‘Project Democracy’ in the first year of his administration, his 1982 speech to Parliament, the creation of the National Endowment for Democracy in 1984, his message to Congress in March 1986, plus the activities of American diplomats in a range of countries,” he argued, “helped to keep democratization a central focus of international affairs in the 1980s and to strengthen the overall global intellectual environment favorable to democracy.”<sup>299</sup> “In some countries,” Huntington added, “the American role was direct and crucial.”<sup>300</sup> He suggested that U.S. support before, during, and after Reagan was critical to democratization in the Dominican Republic, Grenada, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Uruguay, Peru, Ecuador Panama, and the Philippines and that it contributed to democratization in Portugal, Chile, Poland, Korea, Bolivia, and Taiwan.<sup>301</sup>

---

<sup>298</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>299</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 94-95.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid., 98.

At least from the two cases examined here, the United States' role was direct and crucial and in tune with its rhetoric. In El Salvador, the election of Duarte vindicated U.S. policy. Though the civil war did not end, eventually a political settlement was reached in the 1990s. In Chile, U.S. support was direct and influenced the outcome. Freedom House reports capture the success of the democratization process in Chile. The annual report ranks nations on a scale of one to seven, one being the most free and seven being the least, in two categories, political rights and civil liberties. From 1987-88, Chile scored a 6 on political liberties and 5 on civil liberties; from 1988-89 it improved its score to a 5 and a 4, respectively; after the October plebiscite, during which a transitional military government ruled, it scored a 4 and a 3, respectively; and, finally, in 1990-91, Chile scored ratings of 2 in both categories.<sup>302</sup> In the last of these reports, Freedom House wrote, "The inauguration of the freely elected government of President Patricio Aylwin on 11 March 1990 capped the transition to civilian government after seventeen years of military rule," and despite residual tensions, "Chile appeared on the road to regaining its status as one of Latin America's model democracies."<sup>303</sup> In 2007, Chile received a remarkable rating of 1 on both political and civil liberties.<sup>304</sup>

A *Washington Post* editorial, which ran in 2006 after both General Pinochet and Jeane Kirkpatrick died, is perhaps the best vindication of Kirkpatrick, her arguments in "Dictatorships and Double Standards," and the administration's Chile policy. It is hard not to notice, the *Post* said, that Pinochet "leaves behind the most successful country in Latin America. In the past 15 years, Chile's economy has grown at twice the regional

---

<sup>302</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World Report, *Chile*, 1987-88; 1988-89; 1989-1990; 1990-91.

<sup>303</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World Report, *Chile*, 1990-91.

<sup>304</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World Report, *Chile*, 2007,

<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2007&country=7154>

average, and its poverty rate has been halved. It's leaving behind the developing world, where all of its neighbors remain mired. It also has a vibrant democracy." Like it or not, the editors wrote, "Mr. Pinochet had something to do with this success." He introduced free-market policies that produced an "economic miracle," and he willingly accepted the country's transition to democracy, "stepping down peacefully in 1990 after losing a referendum."<sup>305</sup> In contrast, they wrote,

Fidel Castro—Mr. Pinochet's nemesis and a hero to many in Latin America and beyond—will leave behind an economically ruined and freedomless country with his approaching death. Mr. Castro also killed and exiled thousands. But even when it became obvious that his communist economic system had impoverished his country, he refused to abandon that system: He spent the last years of his rule reversing a partial liberalization. To the end he also imprisoned or persecuted anyone who suggested Cubans could benefit from freedom of speech or the right to vote.

The contrast between Cuba and Chile more than 30 years after Mr. Pinochet's coup is a reminder of a famous essay written by Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, the provocative and energetic scholar and U.S. ambassador to the United Nations who died Thursday. In "Dictatorships and Double Standards," a work that caught the eye of President Ronald Reagan, Ms. Kirkpatrick argued that right-wing dictators such as Mr. Pinochet were ultimately less malign than communist rulers, in part because their regimes were more likely to pave the way for liberal democracies. She, too, was vilified by the left. Yet by now it should be obvious: She was right.<sup>306</sup>

Certainly, the Reagan administration made mistakes. Many have argued, for instance, that the contras in Nicaragua, which the administration supported against the Sandinistas, were not nearly as democratic as Kirkpatrick and the administration

---

<sup>305</sup> Editorial, "A Dictator's Double Standard: Augusto Pinochet tortured and murdered. His legacy is Latin America's most successful country," *The Washington Post*, 12 December 2006, A26.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*

claimed.<sup>307</sup> Others maintain that the leftists the administration opposed, such as the FMLN, were not as anti-democratic as claimed. One must remember, however, that neither the administration in general nor Kirkpatrick in particular ever turned a blind eye to human rights abuses or condoned them. The administration accepted some abuses in order to maintain stability and fend off leftist insurgencies, but ultimately that helped promote democracy and human rights in the long run. The totalitarian-authoritarian distinction was real, and when Kirkpatrick and Reagan applied it to foreign policy, as even the *Washington Post* acknowledged, the results were striking.

The key to Kirkpatrick and Reagan's approach to human rights, democracy, and anti-communism ultimately lay in their belief that democracy was the solution to the communist threat and would result in the spread of human rights. It lay in their belief that military dictatorships were less of a threat to democracy and human rights than Marxist insurgencies were. One can see this approach when examining Chile and El Salvador side by side: when there was no leftist insurgency and where a genuine democratic alternative existed, the administration supported democratic change; when a leftist insurgency did exist, the administration supported the military government while piecing together democratic coalitions.

The administration's policies were not consistent, in that the varying and evolving circumstances in different countries required different approaches. The administration was willing to use force in Grenada, when a totalitarian government in the Western Hemisphere received Cuban and Soviet arms and threatened American students; but it

---

<sup>307</sup> See Beth A. Fischer, *The Reagan Reversal: Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1997), 79 and Laurien Alexandre, *The Voice of America: From Détente to the Reagan Doctrine* (Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1988), 114.

was not willing to use force in the case of Mozambique, which was not much of a threat. In both cases, however, the administration worked to undermine Soviet influence and promote democracy. In Chile, there was less need to support the military government because it was not facing a leftist insurgency, whereas in El Salvador it was more important to support the existing government. In rhetoric, however, the administration's policies seem to have been unwavering. Human rights were important, but defeating communism and spreading democracy were more so; and from those goals human rights would flourish.

Given Kirkpatrick's support for democratization, what is one to make of her opposition to the war in Iraq? We saw in the introduction that the principle of the war on terror under President Bush was "to create a balance of power that favors human freedom: conditions in which all nations and all societies can choose for themselves the rewards and challenges of political and economic liberty." Kirkpatrick would have agreed with the ideal, but not with the application. Based on Kirkpatrick's writing during the last decade of the Cold War, she would have two fundamental problems with the war: first, the Bush administration misunderstood the difficulty of the democratization process; second, the administration committed military troops to a struggle that was not of immediate and direct concern to the security of the United States. Invading Grenada, providing military support to the contras, or sustaining with arms the military government of El Salvador all aimed at stemming direct Soviet and Cuban power projections. Vietnam was a similar endeavor to stop the spread of the ideology that Kirkpatrick believed directly threatened the American way of life. Democratization is always desirable, even in countries such as Namibia, of no security concern to the United States;



but the president should only use the country's military resources when the national security threat to the country is direct.

Kirkpatrick would not disagree with the rhetoric of the Bush administration in the war on terror, only with its insistence that all countries immediately pursue democratization. Reagan was just as emphatic on the importance of democracy; as we have seen, his speeches created a "crusade for freedom." But Reagan and Kirkpatrick did not hesitate to support nondemocratic regimes in the short-term if it meant success for freedom and democracy in the long-term. Kirkpatrick would probably not have approved of President Bush's early insistence that Egypt democratize. She would have recognized that the military government in Egypt was helpful toward countering terrorism, which was the direct and immediate threat to the United States; alienating the government would harm the immediate objectives of the war. She would have also recognized that democratization might not be feasible in Egypt in the first place. Many observers have noted the likelihood of a victory for the Muslim Brotherhood should Egypt hold democratic elections; but the Muslim Brotherhood would not support democracy or human rights in the long-term, and they certainly would not be as eager to aid the United States in its hunt for terrorists in the Middle East.

Kirkpatrick, who lived to see decades of "popular revolt" turn into communist repression, understood that to support freedom and human rights the United States sometimes had to ally itself with undesirable regimes. She understood that supporting popular movements like the Muslim Brotherhood might result in worse regimes than the ones at hand, and that not all democracy would be liberal and enduring democracy. The lessons for the war on terror abound, but the most important lesson transcends the current

war: the United States does not have to act consistently, nor does it have to shy away from supporting undemocratic governments, to be morally right and strategically sound. Kirkpatrick made the case for such a view in “Dictatorships and Double Standards,” and she and President Reagan proved it to be true in the final decade of the Cold War.

### **Bibliography:**

- “A Policy is Born.” *World Affairs* 153, no. 2 (Fall 1990): 60-69.
- Alexandre, Laurien. *The Voice of America: From Détente to the Reagan Doctrine*. Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1988.
- Barone, Michael. *Our Country: The Shaping of America from Roosevelt to Reagan*. New York: the Free Press, 1990.
- Bloomfield, Lincoln P. “Transvalued Values and Common Sense.” *Society* 22, no. 3 (March/April 1985): 9-11.
- Bonner, Raymond. *Weakness and Deceit: U.S. Policy and El Salvador*. New York: Times Books, 1984.
- Bryan, C.D.B. “Barely Suppressed Screams: Getting a Bead on Vietnam War Literature.” *Harper’s* (June 1984): 67-72.
- Brzezinski, Zbigniew. *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser 1977-1981*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1983.
- Byrne, Hugh. *El Salvador’s Civil War: A Study of Revolution*. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996.
- Carleton, David and Michael Stohl, “The Foreign Policy of Human Rights: Rhetoric and Reality: From Jimmy Carter to Ronald Reagan,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (May 1985): 54-81.
- Carothers, Thomas. *In the Name of Democracy: U.S. Policy Toward Latin America in the Reagan Years*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1991.
- Carter, Jimmy. *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President*. New York: Bantam Books, 1982.
- Diskin, Martin and Kenneth Sharpe. *The Impact of U.S. Policy in El Salvador, 1979-1985*. Berkeley, California: Institute of International Studies, 1986.
- Fischer, Beth A. *The Reagan Reversal: Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War*. Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1997.

- Friedrich, Carl J. and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski. *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965.
- Gerson, Allan. *The Kirkpatrick Mission: Diplomacy without Apology: America at the United Nations, 1981-1985*. New York: Free Press, 1991.
- Hager, Robert P. Jr. "Soviet bloc involvement in the Salvadoran civil war: The US State Department's 1981 'white paper' reconsidered." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 28, no. 4 (December 1995): 437-470.
- Haig, Alexander M. Jr. *Caveat: Realism, Reagan, and Foreign Policy*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1984.
- Haley, P. Edward. *Congress and the Fall of South Vietnam and Cambodia*. East Brunswick, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1982.
- Halper, Stefan and Jonathan Clarke. *America Alone: The Neo-Conservatives and the Global Order*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Holsti, Ole R. *Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996.
- "Human Rights and American Foreign Policy: A Symposium." *Commentary* 72, no. 5 (Nov. 1981): 25-63.
- Huntington, Samuel P. *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991.
- Johnson, Robert David. *Congress and the Cold War*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Kirkpatrick, Jeane J. *Dictatorships and Double Standards: Rationalism and Reason in Politics*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982.
- Kirkpatrick, Jeane J. "Dictatorships & Double Standards." *Commentary* (November 1979): 34-45.
- Kirkpatrick, Jeane J. *Legitimacy and Force*. Vol 2. New Brunswick, U.S.: Transaction Books, 1988.
- Kirkpatrick, Jeane J. *Making War to Keep Peace*. New York: HarperCollins, 2007.
- Kirkpatrick, Jeane J. "Moral Equivalence and Political Aims." *Society* 22, no. 3 (March/April 1985): 3-8.

- Kirkpatrick, Jeane J. *The Reagan Phenomenon and other speeches on Foreign Policy*. Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1983.
- Kirkpatrick, Jeane J. *The Withering Away of the Totalitarian State – and Other Surprises*. Washington, D.C.: AEI Press, 1990.
- Kirkpatrick, Jeane J. “Why We Do Not Become Republicans.” *Commonsense* (Vol. 2, No. 3, Fall 1979), 27-35.
- Lafeber, Walter. “The Reagan Administration and Revolutions in Central America.” *Political Science Quarterly* 99, no. 1 (spring 1984): 1-25.
- Mayer, William G. *The Changing American mind: How and Why American Public Opinion Changed between 1960 and 1988*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992.
- McCormick, James M. and Eugene R. Wittkopf. “Bipartisanship, Partisanship, and Ideology in Congressional-Executive Foreign Policy Relations, 1947-1988.” *The Journal of Politics* 52, no. 4 (Nov. 1990): 1077-1100.
- McGovern, George and John P. Roche. “The Pentagon Papers—A Discussion.” *Political Science Quarterly* 87, no. 2 (June 1972): 173-191.
- “McGovern Catalyst: The Neoconservative Response, 1972,” *World Affairs* 153, no 2. (1990): 81-83.
- Melanson, Richard A. *Reconstructing Consensus: American Foreign Policy since the Vietnam War*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991.
- Miroff, Bruce, *The Liberals’ Moment: The McGovern Insurgency and the Identity Crisis of the Democratic Party*. Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2007.
- Muravchik, Joshua. *Exporting Democracy: Fulfilling America’s Destiny*. Washington, D.C.: AEI Press, 1991.
- Muravchik, Joshua. *The Uncertain Crusade: Jimmy Carter and the Dilemmas of Human Rights Policy*. Lanham, MD: Hamilton Press, 1986.
- Nove, Alec. “The Scope and Scale of Good and Evil.” *Society* 22, no. 3 (March/April 1985): 12-16.
- Nye, Joseph S. Jr. “Motives, Means and Consequences.” *Society* 22, no. 3 (March/April 1985): 17-20.

- Podhoretz, Norman. "Vietnam: The Revised Standard Version," *Commentary* 77, no.4 (April 1984), 37-41.
- Reagan, Ronald. *A Time for Choosing: The Speeches of Ronald Reagan 1961-1982*. Chicago: Regnery Gateway, 1983.
- Sater, William F. *Chile and the United States: Empires in Conflict*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1990.
- Schneider, William. "Public Opinion: The Beginning of Ideology?" *Foreign Policy* 17 (Winter, 1974-1975): 88-120.
- Scott, James M. *Deciding to Intervene: The Reagan Doctrine and American Foreign Policy*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996.
- Shultz, George P. *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993.
- Sigelman, Lee. "A Reassessment of the Two Presidencies Thesis." *The Journal of Politics* 41, no. 4 (Nov. 1979): 1195-1205.
- Sigmund, Paul E. *The United States and Democracy in Chile*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1993.
- Simons, Geoff. *Vietnam Syndrome: Impact on US Foreign Policy*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998.
- Strong, Robert A. *Working in the World: Jimmy Carter and the Making of American Foreign Policy*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000.
- Vance, Cyrus. *Hard Choices: Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983.
- Vance, Cyrus R. "The Human Rights Imperative." *Foreign Policy*, no. 63 (summer 1986): 3-19.
- Wattenberg, Ben J. *Fighting Words: A tale of How Liberals Created Neoconservatism*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2008.
- Wiarda, Howard J. *American Foreign Policy Toward Latin America in the 80s and 90s: Issues and Controversies from Reagan to Bush*. New York: New York University Press, 1992.
- Wittkopf, Eugene R. and James M. McCormick. "The Cold War Consensus: Did It Exist?" *Polity* 22, no. 4 (summer 1990): 627-653.

## APPENDIX A

Phone Interview with Elliott Abrams  
Friday, August 22, 2008  
Bethesda, MD

**Ilan Wurman:** What I was hoping to do here is get a sense of the Reagan administration's policies in Latin America and, you know, I have general questions on that and then one or two more specifically on Kirkpatrick.

[...]

**Elliott Abrams:** Let me say something before you start asking the questions. By the way this whole conversation is hurting my head, having to remember things from this long ago.

**IW:** laughs

**EA:** You know if you go back to the seminal articles like "Dictatorships and Double Standards," they were a reaction in part to something that happened in both Iran and Nicaragua, and in fact I'd argue that happened in Cuba in 1959, 1960. That is, these principled, and you might say ideological, efforts to replace a nasty though pro-American regime lead you to a worse regime in all three cases. And I think that's the backdrop to this. And it's an argument for why you should not do that, and why you should sort of have a more complex approach to regimes like the Latin dictatorships than simply sort of say, "Oh they commit human rights abuses. They must go. We must depose them."

**IW:** Which was the Carter approach, really.

**EA:** I don't know that's what Carter would say, but that's what we thought of as the Carter approach.

Now, I think we would all agree, and when I say we I mean Reagan officials would all agree, certainly it's a mistake to unseat a government and help put in a government that is worse. It's worse to the United States from a national interest point of view, and it's worse for human rights and for democracy in the country in question. Iran, Nicaragua, being the 1979 examples.

So far, no arguments within the Reagan administration. Where the question becomes a little bit more complicated is in a case—and this is where I had an argument with Jeane—

Chile. Because the argument over Pinochet, the question really is, was Pinochet's Chile like Nicaragua or Cuba or the Shah's Iran? And would pressure against Pinochet lead to a communist regime? It's an interesting question, particularly because Pinochet's coup against Allende was of course defended on the grounds that it actually avoided the communist coup.

But now it's the 1980s. And actually the position that I think it's fair to say Jeane took and the NSC staff took, and for that matter Henry Kissinger took, was yes, it's a pretty close analogy. And to do it again this time in Chile would be madness. I did not take that view and Shultz did not take that view. Our view was that the error in Cuba and Nicaragua and Iran was not in saying, "Uh oh, the guy in power is in trouble—this regime won't survive, something has to be done."

I think probably we didn't do that in Iran, but we certainly did in Nicaragua and Cuba. The error was not in undermining the regime in power. The error was in failing to plan a way to get to a better place. It was in failing to having an alternative ready which I think could have been done in both Nicaragua and Cuba. Because in neither case did the vast majority of people want a communist regime. Nor did Iranians want a theocracy.

In the case of Chile, I felt, Shultz felt, that wasn't at all the choice we faced. It seemed clear to us that the alternative to the Pinochet regime was a democratic government led by the Christian Democratic Party. When you went to Chile or more often when they came to Washington, we knew these people—we knew them by name. We could tell you we thought, we hoped, who the next government of Chile would be.

Now, it turns out we were right. The United States in essence played a large role in forcing Pinochet to hold a referendum and then the election and keep it honest and not compromise it or cancel it. And then he was gone. And you know Chile has been a fantastic success story, first under Christian democratic and then under socialist governments, and a good ally of the United States.

So I think myself that the place where...let me put it differently. Jeane's argument was universally accepted by conservatives and neoconservatives. The argument then came over the replacement particularly of Latin American dictatorships, particularly in cases where we thought we could have a democratic regime succeed a military regime and where we argued that in fact the military regimes were in the end going to create [radicalism] as a reaction against them. And so we delegitimized those regimes. Paraguay is another example. But there are dozens of examples in Latin America.

Here we had something of a split within the Reagan administration. And that in a sense takes the argument a step further than the initial arguments Jeane made. And that's where we then had internally an argument.

**IW:** If I could follow up, would you say that the centrist alternative was more obvious in Chile than say, Nicaragua or Iran? Because I've done some background reading, and



obviously I have retrospect on my side, so it seems clear that there was a centrist alternative in Chile with the Christian Democrats. But in Nicaragua how obvious was it....

**EA:** Yes that's a good question since we have 20-20 hindsight now with respect to Chile. Now this was a Carter administration issue, but if you go back for example there's a quotation in Shirley Christian, a *New York Times* reporter who covered Nicaragua in the '70s when the Sandinistas took over—[she] wrote a book whose name I no longer remember. In it she had a quote from Bob Pastor who was the National Security Council director for Latin America for Carter and is to this day associated with Carter and has been since 1980 with the Carter Center.

Pastor was quoted in that book, and this isn't going to be a quote it's a paraphrase, but basically as saying, "You know people said to us you going to jump in and produce a better result. This Somoza regime is going to collapse and you need to make sure the outcome is good." And Pastor said, "No no no we don't do that. That kind of intervention is exactly what we're against." So as an ideological matter the Carter administration refused to engage in the kind of intervention—and I don't mean sending in the marines, I mean political intervention—that might have produced a better outcome.

I don't think it was at all inevitable that there be complete chaos as there was in Cuba and as there was in Nicaragua and that the rebel band—Castro's and the FMLN, no, sorry, the FSLM—would take over. I don't think that was inevitable. And I don't think it would have taken all that much. I mean what you had in both case in Cuba and Nicaragua is a complete collapse of the security forces and the army. And that's not surprising when a regime that's been around for a long time collapses. But it wasn't inevitable, it could—I think, I would argue—it could have been avoided. And then you would have had a chance for people to say, "Ok we'll have a military government for six months and the then we'll have an election." Because there were democrats in both countries.

**IW:** So it seems though then—correct me if I'm wrong—the Reagan administration did seem to err on the side of Kirkpatrick in a sense, just maintain the authoritarian regime in Nicaragua say but not in Chile.

**EA:** But remember Nicaragua was Carter. By the time we got in the story was over, there was nothing we could do about it except help the contras. But we were presented with actually, well, we were presented with El Salvador where we all supported Duarte. In El Salvador we were pushing for the democratic alternative and that was a policy that had complete support in the administration and in Congress, too. Duarte was a kind of social democrat and Christian Democratic Party, and on the left of him Ted Kennedy supported him father, (?) supported him, so that was a pretty popular policy at least for most of the time.

In South America, well let me say the same thing—we had a Christian Democrat alternative that we were trying to push in Guatemala, too. In South America where you

had military dictatorships, the administration pressured them also in Panama to get rid of him and to have a more democratic system. I mean Chile is the best example but we also did it in you know, Argentina where (?) were clear that the military dictatorship had to go. The administration by the end did take the view that we were not for stability; we were for a change of government in these places back to democratic rule. It was time for the military to go.

**IW:** And would you say that Kirkpatrick felt the same way?

**EA:** I don't think so. I don't want to be unfair to her, but it seems to me that the administration moved over those eight years toward pressure to get rid of these military governments, that the policy that Shultz carried through moved beyond Jeane. I think Argentina is probably another example of that. Obviously she was a Democrat and wanted all these countries to be ruled by elected officials and not by armies. So the question is not one of what's your value system the question is really...

**IW:** ...how do we get there?

**EA:** Yes, exactly. And she was, I don't know what you would say—she had less faith in the civilians, or she had less faith in our ability to maneuver it successfully. I don't know the answer to that. But she was far less supportive than say Shultz of moving in this direction.

**IW:** Would you say she was too supportive...obviously you can give your own opinion, and the administration went on the side of the British, but was Kirkpatrick too pro-Argentina? Was that a manifestation of her fixation in a sense?

**EA:** I would say she was too protective of the Argentines, but I don't think that's too relevant to what you and I are talking about. I think it was more because she was a Latinist and not a Europeanist, that she felt we live in this hemisphere and not that one.

By the way, have you talked to Carl Gershman? [...] Carl was her number two or three person at the U.N. [...] And you know he may agree with everything I say or disagree or he may be able to provide an explanation. I think he would certainly say that she was wrong on Chile, so the question becomes why was she wrong? What was the misjudgment? Maybe she had no faith in the Christian Democrats to be able to pull this off I don't know but it's worth—he's the best person to talk to about that.

[...]

**IW:** I do some other questions and you actually touched upon a lot of them, so I'm going to sift through here real quickly. You already touched on this, but you seem to be quoted, this one quote came up several times—you probably know what I'm talking about—where you said, “No mere spectator in this revolution, we did more than just welcome the

trend rhetorically. Democracy became the organizing principle” of the Reagan administration’s Latin America policy. I think that was 1987.

So one of my initial questions, and you seem to come back to this—was that indeed the administration’s guiding principle? And where did anti-communism and pro-stability come in? You say that the administration eventually came down on the side of pro-democracy? Was it always like that? Was there a difference when Alexander Haig was Secretary of State?

**EA:** Yeah. There was a difference between Haig and Shultz on this. Haig was more orientated toward resisting communist advances and...

**IW:** ...more in tune with Kirkpatrick in a sense? Though they have some infamous rivalry.

**EA:** Yes, though in one sense that wasn’t personal, it was institutional. She was a Cabinet member she didn’t want to take orders from him. But from his point of view she was an ambassador and all ambassadors take orders from the Secretary. But they did agree on this I think. Shultz was much more orientated toward the defense of human rights.

I would say that on the ideological level we in the Reagan administration felt that there was one big difference between the Carter administration’s approach to human rights and ours. We felt that they were responding to individual cases of human rights abuses as case work and that they failed to understand that only institutional change could actually guarantee the protection of human rights. So the point was not to complain about the human rights abuses in Guatemala, or El Salvador or Chile, or wherever. It was somehow to move them toward a democratic system in which those abuses would not occur, or in which a remedy for those abuses could be found within the system. And that’s called democracy. I mean the real solution we felt was not case work; it was to try to bring these countries to democracy.

So that was our line ideologically. And I think if you look—you asked about anti-communism and stability—our view was that in the long-run and maybe in the medium-run these abusive military regimes were creating conditions in which radicalism could be fostered, in which radicalism could grow, in which communists who were getting plenty of help from the Soviet Union would actually be able to find support because they’d appear to be the only alternative to the very oppressive regimes that existed in so many countries in Latin America then.

So our view was that a regime, ultimately the Pinochet regime would feed radicalism. Likewise these other military regimes...you know this is not a new theory. This is the theory of Kennedy and the Alliance for Progress. This was in a sense going back to a theory that was 25 years old at that point.

We felt that long-term stability therefore could not be maintained through oppressive military regimes. So the trick's in the transition. It is. And everyone agreed that that was a dangerous moment. But we felt that the reaction couldn't be to put it off for 100 years; the answer was then to do it well. After all, in how many countries did we do it wrong and how many then were headed for communist and radical take over? The answer is zero.

**IW:** But when you left them alone some did go back?

**EA:** Well you could say that now to Ecuador, Venezuela. There was a difference after the collapse of the Soviet Union; the salience of all this was diminished. But yes, there's a different question there: what went wrong in the early years of democracy? In some countries—I mean it didn't go wrong in Uruguay. It didn't go wrong in Chile. Why did it go wrong in the places it did? It's an interesting question and a different one but that's not the question that was then being debated. The question then being debated was really one of communist groups, extreme leftist groups. People were not debating whether there'd be hyperinflation or incompetent government a la Argentina. This was a Cold War argument.

**IW:** Another question I wanted to ask: the Reagan administration never gave military support, I believe, for Chile. As you said there was the National Endowment for Democracy, which funneled some money. Obviously the administration did use force in Grenada, and I know that's obviously a very unique situation, and also provided arms I guess to the contras. Were there ever any discussion about how and when the administration would provide more than just financial support to Chile's opposition groups?

**EA:** No, in the case of right-wing military dictatorships, nobody ever contemplated doing anything other than essentially diplomatic support. Diplomatic support was hugely important in all those cases. In every single one the argument the military made was, "We are the bulwark against communism. If we don't rule, the whole country will collapse and the communists will take over." And in fact in all those countries there were communist terrorist groups. Each country had some version of this.

Along comes Ronald Reagan, this great right-wing hero. For Ronald Reagan to delegitimize those regimes, for his government to say, "No you are not a bulwark against communism; freedom is the bulwark against communism. It's time for you to go." And for us then to meet with these people, that is to have the Christian democrats, the social democrats come to Washington and be received by the State Department, by the Secretary of State—with the Chilean case he often met with those people—Argentines, you know, we had people from all these countries come up—this was huge in delegitimizing the military regimes and in credentialing you might say the opposition. Because if this Reagan government was saying, "You're ok, we like you, we think you are on the right side of the Cold War," you know that was very, very important. And that was only (?) really.

**IW:** I'm looking through some of the other questions that I have here and you basically touched on all of them in your introduction. That probably made this a lot easier. Just looking through here something I mean, you touched on this but I wanted to ask, something that was important in Kirkpatrick's "Dictatorships and Double Standards" was the distinction between authoritarian and totalitarian government. This is slightly tangential but you have basically told me that whether or not the administration saw a distinction, ultimately the endgame was democracy in both cases. I guess in Grenada that was arguably turning into a totalitarian vs. authoritarian government, and the administration intervened militarily. Was there a different sense of urgency and different priorities that....?

**EA:** Grenada was early. I was not actually in charge then in the first term. I think after Nicaragua and with a battle underway in El Salvador, and pretty active communist groups in Honduras and particularly Guatemala, I think there was just a general feeling that you could not possibly allow another country to go under.

By the way, that just reminds me of a couple things to say. In 1981 under Haig, we stopped giving military aid to the government of Guatemala, which was a military dictatorship. So even under Haig and even in the very early days there was an appreciation that some of these governments were, in a sense they were so bad that they were dangerous even though they were ostensibly pro-American and anti-communist. They were so bloody and so oppressive that you couldn't support them.

[...]

I think on the authoritarian-totalitarian distinction, we believed it was a very significant distinction. And part of the distinction was the question of the road back: that is, could you get from under being a totalitarian regime? There's been a lot written about this, because with the collapse of the Soviet Empire the question I think most of us would say is more complicated than we thought 30 years ago. It seemed more clear-cut then, but it's probably the case that it was more of a spectrum, with black and white but with gray in the middle, too. Because after all totalitarian regimes have collapsed. Certainly the Soviet regime collapsed for what were essentially internal reasons. I think you can distinguish the satellites in Eastern Europe, because in those cases you had regimes which had no internal support whatsoever and collapsed as soon as Soviet support was withdrawn.

But in the Soviet Union you had the actual collapse of a totalitarian regime. So if Jeane were alive we could ask her, what does that mean for the theory in which all of us believed? I think it's fundamentally a useful description of reality to note the difference between, for example, the Latin American dictatorships, in which there was no political freedom but in which the rest of society is allowed to go on, and really totalitarian regimes. I mean, in those countries there was a very substantial amount of economic freedom. There was complete freedom of movement. What we now call civil society, from the bar association to the boy scouts, all of those existed in those countries.

Therefore building a stable democracy was a hell of a lot easier than it would be in a country where all those institution were collapsed.

[...]

**IW:** So I guess at this point, do you have any final thoughts, something you wanted to say but maybe I cut you off? This is a very solid beginning to my research. I guess coming in to this, and maybe you want to respond to this, coming into this interview I had the impression that maybe Kirkpatrick had a little more of an influence in a sense, that the Reagan administration did support more authoritarian governments. But again that could have been more in the first term when Kirkpatrick was ambassador, when Alexander Haig was Secretary of State, than you seem to be indicating.

**EA:** I think that's right. Again, that's my view; you may find that interviewing others that other people disagree. It is my view, and I think that what happened here is that we all arrived with this view—there was no debate about what Jeane was arguing; we all agreed with it. But you know then we had to apply it.

And in a certain sense Jeane didn't have to apply it because she was U.N. ambassador. We had to apply it on a day-in-day-out basis, and I think—look, other people have said this, I think it's true, particularly in the second term when I was assistant secretary—I really very strongly believed that we should be promoting democracy. Haig was gone, Shultz was Secretary, Shultz believed it, Shultz chose me in part I think for that reason. He was fully supportive. And I think over the course of the eight years Jeane's influence on policy in Latin America diminished. It was highest in the first year or two and it diminished in the second term as the administration developed and then implemented under Shultz a somewhat different policy. I think that's true.

I don't know what Jeane's people—Carl and Jose—would say now 20 years later. But that's my perception.

## APPENDIX B

Interview with Carl Gershman  
August 25, 2008  
Washington, D.C.

**Ilan Wurman:** So I guess if we could start, I know you were in the U.N. with her. I don't know exactly what your role was, if you could explain that to me. And then I want to leave it really open-ended so you can talk about, knowing what my topic is, what you think is important.

**Carl Gershman:** Is the topic trying to understand what lay behind her essay, or her role in her administration? What are you trying to get at?

**IW:** It's an intellectual history of her piece, "Dictatorships and Double Standards," and her other work, but it's going to focus on that piece, and then her influence on the administration, so a little bit of both....So I'd like to leave it open-ended.

**CG:** Please interrupt with questions because I need to know what you want to know and where you want to go with it rather than my just talking in an open-ended way. So would you like me to start, or would you like to ask a specific question that I'll respond to?

**IW:** Why don't you start and I'll throw in some questions there.

**CG:** Well I mean, indeed she was part of a particular political and intellectual community that she often referred to as a small group of people who were around Hubert Humphrey. That included her husband, Evron Kirkpatrick, that included Max Kapelman; it included a small group of people who you might call mainstream liberal, anti-communist Democrats in the 1950s and 1960s.

But then of course all of that fell apart over Vietnam, and in the 1970s a group of intellectuals came together around *Commentary* magazine to fight against what they saw as the takeover of the Democratic Party and the intellectual establishment in the United States by what at the time was referred to as "the new politics," or people associated with George McGovern. It was essentially anti-anti-communism, or a rejection of the containment policy.

These people wrote for *Commentary* magazine, they were associated with a range of other organizations such as, as you mentioned, the Coalition for a Democratic Majority [CDM] in the mid-'70s; there was the Committee on Present Danger that came together. There was a group of what you might call anti-communist labor activists with close ties

to the AFL-CIO and the Social Democrats USA. And obviously they were open to working with people who were around Ronald Reagan, to form a broader coalition to try to shore up the kind of anti-communist point of view in American politics.

The other important contextual issue is the Carter administration's foreign policy. Carter ran a very smart campaign in '76, and it was not clear whether he was going to throw in his lot with the people that the CDM had been fighting. It became clear shortly after Carter's election that indeed he would. In other words, the CDM people would get no real place in his administration. There was one individual, I think the joke that was made, Peter Rosenblatt was active with the CDM group—he got ambassador to Micronesia. That was the one position that they got. But in any event, they were pretty much on the outs.

Carter, you know, initiated the whole human rights policy at the time. But there was the feeling that some people had that even though they were advocating human rights through dissidents in the Soviet Union, which was a big issue at the time, the real thrust of the policy was to apply it in Latin America, or to what at the time were called “friendly tyrant regimes.” In other words, governments like Chile, South Korea, some of the countries in Central America, where there were basically autocrats who were running the countries and they were in one way or another aligned with the United States in fighting the far left in those countries. That was the real issue of sensitivity—those types of regimes.

Somebody like Jeane Kirkpatrick thought that the United States had an interest in relating to those regimes. She was not uncritical of them from a human rights standpoint, but she thought there was an interest in having relationships because the alternative was a lot worse. She also felt that, and this was a common point of view within what you might call the CDM world at the time, which was that these so-called “authoritarian governments,” like South Korea, like Chile, like Spain, which was in the process of going through a transition at that time (Franco had died in 1975), or Portugal which began its transition in 1974 with the fall of the military government, but that these governments were open to the international economy. While they were dictatorial and engaged in some cases in nasty human rights abuses, there was the possibility that they could evolve into more democratic countries, whereas the communist regimes were much more rigid and unchanging. Such was the point of view.

In retrospect you can say they underestimated the capacity of communist regimes to change because nobody at that stage in the '70s really anticipated the collapse of communism, even though in a way they were pushing for something like that. But the feeling was that totalitarian governments were much more able to hold on to power whereas these authoritarian governments could change.

So she wrote this article which appeared if I remember in November 1978...

**IW:** '79 I think.



**CG:** '79 was it? Yeah maybe it was. In any event, it was a harshly critical critique of the Carter administration's policy. In a way, you know, the article anticipated two real setbacks to that policy, but it anticipated them: one of them is what happened in Iran, although it was beginning to take place at the time, the other is what happened in Nicaragua, where authoritarian governments fell. Some people think that the loss of support from the United States encouraged the unraveling of both the Somoza government in Nicaragua and the Shah's regime in Iran, and that in each case they were followed by governments that turned out to be worse, or certainly deeply problematic to the United States. Problems we are still dealing with in Iran, and of course the Sandinistas in Nicaragua.

In any event the article was a very sharp critique both on the grounds that the alternatives were worse and also that there were greater prospects for liberal evolution in these authoritarian governments. And it was a coherent, highly sophisticated critique of this policy. The article came to the attention Richard Allen, who was an adviser to Ronald Reagan, and would eventually become his first National Security Adviser. Allen was sort of attuned to what was being written and said in *Commentary* magazine and those circles. And I think he immediately reached out to Kirkpatrick and wanted to bring her into the Reagan camp.

They were very aggressively at the time trying to recruit, and people like Elliott Abrams as well, trying to recruit those people into the conservative Reagan campaign on the basis of shared international views and knowing that there was a growing disenchantment that these "Scoop Jackson democrats" had with the Democratic Party. Those people had not yet broken with the Democratic Party by any means, and there was even a very famous meeting that took place in January of 1980, one month after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, when Carter had said something that led these what were at the time neoconservatives to believe that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan had opened his eyes and that he was prepared to shift gears and embrace what they were saying.

And a meeting was set up at the White House where a lot of them came, and I think Elliott was one of the people who attended that meeting, Ben Wattenberg, who is still active and he's just published a book. Ben Wattenberg was another person at that meeting. Bobby Dickshifter and maybe Michael Novak: these are all people who were probably at that meeting. I wasn't there and I don't know. But the meeting turned out to be a real disaster from the point of view of those who wanted to engineer reconciliation between this group of people and the Democratic president. Carter basically said I'm not reconsidering anything; I'm standing where I am.

The meeting ended very quickly and [Vice President] Mondale, who was in the meeting, tried to recoup some of the damage after the meeting in talking to this group; but the damage had been done and after that a lot of them made up their mind that they were going with the Reagan campaign. That happened during the first part of 1980 when a lot of those people came on board. And there was a very active effort to try to recruit them as

well. So that's the background of that. And you know as soon as Reagan got elected, one of his first appointments [was Jeane Kirkpatrick], and I'm sure that Dick Allen had something to do with that.

[...]

But Jeane was offered the U.N. post and you know she called me up—I had contact with her. As a matter of fact if you go back and look at that article in *Commentary* magazine you'll note that the other lead article was by me in that same issue.

**IW:** I'll go back and look at it.

**CG:** Andrew Young had just resigned as U.N. ambassador, and I wrote a piece about the "Andrew Young Affair" which caused his resignation. As a matter of fact since it was more topical it was given the lead. "Dictatorships and Double Standards" was the second article in *Commentary* that month. But obviously her article was a more intellectually important article, with more staying power; it just wasn't about a topical controversy that had taken place.

In any event, I was running the Social Democrats at the time and I had invited her to speak at a number of meetings and, you know, we were not really close at the time. I was living in New York and she was living in Washington. But I had seen her and we had talked, and we got along really well and she invited me to come along with her. In effect I was called her "Counselor"—that was my formal position though I wasn't a lawyer.

[...]

There were four people who started with her on the first day, on January 28, 1981. I was one of those. My position did not require Senate confirmation, but it was a political appointment.

[...]

Basically she was looking for people who shared her values and who wanted to go to the U.N. to express those values and to carry on the battle, as it were, against the communist regimes and the people who were somehow sympathetic to those values. That's in a sense why she went to the U.N.—to carry forward the intellectual arguments that she had been making. That's why all of us went with her. We might have been writing articles, engaging in various kinds of debates in the public arena. Now we all of a sudden found ourselves at the United Nations where we could carry those arguments forward in a global arena, which was quite unusual.

My formal position in working with her, she did have four ambassador slots to fill, Jose [Sorzano] in the beginning was the ambassador to the economic and social council. Ken Adelman came on later and he was the Deputy Perm Rep. Chuck Lichtenstein was the

ambassador who handled host country matter because the U.S. is actually the host country of the U.N. and there was a position of ambassadorial rank to handle those responsibilities. Then there was a fourth position which she actually gave in the beginning to somebody who was a State Department careerist, which was kind of the representative to the Security Council, even though obviously the Perm Rep was the main representative to the Security Council. But this is somebody who would handle Security Council matters. It was the third of the four positions in addition to the Perm Rep; it was the second most important.

[...]

I used to jokingly refer to myself as the “sixth man” from basketball analogies because there were five ambassadors. In effect I had rank within the mission equal to those other positions, but I wasn’t technically an ambassador. And when she parceled out responsibilities to people she asked me to take the Third Committee, which in the U.N. is the committee that deals with human rights, which was obviously terribly important to her. We collaborated a great deal on speeches, statements in that committee. She would always give the Afghanistan speeches to the U.N. and I would work with her on that and a whole lot of human rights speeches.

I was able to use the Third Committee as an arena to engage in the kind of issues that were important to all of us. And again, the First Committee dealt with arms control, security issues; the Fourth Committee was economic and social issues, which is what Jose had; or maybe that was the Second Committee. In any event, the Third Committee was human rights and a whole series of related issues involving self-determination and countries that were, like issues of Apartheid, countries that were against colonialism or something of that kind.

What was interesting about the way she understood her position at the mission, she had a very close relationship with President Reagan. I think in just hearing her tell the stories, there was a real division between people in the administration who somehow shared a particular intellectual perspective and wanted to be powerful advocates for vigorous pro-freedom, anti-communist points of view, and then others who you might think of as more pragmatic, more *realpolitik* types of people. The mission and the people she gathered around her became a center for a kind of strong pro-freedom, anti-communist intellectual point of view. That’s what she wanted.

Obviously there was a tension there with the State Department, which is always more interested in being more pragmatic: these are professional Foreign Service officers. They don’t really understand the intellectual battles out of which she emerged, out of which we all emerged. In the beginning there was some tension there as to whether we could give this speech or that speech, and you know she was very assertive and she pretty much said, “You’re on your own,” and also “I don’t want you to clear your speeches with the State Department.”

[...]

When we would go into the Third Committee to deliver a speech, like the first speech I gave which was on self-determination, she pretty much gave us carte blanche to carry out the struggle as it were. So it was a lot of fun. We could really take up from where we left off from when we were outside of the government, and really could make some waves, which is what she wanted. She wanted to use that bully pulpit, as it were, to really articulate a point of view.

I mean obviously she had functions within the Security Council and negotiating resolutions where obviously you have to work in close synchronization with the administration—she's after all a functionary of the administration. But on a lot of issues where we were articulating a point of view we were pretty much allowed to speak our minds, in a responsible way of course, about the various issues we were talking about. So if I were giving a speech on self-determination, as I did during my maiden speech in 1981 in the Third Committee, I was able to...I talked about the Soviet Empire. It really unleashed a whole series of protests and outrages.

**IW:** So you know you were doing something right...

**CG:** Well it was also that that's what she wanted. You know, to challenge them on issues. The point of view within the United Nations, the conventional point of view, is that when you go and you talk about colonialism or self-determination you are talking about South Africa, or a few territories that were not yet granted independent but were under the trusteeship of the United Nations and so forth.

You were certainly not supposed to be talking about something like the Soviet Union, which constituted an empire. And all the issues related to that and also then the Soviet Bloc. I mean within the U.S. Congress there would be an annual captive people's week, there would be speeches given, people would recognize that countries like Poland or the Baltic countries or Czechoslovakia were captive nations. That was a common phrase in the United States, but that was not a legitimate point of view within the United Nations. To speak of that as if it were...that under the item on self-determination you could talk about captive nations, you could talk about the Soviet Union, was incredibly controversial.

And indeed it led to in this one speech, there were literally nineteen rights of reply to the speech. In other words, countries were responding because they felt they had been unfairly attacked. And the speech had been interrupted and so forth. In a way that's sort of what she wanted, that was part of what we were supposed to do in the United Nations. And I think that's one of the reasons it got the attention in certain circles that it did.

Obviously the foreign policy of the Reagan administration was much broader than that, but you know we were in the U.N. and it was that kind of an arena. It was during the Cold War and this is how she wanted us to speak, and to speak clearly. She took

advantage of it with her own speeches obviously to speak clearly about these issues, and it was about the issues she cared about. That might be Afghanistan, it might be Cuba; obviously the Middle East was important to her as well. So that pretty much summarizes I think her vision for how we should approach the U.N.

**IW:** So if I can then interrupt, I actually do have a couple questions. You mentioned the State Department being more pragmatic in a sense, and as I told you Mr. Abrams spoke about how the administration shifted over the years, how hard-line it was, or how committed it was to one foreign policy vision over another. What would you say the overall theme the administration as a whole was regarding, if you pick region, say Latin America which as you said was very important to Kirkpatrick: was it pro-stability, was it anti-communism, was it pro-democracy, did it change?

And also generally, what was Kirkpatrick's influence in the White House? Were there competing influences? I know you mentioned the State department and obviously Secretary Haig had some differences with her, but were there any other dynamics going on, how much influence did she have, and what was the overarching foreign policy theme of the Reagan administration, and how much influence did Kirkpatrick have on that?

**CG:** Well you know you can point to a number of speeches, even though there were debates at the time, as to how consistent it was being in advocating these points of view; but the theme was promoting freedom and democracy. The very institution that I run now [National Endowment for Democracy] had its origins in the speech Reagan gave to the British parliament in Westminster, the famous Westminster address, which called for a global campaign for democracy and for the creation of this institution to carry that out. It basically said we should be defending our values. We should be advocating those values. And we should be doing it in practical ways.

I mean in a way what happened was that you could think about the articulation of a democracy policy by the Reagan administration as either an alternative to the Carter policy of human rights, and there were some differences as to what these two policies represented, or as an outgrowth. In a way it's both an alternative and an outgrowth. They viewed the human rights policy—I'm speaking now about some of the people in the Reagan administration—and this goes back to Kirkpatrick and her article in commentary, as moralistic and hectoring and lecturing to countries and wanting them to oppose their abuses and so forth and calling upon them to change their behavior.

The Reagan administration's idea was in a way more practical; in other words we want them to build institutions. We understand that good behavior also grows out of having the right kinds of institutions and that we should therefore have a capacity to help countries develop those institutions, whether it's not only how to conduct free elections, but checks and balances, strong parliaments, free trade unions, a market economy, all those institutions we associate with a democratic society.

So in a way it was more practical. Part of Kirkpatrick's complaint was that they were calling for certain types of behavior out of certain kinds of countries that in her view I think were not oriented for it, or were not ready for it. And I guess this approach was to try to help countries. I mean, obviously in cases where there were serious human rights abuses, to support people who were fighting those abuses, but also then to try to help countries build democratic societies. And in a way this approach addressed the critical problem that was such a point of contention between Kirkpatrick and the human rights world. In other words, they would say, "We don't like this right-wing authoritarian government" and the right would say, "Well what's your alternative?"

And in fact, President Kennedy once said speaking about the Trujillo government in the Dominican Republic, there are three options: our preference is to have a democratic government. But we shouldn't throw out the existing option, namely the authoritarian government, unless we're sure we're not going to get the third option, which could be a communist government. In other words you have those three options. Well, the whole idea of this push that they were making for democracy was [to] help countries try to craft that third option, the democratic option, [in places] where you do have these right-wing authoritarian governments. Instead of just saying we shouldn't criticize them, let's try to help them find a way to develop democratic alternatives. That's what this is all about.

And indeed that is what happened in the 1980s. That is what happened in the Philippines. That is what happened in Chile. That ultimately is what happened in Central America, which was the point of sharpest contention, where you are helping democrats who could emerge and offer democratic alternatives to various kinds of leftist, radical, authoritarianism; so the only alternative wouldn't be a right-wing autocratic alternative. That's what it was all about and I think that was a conscious point of view that the Reagan administration was pushing.

**IW:** And that was in tune with a lot of what Kirkpatrick was saying?

**CG:** Exactly, it was exactly in tune with it. And I guess it was a step beyond it because a lot of the contention between Kirkpatrick and the human rights community was that she was defending the authoritarian government against the communist government and therefore she was from their point of view an apologist for the authoritarians.

The fact is when the Reagan administration got under way and was able to articulate what it was all about, it was really saying that we want to encourage the evolution of these authoritarian governments. The change we want to help create is democratic alternatives. And that is indeed what happened in quite a remarkable way. It's not like it ushered in the New Age, but in one country after another this is what happened. Now, what didn't happen just because of the Reagan administration, but what was not maybe sufficiently appreciated by everybody at that time, something which only got definition and a name [in] the early 1990s when Sam Huntington wrote his book the *Third Wave*—this became the *Third Wave*.

So there were a lot of historical forces at work here. No one fully anticipated at the beginning how vulnerable communism was. Maybe it was in Reagan's vision but no one really realized how if you really stood up and pushed back how it could crack and how quickly it could crack. Nobody really fully appreciated that, even though the Reagan administration came fully on board the idea of trying to uphold democracy as the alternative to communism. So indeed in El Salvador the U.S in 1984 pushed election and tried to move from the dictatorship to the elections. Duarte won those, you know those were Christian Democrats, these were not dictators who won those elections.

The human rights community was very bitterly opposed to this because they somehow wanted a stronger policy of opposition to these governments and not working with them to try to create an alternative. But I think in retrospect if you look at this, even though there were terrible human rights abuses in many of these countries, the policies that they advocated worked! And it certainly worked in the Philippines, and as the decade evolved, especially the Philippines was a critical turning point in a lot of this, though it wasn't the only one. You know, the Reagan administration came fully aboard the idea of abandoning Marcos and supporting Aquino and the alternative. So in other words we're not going to stay with Marcos because we need this authoritarian dictator.

The more the democratic alternative became a realistic possibility, the more the U.S. came together in a bipartisan way behind it. And in a way you could find the seeds of that in the "Dictatorships and Double Standards" article, even though at the time it was written this process had not really gathered momentum, the process of the *Third Wave*. It began in Portugal in 1974, but by 1979 when Kirkpatrick was writing, it was only beginning to emerge.

And in Latin America you still had military dictatorships. You had just had the collapse of democracies. Bitter, bitter battles between terrorists and authoritarian governments; the terrible problem of the disappeared, the murders in Chile and Argentina. This was a very difficult and bitter period. But as the decade evolved, one transition after another occurred in Argentina, in Central America, in Chile. As these transitions occurred, the contentious issues that had been fought over, while you can still say there were a lot of political disagreements between people in the Kirkpatrick camp and the liberal human rights camps—there were still important issues dividing them—but they really took on a more historical character as the decade evolved.

**IW:** If I could jump in there, you mentioned Argentina and Chile twice I think. Actually you came here as soon as it was founded, the NED?

**CG:** Correct.

**IW:** And I know you gave some money originally to Chile in the 1980s I guess right after you left the United Nations. Would you say that there were any differences on Chile between Kirkpatrick and what ended up happening? Did she maybe think it was too anti-Pinochet too quickly? You know, did she think it was moving too fast? And then I'd like

to repeat the question with Argentina because she's been criticized for supporting Argentina in the Falkland Wars over the U.S. government's position which was to support the British. Was that because she was a Latinist or because she really believed that we needed to ensure the stability of this authoritarian government?

**CG:** I think it might have had more to do as you suggested with her being a Latinist. That's something she would have to speak for herself on. But my feeling is that she felt that there was a kind of a elitist condescension toward Latins, in that she was somehow saying that the people who were doing that didn't understand the culture well enough. I mean obviously the administration clearly sided with Britain and that led to the transition in Argentina. And of course this is a transition that she welcomed.

Chile is a more interesting case because this is one took place over a longer period of time, which we were able to be involved in. We supported a lot of groups in Argentina when it came around, but the transition to Alfonsín (?) had already taken place. But with Chile it was still very much in contention and it was very interesting. I mean, all I can say is the critical thing here is that it was not the dictator against the communists. It was trying to craft an alternative, trying to craft a transition. And in our early documents when we expressed what we were trying to do it was encouraging democratic transition. That's how we expressed what we were trying to do in all the document we wrote at the time.

In Chile, in a communist country (?), we were trying to open closed societies. And you can say that all of these phrases, "supporting a democratic transitions" and "opening closed societies" recognized that there was a difference between these situations. But we did not allow ourselves to be trapped in this debate which at the time was between somehow supporting a right-wing dictator against a leftist threat. But in those situations we were trying to build an alternative, encourage a transitional process. In that regard maybe the right was a little bit divided on that. I remember that we were able on a situation like Chile probably to get more support from Democrats in Congress than we could from Republicans.

[...]

If you interview Jose Sorzano he'd probably tell you that he wasn't an enthusiastic supporter of what we were trying to do, that there was that caution there. So you'll get that division of opinion. But obviously once the transition took place, those divisions, those debates were set aside.

And that's one of the reasons why it's important for the United States to move in that direction, because the United States—whatever the debates were with the Carter administration—the United States could never, regardless of the government, could never have comfortable and consensual relations with a right-wing authoritarian government. It's just not going to happen because they are too much opposed to the basic values.



And you have different political camps gathering around those issues, as we have today with our relations with government like Egypt or governments like Pakistan or some of those other governments with which the U.S. tries to work even though we may have strong differences with their human rights policies. You could not have had a close and cooperative relationship with a Pinochet government in Chile. You might have had to deal with them, and somebody could argue that you had to because the alternative would have been worse. One could have certainly made that case in Iran in retrospect or in Nicaragua, or in Cuba, where Castro replaced a right-wing authoritarian government and what we have is 50 years of dictatorship, and it's a worse dictatorship.

So these are still relevant arguments but obviously with all the division over Cuba policy, if Cuba would have become a democracy, you'd have nothing but good, close, cooperative relations. Even if we might have a disagreement about this or that policy, we'd be two friends working together and there'd be no fights about it in the Congress; and you can have strong relations with a government like that. I think that's sort of a point of view that took hold.

The NED, when it got into these things, you can argue that when we approach these issues in a manner consistent with the underlying philosophical ideas in "Dictatorships and Double Standards," in other words recognizing that there's a difference between totalitarianism and authoritarianism, and there was—I mean this was a long intellectual tradition going back to Hannah Arndt, and (?) others who had written long treatises on totalitarianism and why it was something different. It was a new reality in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. And authoritarian governments were simply different. That was the underlying thesis of her article.

And when we came around we understood that there were different things to do in those countries. We wanted to encourage change in both, and therefore these were not issues of contention. We're not saying we're going to ally ourselves with this authoritarian dictator; no, we're going to work for an opening there or transition just as in the case of communist countries...

**IW:** The question is how...

**CG:** ...and one of the remarkable things that people don't realize is that you *could* work in Chile, you could go there, you could meet with political oppositionists. Sometimes the parties might not be legally registered, but it was not a problem to go down there to support groups, to be engaged. It was actually a rather open political situation. It's a perfect example of what she was talking about. Because this was after a decade of the real critical period when the dictatorship took over and a lot of people were killed. This was in the '80s where a lot of things already started to change.

But you could go there and do a lot of work. I made many trips and we had a lot of grants. And they had something in 1985, the National Accord, which brought together 11 parties into a coalition. It was put together by the Church. This was 1985, more than three

years before the referendum leading to the 1989 elections and the transition. And we supported the National Accord with a grant that went to three think tanks representing the three major political tendencies in the National Accord: the social democrats, the Christian democrats, and the conservatives. There were conservative, right-wing parties in the democratic National Accord. There were two conservative parties among the 11 parties....And we supported that through these three think tanks.

It was a very interesting grant that we made, and the Chileans we supported were consciously trying to encourage a change on the Chilean left, to create kind of a European-oriented social democratic left instead of a revolutionary socialist left which they felt led to all the troubles with Allende—and which led to the confrontation that they had to find a way to have a left that could operate in a stable democratic process. And this is what Chileans were working on. The Chileans of the democratic left were working on trying to modernize the socialist democratic left in Chile. And they succeeded, and that's what we were able to support.

I can remember going to the most open communist society there was at the time in 1987, when we were doing all this work in Chile, and that was Hungary. And we had to meet in secret; you had to have loud recorders playing because everybody assumed everything was being bugged. There was no real open political activity that was allowed. And I can remember sitting in a living room, because obviously some people could get together; it wasn't at that stage a really harsh totalitarian situation. I remember meeting with 40 or 50 dissidents in a room and telling them about Chile. I couldn't believe it because they had heard that Chile was the most oppressive place in the world. They just couldn't believe that we were able to operate as we were in a county like Chile.

[...]

**IW:** I have just two really short questions; we're approaching an hour so I don't want to hold you. One, this is just my curiosity but something might come out of it. Did the president or anyone in the administration ever instruct her to do something or say something that was against her better instinct when it came to foreign policy? I'm just throwing that out there it might be a dead end.

**CG:** I don't know it's possible that if you put that question to Allen Gerson who did a book on that...maybe the bombing of the Iraq nuclear reactor. She might have been, I don't know, she might have been a little uneasy with her vote cast in favor of condemning [Israel] at the time. I just don't know what she felt she was being instructed to do something she didn't want to do. She would fight a lot of battles over these types of issues. She did make a point of bringing on her own legal adviser; this was Allen Gerson who you know wrote the account of her years in the U.N.

**IW:** I actually have it in my backpack.

**CG:** He was somebody that she explicitly brought from outside the service. She really wanted to have independent people. She didn't want to be taking her advice from people just within the State Department. So she got a lot of independent advice, so she would at least have the wherewithal to debate those issues. I mean, I know she was constantly in contention on a lot of issues. Some obviously were issues that came to the United Nations. The big issues which you fight about come to the Security Council, but I don't really...Allen may be able to point to one or two instances where that happened.

**IW:** And quickly, the 1984 "Blame America First" speech was a pretty famous convention speech. You mentioned you'd written some stuff for her. Do you know a lot about the history of that convention speech, and maybe did that impact the way anything in the administration, congressional Republicans...is that speech something worth looking into?

**CG:** Well that was after I left. I left in April of 1984. That speech was probably in August. And I had already entered into a very different world—a bipartisan world, not a partisan world. You know she became a kind of a heroine to a lot of people in the Republican Party. She is and was to Senator McCain. She stood for something and she held up a certain banner, not because of that speech alone but because of the way she spoke out when she was the U.N.

You know she had [at that stage] left the Democratic Party. There were a lot of issues that caused her to be alienated as she saw it. She was not someone who would always look for where America was wrong; but America in her view was most of the time right in these situations. She was not uncritical of the United States, but she thought that there was a tendency on the Left growing out of the 1960s, the rise of the New Left...and what happened to the Democratic Party, and in a sense merging the anti-war movement with the Democratic Party. These were people deeply critical of the United States and she felt they just went too far and she spoke out against it...I think once she left the government and went back to Georgetown and her intellectual work and so forth her positions were very nuanced, very complex.

It's worth looking at that last book that was published posthumously to see some of these positions and how she reacted on Iraq, why she was for the intervention in the Balkans, why she was against the way the intervention happened in Haiti and so forth. I mean her views were pretty complex and ultimately by that point came down to the very difficult question, how do you balance democracy and human rights concerns with security concerns. She was a realist in many ways, but a very unusual kind of a realist. She was a democratic realist and very conscious of that. And she would always say you have these two dimensions. And I think that's what you can sort of argue that in "Dictatorships and Double Standards" that she felt that the liberals were out of balance, that they were emphasizing human rights and democracy, or at least human rights, without due regard to the security interests of the United States.

She would also be critical of people if they just approached the security issue without any regard for human rights and democracy. The question is how you bring those two values into proper balance. That's really what the essence of what she was all about. If you can capture that in your paper you'll be doing well.

**IW:** Thank you so much. Unless you have any final thoughts, I'll release you. I really appreciate it.

## APPENDIX C

Phone Interview with Jose Sorzano  
August 27, 2008  
Bethesda, MD

**Ilan Wurman:** So I explained to you a bit what my thesis is about, but basically I am trying to understand the foreign policy landscape in which Kirkpatrick wrote her article, and its influence on the administration. For instance, I spoke to Elliott Abrams, who said he believe that the Reagan administration moved slightly away from Kirkpatrick's views in the second term, while Carl Gershman said that the administration's foreign policy was perfectly in tune with Kirkpatrick's...

**Jose Sorzano:** Carl is right and Elliot is wrong.

**IW:** So Carl was right and Elliot is wrong? If you could just launch right into it I'll let you get started.

**JS:** You know my relationship to the two of them?

**IW:** I believe you were deputy permanent rep and you came with Kirkpatrick so it was not a careerist position, correct?

**JS:** I was a political appointee but let me tell you this. I met Jeane when she was not yet at Georgetown. She was at Trinity College in Washington here, a girls' college. I was a starting graduate student and she put an ad in the Georgetown University government department bulletin board saying she was looking for somebody who could help her research in Spanish and Argentine newspapers. So I got hired by her and I spent a year working with her reading Argentine newspapers because she was then working on her Ph.D. dissertation, which then became a book on the Peron mass movements in Argentina.

Then when she came to Georgetown I became her teaching assistant. Then she was one of the readers of my Ph.D. dissertation. Then I became her colleague as a professor of political philosophy at Georgetown University. And then when she went to New York I became then eventually her deputy in New York. At that time Carl Gershman was there, so was Ken Adelman, Chuck Lichtenstein, and Mark Clatner (?), all names maybe you already heard. That was part of the Kirkpatrick group.

At that time Elliott started as the Assistant Secretary for International Organizations, which presumably would supervise the operation of the U.S. Mission to the U.N. Except

at that time there was a built in problem: the fact was that the ambassador, in this case Jeane Kirkpatrick—the permanent representative—was a Cabinet member and obviously was several galactic dimensions above the Assistant Secretary for International Organizations. So there was to be, and continued to be until the position of the ambassador in New York was downgraded, there was a built-in friction, institutional friction, between the U.S. mission to New York and the bureau for international organizations.

But eventually Elliott then moved to be Assistant Secretary for Human Rights, and eventually he became the Assistant Secretary for Latin America. At that time, I was the senior director for Latin America in the National Security Council. Elliott and I were then in charge of essentially moving the Sandinistas out of Managua. And I would tell you that if there was any kind of making our policies milder, I declare myself not guilty on that particular end because our intention was just to drive those bastards into the ocean.

**IW:** laughs

**JS:** So I don't know where Elliott got the idea that in the second administration of Reagan the policy got watered down. Yes there was the problem of the Iran-Contra which eventually diverted the attention of the administration, but I would say that "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall" and our policies toward the Sandinistas were as hard as they were ever from the beginning. And certainly the policies of supporting the Mujahadeen in Afghanistan continued until eventually the Soviets were pushed out.

**IW:** If I can jump in there and ask there more specifically with regard to Latin America, what would you characterize as the administration's approach or guiding principle? Was it pro-democracy, or was it anti-communism, or pro-stability, or a mix of those?

**JS:** I want to get back to what you said: the intellectual origins of her articles, because I think they are easily identifiable and there are academic origins here.

**IW:** Okay.

**JS:** When the Reagan administration started, remember we are coming from the Carter administration. And the Carter administration had identified one specific item that should be key, central to U.S. foreign policy and that was human rights.

It was his application of human rights to an American foreign policy which then led to a real re-orientation of American foreign policy toward a number of countries that up until that moment had not been particularly friends of the United States, but had not created any antagonism with the United States. Once you begin to look around the world and your glasses are tinted with human rights, you begin to see all kinds of warts that were there to begin with but you didn't notice them before.

So now the Shah in Iran, and then you have the Somozas, and you have Pinochet, etc. etc. So these people who were essentially minding their domestic business and being nasty, but not creating—that was not a problem between our bilateral relations with them. But once you begin to emphasize human rights, suddenly these guys don't look particularly innocuous, and we begin to exert pressure on them to change their policies.

These are not stable governments; they are fragile governments under the best of circumstances, and once we begin to put pressure on them, turbulent dissension begins and the end result is the Ayatollahs and Sandinistas and so on and so forth.

So that is one of the, if you will, empirical bases of Kirkpatrick's argument, namely, yes—the Shah was bad but the Ayatollahs are worse, yes Batista was bad but Castro is worse, yes the Somozas were bad but the Sandinistas are worse. So in other words our policy, which was trying to promote human rights in those countries, actually had the unintended consequence of making things worse. But that's a practical view of an empirical argument.

There are other intellectual arguments that come from what Jeane Kirkpatrick and I taught at Georgetown, and that is, there was a very long tradition in political science which makes a distinction between totalitarianism and authoritarianism. I don't know if you are familiar with the book, but if you are writing this thesis you should become familiar with this. There is a book by Friedrich and Brzezinski.

**IW:** Which book?

**JS:** It has two authors: Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski and it's called "totalitarianism and authoritarianism," I forgot exactly what the title is; but it makes a very clear-cut distinction between authoritarianism—namely the typical military dictator in Latin America, the Somozas and so on and so forth, the Pinochets—and totalitarianism—Nazi Germany, Soviet Union, and so on and so forth. It makes a very black and white distinction between the two of them and what they claim, and that was essentially a central pillar at that time of any attempt to describe foreign governments in international relations.

It makes the point that totalitarianism is a new form of government that has been made possible only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century because of the advent of new technologies: propaganda, control, bugging lines and so on. And it creates a totalitarian system because it seeks to control the totality of the social and institutional and environment of a society in order to bring about a particular political objective.

Authoritarianism on the other hand has much more modest objectives. It seeks only to obtain political power and maintain it and is willing to crack heads and kill and torture and so on, but is not out to shape a new man, or create a new man, as Che Guevara would say. In other words, I think you should read it.

One of the critical aspects of that book is that authoritarianism as I mentioned before are unstable systems, and military dictatorships don't last very long. They are wobbly and they fall very easily. Totalitarian systems on the other hands are very, very strong and the argument went at that time, up until that moment no totalitarian system had collapsed from within. If they ceased to exist it was because they had been invaded from outside by superior military force, namely the allies beating the Germans and so on and so forth. So the belief was widespread—I would say consensual—that a system like the Soviet Union was very stable and that it would not collapse from within because of these new technologies of mass control.

Needless to say, being a nuclear power [Soviet Union], the possibility of overthrowing it from the outside created humungous risk and very few people were willing to contemplate that action.

So I would say that the Kirkpatrick article is based on that distinction, namely that authoritarian systems, while bad, are temporary, unstable, and quite readily change into something else. Totalitarian systems do not.

There's where we go. And she says, "If you got to choose between different amounts of evils, or there are some things that are worse than other, then totalitarianism is worse than authoritarianism." That's not to say authoritarianism is good, which was the false charge made against Jeane. What she was saying is that our policy was to recognize that these authoritarian systems are unstable and are likely to evolve—more likely than totalitarian systems—to evolve in to something that is more acceptable to the United States' democracy.

That's what I would point you to, because I'll tell you what: the advantages of doing that is that you now have a very limited and circumscribed thesis topic. You don't have to explore the whole political systems in Latin America which is going to send you on an unending quest of information. I would just point you to that direction.

**IW:** Thank you.

**JS:** And this by the way is why the collapse of the Soviet Union from within created the intellectual questions for those of us who believed that totalitarian systems were, not immutable, but very resilient and not likely to collapse from within like authoritarian systems often—not often, almost always—do.

Now let me come back to your original question of five minutes ago. I am a long-winded professor.

**IW:** No I like it this is very helpful so thank you.

**JS:** When you come in, it is quite clear what the consequences of a foreign policy that emphasizes human rights are. And those policies brought about conditions which were



worse from our point of view and from the point of view of the subjects of those countries who were worse off than before.

So we began to argue against the threat of communist takeover in Central America with the Sandinistas and so forth. But there is a logical discourse in the United States, because we are an open society—we are a democracy, parties compete with one another—so you can make an argument and you can expect that the other side is going to make a counter-argument.

It became evident that trying to sell anti-communism was not going well. It became evident that we needed to change the argument and the symbolic environment of our policies. So it became also evident to those of us who were professors that human rights is good, but human rights is essentially a part of something much larger, much more desirable: and that is democracy. In other words, it is possible to allow say a monarchy that respects human rights but it is much more likely that a democratic system will respect human rights because the workings of a democratic system presupposes all kinds of things, which are incorporated into our notion of human rights.

So the argument then shifted to promoting not anti-communism but promoting democracy, which was essentially the same thing. Because if you promote democracy you are anti-communist. But it was not only a more satisfying intellectual construct, but also an easier sell. It tracked with the tradition of the United States and the view that what the United States has tried to do abroad is to promote good things, and that we are not out there to do what Truman said about Somoza: “he may be a son-of-a-bitch but he is our son-of-bitch.” That is realistic, that is Bismarckian, that is *realpolitik*; but that doesn’t play well in Peoria.

So promoting democracy and human rights became the policy of the Reagan administration. It was not to set aside human rights but essentially to encapsulate human rights within a larger and much more desirable goal, which was to make this a stable, prosperous democracy.

This led, in my mind, to one of the greatest achievements of the Reagan administration, which was to make for the first time a bipartisan consensus on what ought to be the U.S. foreign policy toward Latin America and Western Hemisphere. Up until that moment there had been this division in which the Democrats wanted democracy and human rights and the Republicans wanted anti-communism. And the Republican position was summarized by Truman, by saying he may be a son-of-a-bitch but he’s our son-of-a-bitch, and as long as these people were anti-communist it was ok with us; we weren’t going to go to bed with them but they didn’t look that ugly to us.

But with the change in the rhetoric as well as the conceptual apparatus—and this is Kirkpatrick’s doing—the conceptual apparatus of how do you justify our foreign policy toward the region, then you had a situation in which we came to the “Washington Consensus,” what is called the “Washington Consensus.” The Washington Consensus

was that liberals and conservatives, and Democrats and Republicans, agreed that in Latin America the foreign policy of the United States ought to be to promote democracy and human rights as well as a market economy. I think that the Democrats were on board with that one; I would not know that they were equally supportive of the two legs of the consensus, namely democracy on one hand and market policies on the other, because many of them are not particularly keen on market policies. But it was enough to create a consensus.

But now as I said, there is a logic to the debate. And once you agree to this thing, you have a situation which is, hell, we are pushing democracy. What are you, Mr. Reagan and Mr. National Security Council and Mr. State Department, what are you guys going to do about Pinochet?

**IW:** This was going to be one of my specific questions so please go on.

**JS:** Well and the next question is, if you are going to be for democracy, and this is what you are trying to do in Nicaragua, what are you going to do next door with Mr. Noriega? So you cannot be inconsistent publicly. Liberals are, but you know, if you are going to be intellectually honest, then you have to say, well, we actually have to modify our policies toward Pinochet. And Elliott Abrams himself was pushing from the State Department the position of changing the policies toward Pinochet and applying all kinds of sanctions on Pinochet like (?) all kinds of things. In other words we began to apply the screws to Pinochet in order to actually be able to be consistent in our foreign policy.

Needless to say, we did exactly the same as Noriega; we put sanctions and so on and so forth. In other words, the policy was to promote democracy and within democracy human rights, and market economies. And even though Pinochet promoted market economies, given the fact that he only had one particular box checked out and the other was not. So I do not know that we softened our foreign policy. What we did was actually to make it a cohesive and a coherent justification for our policies in Nicaragua, in Chile, and in Cuba, and in Haiti, and in Panama.

There you go.

**IW:** Well thank you. If I could just quickly follow up. So if I were to ask a rather simple question, you do not think that Kirkpatrick believed that we were going too quickly away from Pinochet? You think she was completely supportive of this change in tune, that we do need to promote democracy even with Pinochet? So she wasn't too hesitant about...

**JS:** What I would ask....A few days after Jeane Kirkpatrick's death, the *Washington Post* had an editorial. You are from the region so you know the *Washington Post* is no neo-conservative...

**IW:** Yes, sir.

**JS:** Read the editorial. Look it up. Jeane Kirkpatrick's. And it said you know, when Jeane Kirkpatrick made the distinction between totalitarianism and authoritarianism, and she died and Pinochet died and Castro is about to die, and—she was right! Ok, there is a thriving democracy in Chile, and in Cuba you still have a totalitarian system. So look it up and quote it, because your professors out there on the West Coast are not going to be able to say you are just quoting *Human Events* or *National Review* or something like that. I'm not kidding look it up because the *Washington Post* said Jeane Kirkpatrick was right—it means it was undeniable!

**IW:** **laughs.** Yes, sir. Let me look through here, you basically answered quite a few of my questions, so I'm just sifting through here. Would you say, I mean, to recap, correct me if I'm wrong I just want to make sure I have everything clear. Basically, the Reagan administration was always in tune with Kirkpatrick? There was a slightly different pitch you guys made, when you tried to couch it in terms of democracy versus anti-communism...

**JS:** I would tell you she was instrumental in fine-tuning the message!

**IW:** She was instrumental, okay.

**JS:** Believe you me, okay?

**IW:** Oh I do, I do.

**JS:** There would be no democracy in El Salvador today were it not for the fact that Jeane Kirkpatrick traveled to the region very closely to the assumption of power of Reagan, and came back alarmed; that led to the formation of the Kissinger Commission, that led to the policy of providing assistance to all these government and so on and so forth.

And believe you me, our efforts to convert Salvador—which was under attack from the FMLN—from a thuggish military dictatorship into a democracy...I mean we worked harder on that thing than I don't remember anything else. Napoleon Duarte was a Christian Democrat and we supported him to the hilt despite the fact that he nationalized absolutely everything. I mean his economic policies were terrible!

But we supported him and we supported the transition to democracy in all those places. And believe you me, there ought to be Jeane Kirkpatrick boulevards all over Central American, because without her the situation in Central America would not be what it is right now. That Daniel Ortega is capable of winning an election and getting back to power this time not by guns but through ballots.

**IW:** Well if I could go to what should be a quick question, and there seems to be consensus on this but I'll ask it to you anyway. Would you say that Kirkpatrick might have been too pro-Argentina during the Falkland crisis, or was it because she was trying to protect the stability of an authoritarian friendly regime or was it just because she was

more of a Latinist and Alexander Haig was more of a Europeanist. The administration obviously came down on the side of the British on that but how would you characterize her support for Argentina during the Falkland Wars as part of this?

**JS:** Who gave you the three options? Someone should be put in a fire wall and shot for those three options you gave me.

**IW:** You can make your own, you can fill in the blank.

**JS:** No read me the three options because one of them made me puke.

**IW:** Was it that she was a Latinist?

**JS:** No not that one

**IW:** That she wanted to support the stability of Argentina?

**JS:** That's horseshit.

**IW:** That's horseshit? So how would you characterize it?

**JS:** I just want to say that I was intimately involved on this. The secret meetings between the Argentine governments—and I put it in plural because there was more than one government—and the United States government were held in my apartment in New York City. This is the situation: Jeane Kirkpatrick felt, I felt, and I'm going to tell you President Reagan felt, that the British were big boys and could take care of themselves, and that we ought to take care of ourselves as well. And having a fight between Britain and Argentina was not in our interest because no matter who won we would lose. Okay? So our number one objective was to prevent them from coming to blows. Secretary Haig did not do a very good job of that.

So they came to blows. So after they came to blows, our objective should be to minimize the damage that would take place because actually we could not prevent them coming to blows. Now the damage was in the United Nations and the Security Council. As you are well aware, Britain is a permanent member of the Security Council. They have a veto. We have a veto. There's no need to have two vetoes. If Britain can veto it, why should the United States redundantly veto it and pay a diplomatic cost for doing so?

Still with me?

**IW:** Yes, yes.

**JS:** So then our position at the U.S. mission was to...we had received instruction to veto it. And we lobbied to change our instruction to abstain. Let the British veto it, the interests of Britain would be protected that way, and our interests would be less harmed

by abstaining than by vetoing. Vetoing it would not help Britain anymore than they had already helped themselves, but it would incur damage to us vis-à-vis the Argentines.

This comes in the framework of what the American-British relationships were in the U.N. Perhaps the toughest meeting I ever participated in diplomatically was in a meeting with Jeane Kirkpatrick and myself and the British ambassador and his deputy. It was just two on two, I just sat there pretending to look intelligent, the conversation was between the two permanent representatives. But essentially Kirkpatrick said to...it was Tony Parsons....that the United States is disturbed by the way Britain is behaving in the U.N.

We the American delegation had been acting on the premise that there is a special relation between the two countries, but we believe Britain is not acting in that relationship and that if Britain is acting as a member of the European Community—at that time there was no EU—and that Britain was often going with the European Community against positions of the United States, and Kirkpatrick said, and this is why I used the words before: we are big boys. We can play each way you want it. But we just want to know which way you want to play it.

The relationships were not hunky dory, in closing. The contention was, they are taking care of their interests, we should take care of our interests.

[31:30]

[...]

[45:00 – End]

## APPENDIX D

Interview with Joshua Muravchik  
October 17, 2008  
Claremont, CA

**Ilan Wurman:** I was hoping you could start going over a little bit what were the key defining moments in the split of the Democratic Party, which led to the rise of the neoconservatives. Was it the Vietnam War? The 1972 McGovern election? Jimmy Carter's foreign policy?

**Joshua Muravchik:** It was all those things. The Vietnam War was the (?). The anti-war movement was really anti-liberal. Everyone understood that the Johnson-Humphrey administration was the embodiment of liberalism as they saw it at the time. And therefore the New Left of the '60s, which then became the anti-war movement, was explicitly radical and anti-liberal. There were all these pejorative phrases: "the liberal establishment"—that was the most common phrase to identify who the bad guys were. In more Marxist circles, it was phrases like "bourgeois liberalism," but even in the non-Marxist, the broader student-left circles, the "liberal establishment" was seen as the target.

For many of us who became neocons, we really liked the Johnson-Humphrey administration. Jeane in particular was close to Humphrey, because Evron, who was her mentor, was also Humphrey's mentor. So she was actually personally close to Humphrey. But the Johnson-Humphrey administration had more influence in it by organized labor than any administration since then. The Roosevelt and Truman administrations were also very influenced by organized labor. The '30s to the '60s were probably the hey-day of union political power in America. And it was the Johnson-Humphrey administration that forged the victory of Civil Rights in America.

Kennedy didn't do it and couldn't do it. Although in the history that's rewritten, Kennedy is portrayed as a liberal champion, but it's not true. Kennedy was less liberal than Johnson and Humphrey and much more equivocal on civil rights. I remember as a young activist going to demonstrations demanding that the Kennedy Justice Department do more to protect civil rights workers who were being killed and beaten and so on in the South. Remember Humphrey also was the civil rights spokesman among national politicians; it was Humphrey's speech to the 1948 Democratic convention that put across the civil rights plank that threw the Dixiecrats out of the Democratic Party. And the Johnson-Humphrey administration was responsible for the Civil Rights Act of '64, the Voting Rights act of '65, the Fair Housing Act of '68.

So there was this universe of liberal thought in which I was just a young hanger-on, but Jeane was right in the center of, which really had come into its own with the Johnson-Humphrey administration. The anti-war movement treated the Johnson-Humphrey administration as the real enemy, as the bad guys, and so this split was very sharp and angry right from pretty early on. And the battles raged over the next decade. At the '68 Democratic convention in Chicago, where the New Left anti-war demonstrators were demonstrating violently and the Chicago police "roughed" them up, and then Senator Ribicoff...accused Mayor Daley of using Gestapo tactics. And the anti-war movement was virulently and violently opposed to Humphrey, and eventually cost him the election. And so that was a very big moment.

Then in '72, when McGovern got the nomination, what it really signified was that the people who were out in the streets in Chicago in '68 had decided, even though they were radicals against the system, to work inside the system. And there was this huge discourse within the ranks of the anti-war movement to work inside the system versus outside the system. But they basically mostly decided to work inside the system and they all enlisted in the McGovern for President campaign, and they were successful.

And at that point they triumphed in the Democratic Party, but the battle went on for the next four years. McGovern lost so badly there was kind of a backlash. There was a backlash, and the more moderate conservative Democrats fought back after the election, ousted McGovern's chairman of the Democratic National Committee. And there was an organization formed immediately after the '72 election which was called the Coalition for a Democratic Majority [CDM]. And that was designed to be a factional structure within the Democratic Party. The point of the name at the time was that if the Democrats are McGovernites, they'll keep losing like McGovern lost. And if they want to win and be the majority party they have to move back to the center.

So this became—we don't have a good name for it—but the anti-McGovern faction of the Democratic Party. Initially the two honorary co-chairs were Humphrey and Scoop Jackson. Some years later Humphrey was replaced—four years later Humphrey was replaced—by Moynihan. And Jackson remained as one of the two. The chairman of the Executive Committee was then Ben Wattenberg.

[...]

Jeane was a member of the Executive Committee. A few of the other members of the Executive Committee were from the "Kirkpatrick Circle," and when I use the term "Kirkpatrick Circle" it's really a reference to Evron, because he was for 20 years the executive director of the American Political Science Association. He was kind of the Grand Old Man of American political science. Jeane was younger than Evron—no one called him Evron, everyone called him Kirk—Jeane had been Kirk's student I think at Columbia, and there was an aged difference between them. He was a man who was very academic in the sense that he didn't publish a lot, he had no desire to be publicly recognized himself; but he mentored a lot of people including Hubert Humphrey and

including Jeane and a bunch of other political scientists....In addition to Jeane there were three other members of this circle who were on this Executive Committee of CDM.

In that period, '72-'76, we kept up this fight within the different institutional structures of the Democratic Party. And we lost. The key to that was—you know we were a band of intellectuals, we didn't really have troops—but what we did have was organized labor, which was in that era the bastion of liberalism but was also very anti-communist, always supported the Democratic candidate for president, but didn't support McGovern in 1972 because he was soft on Communism. So that's what gave us a hope of winning in the factional fights, but it wasn't enough. We lost, and at that point the AFL-CIO decided to cease involving itself in these factional fights because it was costing too much money—not money but political capital. And they decided that we were high and dry because they were the backbone of the anti-communist liberal faction. And so we were in pretty bad shape after that.

But then came the '76 presidential race and Scoop ran for president. He had a pretty decent shot actually, and he won two critical early primaries: he won the Massachusetts primary and the New York primary. And this was really a drubbing for the liberals—there were a whole bunch of liberal candidates and none of them won anything. The three main contenders at that point boiled down to sort of the center and right of the Party: that is George Wallace, Scoop Jackson, and Jimmy Carter. Jimmy Carter did not run as a liberal. He positioned himself a little bit to the left of Scoop, but very much as a centrist. And when he beat Scoop in Pennsylvania it was kind of all over for us. But that was pretty early on.

We were disappointed but we didn't feel so bad. We thought that alright, Carter would be a centrist; he wasn't as hard-line as we were, but he wasn't a McGovernite liberal either and we could live with that. And when the platform of the Democratic Party was determined at the Platform Committee, Jeane and Ben were the two official representatives of Scoop Jackson to the Platform Committee, later joined by Moynihan. Moynihan actually had a seat on the Committee; he was a delegate. Jeane and Ben were not delegates, but they were staff; they were the designated representatives of Scoop to the Platform Committee....And we won most of the arguments in the platform, and we were very happy. Even some of the liberals complained that we had got the better. So we were alright; with Jimmy Carter we would have half a loaf or maybe a little more, maybe 60 percent of a loaf.

And then Carter was elected, and immediately he appointed all McGovernites to all national security positions. We felt trapped and betrayed, but it was also, why did Jimmy Carter do this? I don't think Jimmy Carter had a single political belief or principle at that time. But at that moment at least he was a savvy, canny politician, and he sort of said those were the people who really had the power in the Party and he would do better to align himself with them.



Even though we weren't unhappy leading up to the election, right after the election we started off very at odds with the Carter administration. That continued different kinds of running warfare through Carter's years. Big fights over defense spending and other things. SALT especially was the biggest. SALT came first and then defense spending, but all had to do with one's view of the Soviet Union and communism. It was Carter's belief that we had had "an inordinate fear of communism."

That was a big part of the case against Carter, captured in that article of Jeane's, "Dictatorships and Double Standards." There was an oddness we all felt that she was able to nail down. The oddness was that Carter and the liberal McGovernite camp that he made himself a part of, put all this emphasis on human rights, but the whole essence of their fight with us was that we were too anti-communist. The reason we were so anti-communist was above all about human rights. So it seemed to us that there was some hopeless contradiction in the thrust of Carter's policies, which was to talk a lot about human rights and spend a lot of energy being nicer to regimes that horribly abuse their subjects.

But we didn't succeed in articulating that very effectively until Jeane's article. As I said [before], I don't think Jeane was quite right or quite fair in saying that they went after rightist regimes and not leftist regimes. I think it was more nuanced than that.

**IW:** They went after the weaker....

**JM:** They went after the weaker regimes. They went after Guatemala and Mozambique and not after China and Saudi Arabia. Still, even though she overstated that part of it, still the difference that she drew between totalitarian and authoritarian regimes was quite crucial if you really cared about human rights, because the reality is there are different degrees of repressiveness. And there were and are regimes in the world that are dictatorships that are completely undemocratic, citizens did not choose the government and cannot change it, but nonetheless you can sit in a café with people and talk freely and people criticized the government and they're not looking over their shoulder. You can do that today in Egypt or Jordan. But you could not do that in a communist country.

There was a difference between a regime that was a dictatorship where basically the motto was, "You leave me alone and I'll leave you alone"—the dictator basically saying don't challenge my power and I don't care much else of what you do—and a totalitarian mobilizational regime. By mobilizational I mean where the regime constantly has a hundred ways of prodding people to affirmatively express and profess their obeisance to the regime and their love the great leader, and there are spies everywhere and where people are encouraged inform against their neighbors or their family members. That's a much more horrible thing.

The Carter administration had done two things, which Jeane had nailed. One thing it completely ignored was the scale of evil or scale of repressiveness of dictatorships. And the other thing was, and I do think she was right, was more in the spirit of the Carter

administration. The spirit of the Carter administration was, we're going to be somehow better, finer than America used to be; and two things we're going to do is we're going to cozy up less to the dictators whom we had aligned ourselves with out of self-interest, we were going to kind of slap them in the face; on the other hand we were going to be nicer to the people we used to be at odds with because we want peace on earth and goodwill to men, and so we'll make more friendly gestures to all kinds of nasty regimes.

So anyone who had been our enemy automatically there was a presumption that in the name of peace and understanding we should be nicer to them than we used to be. And anyone who had been undemocratical and had been our friend we should be less nice to because it had sullied us to....

**IW:** And in the end we didn't have any friends!

**JM:** Well if it had kept going, it was a clear message the less you liked us the more we liked you. Which is not strategically very wise. And so she really nailed that in that article, though I have the quibbles that I've mentioned. And so that was really a big landmark and got her named to the Cabinet.

I can't give you that long of an answer to all....

**IW:** That was the broadest question I would say. So I'll ask you again what I asked you before: for different reasons, you say it was because weaker vs. stronger regimes, and Jeane said it was authoritarian vs. totalitarian regimes—but there was an inconsistent application of human rights [under Carter]. When Kirkpatrick was U.N. Ambassador and when Reagan was president, were they also inconsistent, but in a different way? Were they too anti-communism and pro-authoritarian regime? Or was there the underlying consistency of democracy promotion but different methods of pressure for different regimes? How would you characterize the differences in their policies?

**JM:** There were two differences. One was that if liberals criticized Jeane, Reagan, for being inconsistent, softer on rightist regimes than leftist regimes, there is a grain of truth in that. I don't think it's true in the end. That is, it was the Reagan administration that in effect ousted, or forced out, the military rulers in El Salvador, and forced them to turn power over to Jose Napoleon Duarte, who was the equivalent of a European Social Democrat—he was left of center.

Although initially saying friendly things toward Marcos, it was the Reagan administration that sent Senator Lacksoll (?) to Manila to tell Marcos he had to go, and probably before he sent signals to the Philippine military along those lines. And so in fact the Reagan administration did crack down on some rightist regimes. But it dealt with them in a more collegial way. It sent high-level emissary to talk to them—Bush in the case of El Salvador, Lacksoll (?) in the case of the Philippines—treating them in a kind of collegial manner, while telling them that their time was up.

The grain of truth here in the criticism was that the Reagan administration was more focused on the Cold War and on fighting it to win rather than thinking we could make it go away. And therefore, in that context, the Carter administration had that strange kind of morality in which if a regime allied with us it showed something bad about it. The Reagan administration felt that regimes got points for being our friends. As I was saying a minute ago, what's false about the critique is they didn't get a free pass. It's not the same thing. They got some points; they got some credit with us. They got political capital for cooperating with us. But at the end of the day, as in these examples, we still were ready to ditch them over human rights.

The second part of what the Reagan administration did started with Reagan's speech to the British Parliament in '83 or '82 about democracy. It made democracy the template more than human rights. Therefore, it shifted the focus from negative to positive since human rights was more about sanctions against regimes that were violating human rights, whereas democracy was more about what can we do to support people in undemocratic countries who were trying to convert them into democracy.

**IW:** There's conflicting views on this, but I've read that Reagan's policies some considered to be more hard-line in the first few years of the administration and in the second term he became slightly less lenient on the authoritarian regimes in Latin America. Would you say there was a difference when Shultz came in and when Kirkpatrick left the administration, or would you say the change in policy was because the situation changed a little bit?

**JM:** Shultz was about two years into the administration. Shultz was a much smarter guy than Haig. But Shultz was not a soft-liner. He just had a better sense of how to go about it. And so it's important to point that out because I think there probably was more panache, a better presentation of policy under Shultz than under Haig.

Probably three things were going on in the second term: I don't think there's a big difference. The biggest difference was the selling arms for hostages. That was in my opinion a terrible betrayal of what Reagan had stood for, and I think it was an early symptom of his Alzheimer's, because he kept saying when it was exposed, "I did not trade arms for hostages."

There was a complete strangeness here, because the evidence was now right there in the public record that that was exactly what had happened. There were documents showing that we delivered x number of missiles and they released two hostages. There were communications going back and forth. Okay, two more hostages for fifty more missiles. It was all very explicit.

If he didn't know it was going on it was really odd, but [even so] there was the public record splashed across the newspapers and there was Reagan saying, "Yes it happened, but I didn't trade arms for hostages." There was no coherence, no logic to what he was saying. He didn't deny that we gave them missiles and that they gave us hostages and that

there was a quid pro quo, but he kept saying “I didn’t trade arms for hostages.” It was so crazy. So there was some breakdown in Reagan himself.

Secondly, it is probably true that there was some greater influence of Baker, Deaver, these Republican operators who didn’t give a damn about policy, that toned down the ideological content of Reagan. And Jeane’s absence would have been a part of that. They were very much hostile to her, I think because she represented a kind of strong ideological commitment which they had no use for.

But the third thing that happened which also can’t be left out of the equation is Gorbachev. So, anyone who would say that there was a change in Reagan vis-à-vis the Soviet Union or the Cold War, is just not talking sense, because there was a really big change on the other side that required a response from our side, and required us to start behaving differently and exploring it.

Remember the first one who alerted the West to the possibilities of Gorbachev was [Prime Minister Margaret] Thatcher. Famous statement she made, “He’s a man with whom we can do business,” after sitting and talking to him in private. No one has said that Thatcher had changed her policy and had gone soft at that stage in her premiership, so I think if you were analyzing a difference in Reagan’s second term from his first you’d have to take all these factors into considerations. I think the Iran-Contra is where it really came out, I don’t think it was in other policy areas.

**IW:** Well that’s about the time. That pretty much covers it very succinctly.

## APPENDIX E

Interview with Frank Gregorsky  
August 24, 2008  
Falls Church, VA

**Frank Gregorsky:** Since you were pretty flexible in your laying out the landscape, I would like to talk a little bit about how bad Republicans were on foreign policy from the '20s up to the '60s. Because anyways, Kirkpatrick, Hubert Humphrey, Kennedy and Johnson, those people positioned themselves against the irresponsibility that was coming from the Republican Party, and then it kind of switched by the '80s. It was the Democrats who were much more skeptical about foreign intervention, Republicans tried to reclaim the mantel of Kenney and Johnson, defending our allies against communism.

There was a huge shift in the mid-'60s to the early '80s, and not a lot of people have written about that. I mean they've written about it from their own parochial points of view. I want to get in my spin on your main point which is how Jeane first was affected by this change in the Democratic Party.

[...]

The Democrats figured out a long time before the Republicans did, and a long time before the conservatives particularly did, that we needed to play a role in the world. I wrote a paper about Harry Truman and Congress's foreign policy activism in '46, '47, '48. Harry Truman, coached by Winston Churchill, figured out pretty quickly that the great alliance of the Soviet Union which got us through WWII and helped defeat Hitler was not the way to go after '45 and after the big victory.

Harry Truman courageously, powerfully, with a few mistakes, coddled together our foreign policy apparatus. He created the Air Force out of what had been the Army Air Corps, created the CIA in '47 I believe it was. There's always a prototype where you have to do something different that has not been in your past in terms of your policy or product line. The big thing that grabbed Truman was the Greece and Turkey situation. They were somewhat different, but he got through—and this was a Republican Congress, because there was a post-war reaction after WWII just like after WWI, Warren Harding came in after WWI and we were going to be an isolationist country again—anyway the same thing almost happened in '46. The Republicans came in '46, big victories in the House and Senate in 1946, and suddenly Truman, who's an unelected president, came in as Vice President—three months later FDR is dead—who was not kept in the loop in a lot of things, was told that we have the A-bomb. I mean you have to remember the incredible

things that Truman dealt with in his first 6, 8, 10 months of his presidency, his accidental presidency.

One of the many problems was Greece and Turkey. Greece and Turkey had a kind of screwed up monarchical government and a communist insurgency which is being aided by Stalin. Turkey is a different situation but there is a left wing insurrection going on in Turkey. And Truman says to the Congress, we have to provide I think it was 250 million dollars, which is a decent sum of money in '47, in aid to the anti-communists in Greece and Turkey. This is the prototype I'm talking to you about. The Greece-Turkey aid bill in '48 was very hard to get through the Congress.

[...]

It took Republicans coming to power under Eisenhower to realize that we can't go back to the 1920s. We can't go back to the 1930s. We can't be protectionists. We have to have a big foreign aid budget. Eisenhower was a pretty effective in terms of overthrowing a left-wing government in Iran in 1953, overthrowing a left-wing government in Guatemala in '54. Eisenhower was one hell of a leader. He used the CIA, he used targeted assassinations before it became illegal. [...] The idea of aggressive anti-soviet, pro-Cold War interventionist foreign policy in the '50s became basically our bipartisan attitude toward the Cold War. There are always situations like where China, where there was the polarization and where some Republicans were screaming that Truman lost China....And of courses Korea is another situation.

[...]

But the point was, by the time we got to '63, '64 the Cold War consensus was still there. We had a democratic administration; most Republicans had gotten over their isolationism by then....The debate in '64 was about how we can keep the Russians on the defensive. [...] Kennedy signed a nuclear test ban treaty with Khrushchev. There was kind of a détente going on. Liberals always say, "Well we have to deal with the Soviets because we have each other targeted for destruction, it's stupid not to deal with them." Most reasonable Democrats and Republicans said, "Of course we have to deal with them! The question is over what, how hard are we going to deal, are we going to push them to the wall from time to time, are we going to cut deals...."

People of Jeane Kirkpatrick's generation—she wasn't in government at the time—but she was out of that tradition of Hubert Humphrey, Scoop Jackson. Point is, most of the Democrats were unified as late as '66 and '67. They were internationalists, they were responsible free traders, they were pro-military, they were willing to use the CIA. Let's remember that Jack and Bobby Kennedy used the CIA to try to kill Castro four or five times....They knew that having a communist government right in our hemisphere was nothing but trouble. And Johnson did that too.

[...]

Let me stop for a minute since we covered the mid-'40s through early '60s. What's your reaction?

**Ilan Wurman:** This is good. I don't know much about Scoop Jackson and Hubert Humphrey, but maybe you can flesh out their foreign policy a little bit. I pretty much understand that by '64 you had kind of a consensus. Republicans and Democrats kind of aligned at this time; they weren't isolationist anymore (the Republicans).

**FG:** And the Democrats weren't either.

**IW:** And from what I'm understanding this all changed in the '70s.

**FG:** It started to change in the late '60s. Vietnam shattered the consensus. We'll get to that. But what I really want you to know is Truman and Dean Acheson and George Marshall and the democratic leadership from '46-'52 were vital. I mean, I'm a Reagan conservative and I love Harry Truman. They made the most of a very bad situation. They innovated under pressure. They were bureaucratic builders. They created the CIA, they signed a defense pact with Australia and New Zealand, they quickly realized that Japan and Germany...had to be allies, and we had to make them prosperous as bloody fast as we could. Truman did all that. Reagan would have nothing to defend if it wasn't for Truman's innovation, and Marshall and Acheson. They took the Congress along kicking and screaming for the most part, especially Republicans. [...]

If you look at other politicians and even Jeane Kirkpatrick who was probably in her 20s back then, it was an exciting vision to affiliate yourself with.

[...]

Scoop Jackson, briefly: Scoop Jackson was elected Senator from Washington state in '52, had been a congressman for five or six terms. Elected in '52, died in '83. But he was one of the last defenders of the Kirkpatrick, Elliott Abrams tradition in the democratic leadership. He ran for president in 1972 and lost to George McGovern. That was a huge fight. Scoop defended Nixon on Vietnam. [...]

**IW:** That was in a sense one of the turning points....

**FG:** Oh, yes. McGovern was the big one, but Scoop was alone among the Democratic candidates; Scoop Jackson was upholding the traditional Truman, Kennedy, Johnson foreign policy. And all of those guys—Elliott Abrams, Jeane Kirkpatrick—I bet they were all supporting Scoop Jackson in '72. He also ran again in '76. Hubert Humphrey was mayor of Minneapolis in '45-'48, he became senator in '48. He ran for president against Kennedy in '60. He was a little more liberal than Kennedy, a little more internationalist; let's have more foreign aid, let's not be too jingoistic. But after he became Johnson's vice president, Humphrey was torn to bits by [Vietnam]. I don't know that he would have done Vietnam any differently, but he was an honest and loyal man,

and he was loyal to LBJ. Humphrey was torn inside, having grown up in the Kennedy-Johnson tradition. He was the nominee in '68 and also ran in '72. [...] You had Scoop Jackson running from the old tradition, the strong internationalist foreign policy; you had George McGovern who was hero of the college kids and said Vietnam was terrible and that we had to come home and cut our military by 30 percent. You had Hubert Humphrey who was torn between these two extremes, and you had George Wallace who was a serious candidate before he was shot.

[...]

So the Democrats had gone from being a unified, fairly coherent governing establishment by '72 to a party that was breaking down, to a party that was torn to bits by Vietnam. Let me stop again because Vietnam is a big topic. Go back and pick up anything.

**IW:** You can go on.

**FG:**

[...]

The brilliance of Jeane's 1984 convention speech, this is one of the most rhetorically clever and also one of the most profound things ever done in American politics, at least in foreign policy debates. There was a movement in the 1930s in the United States...called "America First." We went over to help the Brits and the French in WWI, they have screwed up their government and their continent so much; now they have Hitler and now they want us to bail them out again. To hell with it. [...] There was a great movement against aiding the British, against increasing foreign aid, against reinstating the draft. Republicans and isolationists, mid-westerners led that movement. It was called the "America First" movement. Massive rallies in Madison Square Garden as late as 1941. Even when Hitler had taken over two countries and Churchill was standing alone for freedom against a terrorized continent with blitzkriegs. [...] To his great credit, FDR was a great president regardless what you think of him about the New Deal, he was an internationalist along with Truman.

**IW:** You can forgive him for the New Deal because of WWII.

**FG:** Absolutely. He saw this as early as '36. He said in '37 that America needs to be the "arsenal of democracy." People freaked out. Even some democrats said, "What?" We're not going back to Europe to get involved in another war. [...] So Roosevelt said well, I have to be more cautious about how I do this. I know what's coming, I know Hitler is going to be the enemy, I know we'll probably have to make a deal with the Soviets. And he played all that out calmly and slowly....My point is, the Republicans and particularly isolationist congressmen, preachers, small town people, were reacting from the '35 period on, had formed the "America First" movement. [...]



Getting back to Jeane, “Blame America First”! I mean, I can take a little bit of credit for this, because my paper [May 1984 Republican Study Committee Report, *What’s the Matter with Democratic Foreign Policy?*]...had a section in there called the “Blame America Democrats.” The point was that every time there was a risk or a danger, from Grenada to Iran to Nicaragua, the Steve Solarz’s and to a much greater extent a lot of other people in the House and Senate would say, “You did it. America did it.” We either did something wrong 30 years ago and they’re settling the score now (Iran).

[...] But it was always America’s fault because we were confronting them needlessly now, we were provoking them needlessly by our warmongering, failing to learn the lesson of Vietnam that if something’s going to happen in a far away place, there’s really nothing we can do about it; and if the Russians were doing something they said fine let the Russians do it.

All I did in ’84 [with the report] was to go back to the late ’60s and find all the evidence of this among the Democrats. At some point Newt [Gingrich] said to me that Kirkpatrick’s very interested in your research. [...] Take the latest copy of your paper. Here’s the address, go over there tonight put it in an envelope and leave it on the door. So I remember at some point in early May in 1984 driving to Bethesda, Maryland and leaving this enveloped on the front of this very plain, middle-class house somewhere up in Maryland.

Maybe two weeks later we had a big press conference...to release this paper. [...] She never talked to me; I never did talk to Mrs. Kirkpatrick. But she talked to Newt, and she said this really does explain why the Democrats had gone off the rails, and why no one is going to trust the Democrats to govern, to control the CIA, the presidency. She made the argument that if they continually blame America for everything and try to see the stupidity and corruption of Uncle Sam in every hot spot in the world...her masterstroke was taking the old Republican isolationism of “America First” [and saying] the democrats today always “Blame America First.” It was a masterstroke.

[...]

**IW:** There was actually something I wanted to ask. You mentioned the Clark Amendment earlier, I was wondering what that was.

**FG:** Senator Richard Clark was one of a whole bunch of people who were elected in ’72, ’74, and ’76 who were part of this new post-Vietnam consensus in the congressional Democratic Party. He was elected from Iowa in ’72, he lost in ’78 (he only served one term). But his everlasting legacy was in 1975, passing the Clark amendment saying that the Ford administration could give no foreign aid, no military aid to the freedom fighters—the anti-communist resistance in Angola. The Cubans sent troops, and the Russians sent money to the Angolan communist government in ’74. I mean Cubans in Angola! That’s how on the defensive we were. We had to worry about Cubans in Angola! And Ford was still of the old consensus; he had always been an internationalist; he had

never been an isolationist. He got elected in '48; he supported Truman to his credit. I mean Ford was almost bewildered by the mid-'70s. [...] The Clark amendment passed a heavily democratic passed saying, stay out of Angola. Well, by '77 Carter gets elected. Carter doesn't have strong feelings one way or the other on foreign policy.

[...]

So Carter never says he's going to carry out George McGovern's policy, but in effect he started to do that....they created a U.N. Secretary for Human Rights, Patricia Derian—she was one of the bete noires of the right in the late '70s. I'm sure if you said that name to Elliott Abrams he'd scoff. She went around lecturing countries, mainly our allies, about how they had to become democratic and have a free press very quickly.

One of the very first things Carter did to show that he was going to have a different policy, he cut off military aid to three friendly South American governments—Brazil was one, Argentina may have been one, Bolivia, not sure who they were; we didn't have any military aid to Chile at that time, Chile was already a pariah state—but he cut off military aid saying, “Hey maybe we're not giving aid to communist governments, we'd like them to be democratic too.” It's not like we're going to be pro-communist, but we only have leverage with our right-wing allies, so-called “friends,” we're just going to start cracking down. You go where you have leverage. Most people just said to hell with you, we'll buy the weapons from some place else.

But the point is it sends a signal that if you are on the side of the United States and if you are anti-communist they might cut you off, this new Carter approach.

**IW:** Does that include Somoza in Nicaragua?

**FG:** Oh yeah absolutely. It didn't happen right away. We stopped supporting Somoza.

[...]

So Reagan comes in, and does two things: you got a problem in Nicaragua, a communist government; you have an insurrection in El Salvador, that we don't want to become a communist government. We're going to try to overthrow the Nicaraguan reds, and we're going to aid the El Salvadorians, end of story. But he also goes beyond. What would happen if the Soviet Union weren't there giving this money and training and backing to all these communist insurrections? Why don't we just get rid of the Soviet Union?

[...]

He does everything he can to fight the proxies of the Soviet Union, but not just the proxies in the way Truman and Eisenhower did, but try to destroy and unravel the whole Soviet apparatus. Star Wars, the Strategic Defense Initiative starting in March 1983, is a wonderful way to do this technologically and it scares the hell out of the Soviets,

particularly Gorbachev. But it's also as an idealistic thing too: we want to rid the world of a nuclear threat. Liberals are totally confused by this....Reagan is selling it as hey, you guys are worrying about a nuclear attack; but if either country has a shield against nuclear weapons, there's not going to be any nuclear holocaust. Oh there was so much propaganda fought with that, because logically we tied the other side in knots. I'd better stop now, come back.

**IW:** I had some thing awhile back...

**FG:** Go back to any time, I'm not in a hurry if you're not.

**IW:** You talked about 1972 being a turning point, but you said it went back to the 1960s, and you said you collected in your paper quotes for your article in the late 1960s. Now I took a class on this and I'm embarrassed that I don't remember, but in 1968 what was going on around then when Johnson decided not to run and Nixon won the presidency? What was going on the Democratic side in 1968?

**FG:** Vietnam proved so hard to implement, so hard to win. Basically when we wanted to create a democracy in South Vietnam, have elections, have there be an anti-communist ally of the United States, we wanted to stop the communist infiltration at the demarcation line. [...] Because of the Korean history, because of the fact that we did overreach in Korea, that MacArthur made that battlefield mistake and the Chinese came in across the boarder, there was always this fear on the part of President Johnson and all of his people that if we go too far in protecting South Vietnam that we were going to get a Chinese or Russian intervention. That was real. I don't want to trivialize that; we had to worry about the Russians and Chinese.

So they never could get victory in Vietnam. We did a lot of conventional fighting. Our military performed better there than it gets credit form. But by 1968 there was a massive offensive by the Viet-Cong...with lots of Russian and Chinese weapons. It shattered the American establishment's confidence. Secretary McNamara said we needed to start negotiating, to get out of there; there were some people, Dean Rusk was one, Walt Rustow (?) who never accepted that change. But the point was if we ever wanted a victory in Vietnam it was gone in early '68 on the part of the government.

Basically, when Nixon came in, he was left with a mess. Sort of like Eisenhower and Korea. But Nixon didn't have the leverage to deal with the Vietnam situation in '69 that Eisenhower had in '53 when he came in. Well let's get back to your politics thing.

In '68, oh, it was an incredible year for the Democrats. First Gene McCarthy, Senator from Minnesota, runs, and challenges LBJ. He says we need to depose our own president. He gets 42% in the New Hampshire primary. Not against LBJ, he's not on the ballot; the governor of New Hampshire is a stand-in candidate for LBJ. So it is a myth to say that Gene McCarthy ever beat Johnson. It never happened. Johnson wasn't on the ballot. Nevertheless, Gene McCarthy got 42% and the governor got 49%. It was a psychological

defeat for the president. His approval ratings were down at 38, 32 percent at this time. It's very much like Bush. I mean, Bush could have just been driven out of town and been an LBJ. [...] Bush pursued a very different path on Iraq than LBJ pursued in Vietnam.

So the system does learn from its lesson, or at least Bush learned from what happened to Johnson. After it was proven that LBJ was weak, Bobby Kennedy, Senator from New York, gets in the race. March 16, my birthday, 1968, LBJ pulls out a couple of weeks later saying he's not going to run for re-election; he could have run under the 22<sup>nd</sup> Amendment because he had only been elected to one term. [...] The fact that Johnson collapsed and the fact that suddenly you had an insurrection in the Democratic Party led by two doves, McCarthy and Kennedy, who detested each other—they hated each other—what happens then? Who's going to stand for the LBJ tradition when LBJ himself has been shattered by this incredible series of mishaps in Vietnam? Vice President Humphrey. He gets in the race really quick. So now you have a three-way democratic race between Humphrey, McCarthy, and Bobby Kennedy. Bobby Kennedy gets killed in LA the night after winning the California primary; he beat McCarthy by four points. But earlier in Oregon McCarthy had beaten Kennedy. So it was a tight race. Everyone thinks Bobby Kennedy was this wonderful saint-like guy; he was fighting for his life back then. It was by no means clear who the Democrats were going to nominate.

Once Kennedy was killed, Humphrey, with the help of the democratic establishment—Mayor Daley—a lot of states didn't have primaries back then, a lot of governors basically picked the delegates, and Humphrey you know had been a good middle-of-the line Democrat for many years, was able to get nominated. And he's way behind in the polls. The Democrats have a terrible convention in August '68. Riots....The Democrats as a party are just a basketcase. Humphrey is 16 points behind Nixon in the polls—Nixon! The guy who had lost in '60, the guy who couldn't get elected governor in '62; this discredited guy who's sort of come back. And who's running as a third party candidate? George Wallace. George Wallace got as high as 21% in the September '68 in the polls. The worst polls for the Democrats that ever existed was September '68, third week of September, Nixon was 44%, Humphrey was down to 28%, George Wallace was 21%. So the Democratic Party had basically split into three parties.

You had the southern base, the segregationists, the traditionalists, all rallying behind Wallace. You have the college kids, the intellectuals...they were anti-Humphrey. They would never vote for Nixon, they would never vote for Wallace; but Humphrey was just a Johnson re-trip. So they were really traumatized by Vietnam, learning I would say to hate their country, but let's just say really questioning everything they'd grown up believing: that America was a force for good. You know, the CIA was now a secret police: Murder, Inc. This was sweeping the campuses and the intelligentsia in '68. Maybe not in Claremont, but...

**IW:** A little bit in Claremont, too...

[...]

**FG:** This is the great crisis. When you look at Jeane Kirkpatrick and her later work, and Elliott Abrams and some of those Democrats like Senator Jackson who never did buy into this new vision of America as the source of the problem, for the rest of their lives they had to deal with what happened to the Democrats in the late '60s: the collapse of LBJ, the fact that Hubert Humphrey had been torn to bits, the insurrection of Bobby Kennedy who was then killed and became sort of a martyr to the Left. Bobby Kennedy was not that much of a left winger: he was for capital punishment; he wanted to crack down on the black rioters.

There was still some Kennedy toughness in Bobby Kennedy. It was all gone by the time Teddy Kennedy came around. He ran in 1980 against Carter that's a whole separate story. Are you ok on '68?

But again it got worse in '72. Because once Nixon came in, we have 500,000 troops in Vietnam and nobody wants to win anymore. What the hell do I do? Can I pull them all out in a year and become a hero on the campuses for pulling everybody out? Or do I do the best I can to try to leave a functioning government in South Vietnam, so America's credibility in the world is not destroyed?

Nixon and Kissinger fought a backhanded, retrograde approach while in office to sustain the South Vietnamese government while continually pulling troops out. Every month Nixon would announce the withdrawal of American troops....In other words, he was giving the Left what it wanted, but nonetheless the Left still needed Nixon because he was president, we were still in Vietnam, there were still casualties. He went to China, made a deal with the Communist Reds; everyone said hey if he can deal with Mao Tse Tung why can't he deal with the North Vietnamese?

The liberals were really on the (?) back then. And it lasted all throughout the '70s and then it filtered in the Carter administration which began to carry out their policies. Reagan comes in in '81...and it was a lot easier to make a Reaganite argument in '81 than in '72. Again, you got to allow for the circumstances and who seems to have the better case. It was impossible to defend LBJ's Vietnam record. It was impossible to defend it, by anybody, the people who liked LBJ or the people who hated LBJ. Nixon spent a lot of time and energy and political capital trying to lead a country and government in South Vietnam. He did. What he did was he went into Cambodia in '70, he went into Laos to clean out some communist sanctuaries in '71. In May of '72 he bombed (?) harbor, which was a very aggressive thing that LBJ never did. At the very same time he was dealing with Russia and China. If you like Bismarckian big power politics—I have a lot of problems with Nixon, he wasn't much of a conservative at all—

**IW:** And yet the liberals still hated him...

**FG:** Oh they hated him! And how much they did! He gave military aid to the Soviet Union. He encouraged Henry Ford III to go over and build a truck plant on the (?) river.

Some of those trucks were used against us in Vietnam. So Nixon was in no way a Reaganite, he never thought the Soviets could ever be destroyed. In some ways Reagan's administration was not just a rebuttal to Carter, but was a rebuttal to Nixon. We needed a whole set of policies that harkened back to Truman. That's why this Carter stuff is so confusing: the Democrats are weak and Republicans are strong; well...

**IW:** Depends when you look.

**FG:** It does depend when. The Democrats nominated a real pacifist by '72. Humphrey ran against McGovern in '72 and was strong right up to the end; but they really wanted McGovern because the Democrats thought they had learned the lesson of Vietnam. McGovern says some incredible things in '72. He said, in July of '72, "If I thought I could end this war any sooner I would go to Hanoi and beg on my knees for a peace settlement." Nominee of a major American party saying this! Scoop Jackson is still in the race, and he is disgusted! Disgusted, as are I'm sure Elliott Abrams and Jeane Kirkpatrick, at the people who had taken over the Democratic Party. What happens is they get wiped out. There were 49 states to Nixon. It was the worst landslide since 1964 when LBJ beat Barry Goldwater.

The Democrats are shattered, but Nixon, through Watergate, oil crisis, recession, high inflation—Nixon's second term is such a disaster that Democrats miraculously come in in 1977 and start to implement all these policies. I'm really fast forwarding here but by 1979 we were on the run everywhere. [...] Democrats still control the House. And some of our Democratic friends were trying to change the Clark Amendment, get aid to Angola, and we were doing some fairly aggressive things in Nicaragua, and we had a situation in El Salvador that was in flux.

Reagan started doing whatever he could to aid those freedom fighters in those different places, some of which was illegal. The House actually passed the Bolin amendment saying you can't do anything in Nicaragua. We were doing stuff in '85 that was against the Bolin amendment. Reagan cared enough about it that he was willing to risk a scandal or impeachment to do these things. You can argue constitutionally that it was ok, but why was that amendment passed in the first place? Why were we protecting the Nicaraguan communists? It's much easier to negotiate with them if they fear you are coming after them. It's very simple.

[...]

In '85 there was a new variable: Gorbachev. That was very exciting. Because Gorbachev knew he had to liberalize. He was going to try and do what the Chinese do: he was going to open up the economy and have a little bit of freedom a little bit of ownership and still keep the communists in power. He wasn't able to do that but the Chinese have been able to do that for 25 years; it's amazing. But Gorbachev would have liked to do what Deng Xiaoping actually did.

But anyway, that late '80s part begins to take the whole polarity out of the Cold War debate. Miraculously in 1989 under Bush, the Sandinistas lose an election in Nicaragua. This is one of the biggest shocks. (?) We did force the Sandinistas to hold an election and a communist government was defeated. Now at this time the Soviets are pulling back, they cut off their aid to Cuba. Reagan was right: if you can cut the head off of the snake a lot of these other (?) would just cool down. And if you look at all the breakthroughs in the '90s in South Africa, the Korean peace talks—as crazy as that situation was there was some possibility of Korean peace in the late '90s—Cambodia. All of the hot spots by the late '90s were showing dramatic progress. It was a great decade. And I give full credit to Kirkpatrick for helping in many ways.

[...]

[End]