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**The Good Guys Win: Ronald Reagan, Tom Clancy, and the
Transformation of National Security**

**APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:**

Supervisor:

Jeremi Suri

Mark Lawrence

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Transformation of National Security**

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Benjamin Griffin

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Dedication

For Amibeth, Natalie, and Patrick. Thank you for your love, patience, and support.

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Abstract

The Good Guys Win: Ronald Reagan, Tom Clancy, and the Transformation of National Security

Benjamin Griffin, MA

The University of Texas at Austin, 2015

Supervisor: Jeremi Suri

This paper examines the relationship between popular culture and policy. It argues that popular culture serves to make policy legible to a broad audience and exerts influence on policy makers themselves. It examines the way the administration of Ronald Reagan made use of the novels of Tom Clancy to build support for its national security agenda, how the public received the works, and in turn how the novels reinforced Reagan's confidence in his policy. The paper also explores how Reagan developed his political ideology and how his background informed the method in which he received, and then presented information. It argues that Reagan was the driving ideological force in his administration.

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Introduction: Intersections of Policy and Culture

Americans watching *Saturday Night Live* on December 6, 1986, saw rookie cast member Phil Hartman portray Ronald Reagan for the first time. The sketch opens with an apparently senile president discussing the unfolding Iran-Contra scandal with a reporter. The reporter mentions that she is not sure which is worse: Reagan knowing or not knowing about the crisis. Hartman gradually ushers her from the oval office, saying he hopes he was informative even “given the very little that I know.”¹ When the reporter leaves, Hartman’s Reagan transforms. The president no longer shakes and stands straighter, and an expression of angry calculation replaces one of grandfatherly confusion. He calls for his staff, gruffly tells them that he is “only going to go through this once, so it’s essential that you pay attention.” With that, he launches into a master plan to continue supporting the Contras. He directs William Casey, the director of the CIA, to observe the loading of new weapons for sale to Iran. His chief of staff, Don Regan, is going to have to resign, but not before releasing a statement supporting the president, conveniently already written on a computer that the perplexed staffer cannot operate, prompting Reagan to declare “oh, alright I’ll do

¹ “President Reagan: Mastermind,” *Saturday Night Live*, NBC December 6, 1986.

it for you,” with an exasperated tone indicating this is not the first time. When Caspar Weinberger, played by Jon Lovitz, asks Reagan to slow down as “there’s still a lot about the Iran-Contra affair” he did not understand the president berates him. He shouts, “You don’t need to understand! I am the President, only I need to understand.”² When newly anointed National Security Advisor, played by Kevin Nealon, worries about what would happen to the plan if Reagan should die as he is the only one who knows what is going on, Reagan responds by quoting Montesquieu and the danger of sharing knowledge. Over the remainder of the skit, Reagan does complex financial calculations without the aid of a calculator, concludes a weapons deal with Iraqis while speaking Arabic, and speaks Swiss while conducting financial transactions. His staff looks on befuddled before eventually falling asleep as the president works through the night.

The skit touched on an issue that still dominates the study of the Reagan administration; exactly who was in charge of the whole thing. Bureaucratic chaos and personal rivalries played out publicly throughout Reagan’s time in office lending the impression that the administration lacked a strong leader. Tell-all books by disgruntled former aides and administration officials contributed to the public image of the president as an amiable figurehead that was out of his depth on policy issues. David Stockman, Reagan’s first director of the Office of

² Ibid.

Management and Budget and architect of the administration's early budget cuts, released the first of these, entitled *The Triumph of Politics: Why the Reagan Revolution Failed*, in 1986. He describes how those around Reagan "made him stumble into the wrong camp," and how the president "had no business trying to make a revolution" as he lacked the will to lead one.³ The book debuted in the top spot on *The New York Times* non-fiction bestseller's list and Stockman played a prominent role in a media blitz promoting the book and the failure of Reagan's leadership.⁴

In its review of the book, *The New York Times* highlighted what it viewed as evidence that Reagan was not mentally capable of directing his administration. It noted that Stockman's "Reagan stories are priceless."⁵ The book repeatedly demonstrates the president sitting silently in meetings until the mention of a magic word, like 'welfare' or 'Medicare,' caused him to launch into an anecdote. For Stockdale and *The New York Times* these stories and jokes showed how the president "totally misunderstood the preceding conversation."⁶ The memoir showed cabinet members who "take skillful advantage of the president's capacity for befuddlement," as they pursue their agendas by using

³ David Stockman, *The Triumph of Politics: Why the Reagan Revolution Failed* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), 5.

⁴ Bob Greene, "Triumph of Politics is a Triumph of Hype," *Chicago Tribune*, May 14, 1986.

⁵ Michael Kinsely, "In the Land of the Magic Asterisk," *The New York Times*, May 11, 1986.

⁶ *Ibid.*

misdirection, movies, and comic strips to sway the leader of the free world.⁷ Stockman and *The New York Times* view Reagan's preference for spinning yarns as a sign of his intellectual incapacity, and proof that he did not provide the ideology and policy ideas his administration pursued.

George Shultz, who served as Reagan's Secretary of State from 1982 to 1989, views the use anecdotes differently. He acknowledges that many of Stockman's criticisms were in fact accurate. Reagan "could allow himself to be deceived, sometimes almost knowingly."⁸ He would rearrange facts to make stories better, and at times simply ignore the facts entirely. However, Shultz did not view this as a sign of intellectual incapacity or even dishonesty on the part of Reagan. Instead, he views the president's use of stories in a positive light, noting, "he used a story to impart a larger message --- and sometimes the message was simply more important than the facts."⁹ Reagan recognized the "stories create meaning" and that "facts are the unassembled parts" of a story waiting for a master to piece them together into something greater than its parts.

Caspar Weinberger, Reagan's Secretary of Defense from 1981-1987, agrees with Shultz on the issue of Reagan's use of anecdote, one of the few areas where Shultz and Weinberger concurred. He argues that Reagan's use of

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ George Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State*, (New York: Scribner's, 1995).

⁹ Ibid.

stories and jokes were important factors in giving the president “such high standing and deserved popularity” with the public.¹⁰ The stories and jokes created “an atmosphere” that produced “vital agreements that neither logic, nor table pounding, nor cajoling could bring about.”¹¹ Weinberger viewed Reagan’s seemingly unorthodox method of communication as essential to the success of the administration and the accomplishment of Reagan’s agenda. Both Weinberger and Shultz vehemently deny that anyone other than Reagan acted as the driving force of the administration, and years after Reagan’s term in office ended wrote their memoirs in part to combat the continuing perception that others defined Reagan’s policies and goals.

The “President Reagan: Mastermind” skit also shows the role of popular culture in shaping perceptions of leaders and policies. It played on and reinforced the public’s false understanding that Reagan was a figurehead, or as former Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford termed him, “an amiable dunce.”¹² Literary scholar Edward Said argues that culture provides “a sort of theater where various political and ideological causes engage one another.”¹³ In *Culture and Imperialism*, he asserts that the novel and imperialism are “unthinkable

¹⁰ Caspar Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace: Seven Critical Years in the Pentagon* (New York: Warner Books, 1990), 33.

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 132.

¹³ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), xiii.

without one another.”¹⁴ This is because novels either explicitly or implicitly reinforce the existing structures of the state. They depend on the existing “authority and power” of society and established institutions to create legibility across a broad audience which adds to the legitimacy of the existing structure of the state. Said could easily include the other mediums of popular culture into his framework. Movies, plays, and music, as well the novel, depend on their audience instantly contextualizing it within their own lives, and as a result adopt present societal norms as a common language. Even elements of culture intended as subversive rely on this common language. They often shock consumer’s sensibilities through the absence of a familiar frame of reference or create a sense of alienation through the juxtaposition of existing norms. Melani McAlister expands on this notion in *Epic Encounters*. She looks at depictions of and references to the Middle East in American culture to show that culture actively assists the construction of “narratives that help policy make sense in a given moment.”¹⁵ She notes that cultural fields constantly interact with and respond to “other fields in the larger social system.”¹⁶ The relationship is a complex one, and often results in a cultural object that is a fun house vision of policy rather than a direct reflection.

¹⁴ Ibid, 71

¹⁵ Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, & U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 6.

¹⁶ Ibid, 7

Said and McAlister are correct to identify the absence of cultural examination from the study of policy. However, their focus on the idea of culture as a clarifying agent of policy and strategy describes only a part of the relationship. Culture also influences decision makers. In *Grand Strategies*, Charles Hill argues, “literature shows its relationship with statecraft to be reciprocal.”¹⁷ Although he then goes on to lament how “popular cultures of entertainment” evicted literature “from its place in the pantheon of arts,” his argument still applies to the cultural realms he disdains.¹⁸ Hill recognizes that literature informed the actions of leaders, which then in turn informed the actions of future works of literature. Popular culture accelerates this cycle. Popular culture helps and influences policy makers in several ways. It can provide feedback on popular attitudes and opinions across a larger scale than other measures such as polls. Culture can also model the outcomes of policies in an accessible and visible manner, potentially providing a sense of the feasibility of particular course. This is particularly useful in defense planning, as culture can serve as informal war games allowing for visualization of concepts without an actual war or large-scale exercises. Positive cultural portrayals will serve to

¹⁷ Charles Hill, *Grand Strategies: Literature Statecraft and World Order* (Cambridge: Yale University Press, 2010), 8.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 5.

reinforce a leader's confidence in a given initiative, while the opposite can highlight the need for a new course.

Reagan was exceptionally cognizant of the representations of American policy and strength in popular culture, and actively sought to shape them to support his agenda. On the eve of his election to the presidency, he perceived the prevailing trends as hostile to his agenda. Popular movies, books, and music portrayed the United States as weak and morally compromised, and Reagan had a particular revulsion for movies such as *Apocalypse Now* and *The Deer Hunter*. They were, Reagan asserted, examples of the "reprehensible pandering" of Hollywood to the forces of "anti-militarism and anti-Americanism."¹⁹ If themes of moral equivalency and impotent American military might remained dominant in cultural discourse, it would be difficult for Reagan to accomplish the reinvigoration of the defense establishment and pursue a hawkish course with regard to the Cold War.

Fortunately for Reagan, the majority of the American public was ready for a change in the discussion. They felt battered by the previous decade. Military embarrassments in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Iran raised difficult questions about the capacity of the United States to exert its will on minor powers, much less the Soviet Union. Communism seemed on the march as well, as in addition to the

¹⁹ Draft of Reagan's Commencement at West Point, Folder: "West Point Speech and Back Up File (1)", Box 8 Speechwriting, White House Office Of: Research Office, 1981-1989, Ronald Reagan Library.

emergence of new communist state in Southeast Asia, military action led to communist states in Angola, Afghanistan, and Nicaragua. Americans began to doubt their chances for a victory in the Cold War. Additionally, the fall out of the OPEC oil embargo demonstrated the ability for small states to drastically affect the lives of everyday Americans and inflict lasting harm on the economy. The diminishment of American prestige and power in the 1970s created an enthusiastic audience for Reagan's message of optimism and rebirth.

Throughout Reagan's time in office a large segment of popular culture reflected the resurgent American nationalism his administration encouraged. Movies like *Rocky IV*, *Rambo II*, and *Top Gun* reflected a desire to move beyond the questioning of the previous decade towards an embrace of exceptionalism. No one captured the sentiment and content of Reagan's presidency as well as Tom Clancy. The author's first book, *The Hunt for Red October*, debuted in 1984 and after receiving an endorsement from Reagan catapulted up the bestseller lists. Every year from 1986 through the end of the decade, Clancy would release a new novel that finished in the top two on end of year bestseller charts and would later spawn a movie franchise. Clancy's books certainly support McAlister's sense that popular culture makes policy legible to the public. Each of his early novels highlights the superior morality and quality of those in the American military, the need for advanced technology to fight and win modern wars, and the rightness of the American cause in the Cold War. Clancy's novels

also demonstrate the ability of popular culture to affect policy makers. In addition to gaining a wide readership within the Pentagon and Congress, the novels became of favorite of Reagan. He read them both as entertainment and as research.²⁰ The realistic and successful portrayal of administration initiatives reinforced Reagan's sense that he was pursuing the correct course. Clancy's books became evidence to Reagan that not only were his policies popular, but that they were working as intended and could achieve their goal of winning the Cold War.

This study argues that the complex relationship between culture and policy remains under examined, to the detriment of historical inquiry. Its study helps to answer questions about how policy comes to be and about the sustainability of strategies that leader implement. In particular, the paper will explore the symbiotic relationship between the Reagan administration and the works of Tom Clancy and examine how the interactions between policy maker, author, and popular culture writ large created an environment for the sustainment of Reagan's vision. The first chapter, "Storyteller in Chief," will argue that Reagan's career as a broadcaster and actor led him to place particular emphasis on fictional narratives as a medium for conveying greater messages. It will also argue that Reagan formed the core tenants of his Administration's policy long

²⁰ Cannon, *Role of a Lifetime*, 294.

before he arrived in Washington DC and that he acted as the driving ideological force of the administration. Reagan communicated this ideology through stories, and upon his discovery of Tom Clancy knowingly raised the author's profile to help his message reach a broader audience. The second chapter, "Up From the Depths," will examine Reagan's first term efforts to improve the public's perception of the military, increase ideological pressure on the Soviet Union, and pursue technological advancements as a means to close a gap in capability between the Warsaw pact and NATO. It will explore these trends through the context of *The Hunt for Red October*, Clancy's first book, and identify what about the novel drew Reagan's attention and caused him to promote the book publicly and privately. Chapter three, "Weathering the Storm," will use Clancy's second book, *Red Storm Rising*, to study Reagan's anti-nuclear views, the administrations fielding of new military technology, the importance of realism in fiction, and the second term emphasis on emphasizing the difference between the Soviet system and the Russian people. The final chapter, "Techno Thriller Rising," will look at the impact of Clancy's works on the military, on Congress, and in popular culture. It will identify how the themes of the novel and the Reagan Administration expanded into other parts of culture to increase public and political support for Reagan's ultimate objectives.

Chapter One

Storyteller in Chief: Reagan and the Power of Narrative

In December of 1983, Ronald Reagan stood before the Medal of Honor Society at its annual dinner in New York City. Facing an audience composed of the recipients of the nation's highest award for valor and courage under fire, the president sought to highlight stark differences in the values of the United States and the Soviet Union. After a self-deprecating opening and comments about the recent death of Marines fighting in Lebanon, Reagan ended the speech by telling a story. He recalled reading about Ramon Mercader, the assassin of Leon Trotsky, who after serving two decades in a Mexican jail arrived in the Soviet Union and received their highest honor, the title of "Hero of the Soviet Union." The notion disgusted Reagan, and he derided the Soviets for giving "their highest honor to a political assassin."²¹

He contrasted the Soviet award with his own experience serving in World War II. Serving as an adjunct for the First Motion Picture Unit, Reagan frequently read citations for awards in the course of his duties. One citation for the Medal of Honor particularly struck the future president and offered a perfect

²¹ Ronald Reagan, "Address to the Medal of Honor Society in New York," (speech, New York City, New York, December 12th 1983).

contrast to the Soviet lauding of murder. The citation told the story of a doomed B-17, damaged on its return from a bombing mission over Germany. Losing altitude and unable to reach a landing strip, the pilot orders the crew to bail out before the plane crashes into the English Channel. The ball gunner, wounded and unable to escape, cries out, terrified of dying alone. The pilot, hearing the fearful cries, moves to the rear of the plane, sits down and as he grabs the young airman's hand tells him, "it's ok son, we'll ride it down together."²² Reagan pauses a moment before adding, "Congressional Medal of Honor, posthumously awarded."²³

For Reagan it is obvious that "a man who would sacrifice his life simply to bring comfort to a boy who had to die" deserves his nation's highest honor and highlights the "great difference" between the societies of the U.S. and U.S.S.R.²⁴ His story dramatically and effectively made his point. However, there was one problem with the story. The doomed B-17 never existed. No pilot received a Medal of Honor for sacrificing his life in order to comfort a dying boy. Instead, Reagan was most likely recounting a story he read in *Reader's Digest* decades before.²⁵ This is far from the only time that he chose a fictional narrative over actual events. Though he often frustrated his aides and speechwriters with his

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Canon, *Role of a Lifetime*, 59.

tendency to rely on stories, Reagan believed that fictional narratives created a personal connection with his audience impossible from a more conventional approach.²⁶ Reagan's Secretary of State George Shultz explains the favoring of stories in his memoir *Turmoil and Triumph*. He argues that Reagan "used a story to impart a larger message."²⁷ Like a modern day Aesop, Reagan constructed fables to "create meaning" and leave a permanent imprint on his audience.²⁸

An important part of Reagan's pre-political life centered on his ability to weave compelling stories and established himself as a master storyteller long before he reached Hollywood. In 1932, freshly graduated from Eureka College, Reagan walked into the WOC Davenport radio station seeking a job as a sportscaster. For his try out, he recreated from memory the final quarter of a football game between Eureka College and Western Teachers. Edmund Morris, Reagan's official biographer, notes that Reagan took some liberties in the account, changing the result to a win for his alma mater and describing the locale in more glowing terms than an impartial observer would find.²⁹ "Radio...was theater of the mind" for Reagan, and he recognized the need to take dramatic liberties to hold his audience's attention.³⁰

²⁶ Jack Matlock, interview by author, tape recording, Austin, Texas, September 23, 2014.

²⁷ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Edmund Morris, *Dutch: A Memoir of Ronald Reagan* (New York: Random House, 1991), 112.

³⁰ Ibid.

The mock sportscast won Reagan the opportunity to call football games for the station on a freelance basis, and he soon turned this into a full time job. “Dutch” Reagan soon moved to a larger audience with WHO in Des Moines and received the assignment to broadcast Cubs games for the station. The ability to improvise and create a story from imperfect information proved critical to his success in the job. Information about the game came into the station via three letter codes over telegraph. A code of “SC1” meant “curve ball, strike 1,” a statement that hardly makes for compelling listening.³¹ Based on these small pieces of truth Reagan created a story about the games. While people listening to “Dutch” would know the game’s final score, their understanding of the action on the field would differ considerably from that of someone who attended the game at Wrigley Field. Success in the job depended less on a slavish devotion to facts than on the ability to use them as the seeds for something more lasting and compelling.

The pursuit of compelling stories led directly to Reagan’s career as an actor. He received his first exposure to California in 1936. He convinced the WHO station manager to let him follow the Cubs to Catalina Island, just outside of Los Angeles, for Spring Training. Reagan believed that the personal connection he could establish between himself and the players there would

³¹ “Cubs-Pirates,” WGN, September 30, 1988.

cause him to capture the essence of the game in both his radio broadcasts and in his weekly newspaper column for the *Des Moines Dispatch*.³² The trip proved successful in livening up both broadcast and column, and Reagan would follow the team again in 1937. This time he had an ulterior motivation, to become an actor. While on the trip, he arranged a screen test, and soon after his return received his first movie contract from Warner Brothers. The contract paid him two hundred dollars a week, was renewable on an annual basis for seven years, and ultimately brought Ronald Reagan to national attention.³³ If not for his ability to compose compelling stories around small nuggets of truth, it is unlikely that Reagan would have reached Hollywood, much less the White House.

Reagan's Hollywood career only reinforced his belief in the power of narrative, and simply added a visual scope to his previous auditory efforts. Although his career peaked with the 1942 Oscar-nominated movie *Kings Row*, he spent nearly two decades in an industry that immersed him in narrative creation. Reagan's wartime duties included starring in short movies that trained new recruits and maintained support for the war effort. He keenly observed the critical role Hollywood played in softening American perceptions of Stalin.³⁴ This

³² Morris, *Dutch*, 124.

³³ *Ibid*, 132.

³⁴ Jack Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended* (New York: Random House, 2005), 6.

further taught him the power and importance of managing and creating narratives to achieve policy success.

His move to television as host of *General Electric Theater* also afforded the opportunity to hone his political message and speaking style through his frequent visits to corporate locations. His time as the leader of the Screen Actors Guild provided his first experience as a negotiator as he led often-contentious efforts with studios over actor compensation.³⁵ Reagan's time in Hollywood also marked his political awakening. He responded to the dropping of the atom bombs by becoming an advocate for international control of atomic energy. Only studio intervention prevented him from reading Norman Corwin's anti-nuclear poem "Set Your Clocks to U-235" at a public rally in 1945.³⁶ His postwar time in Hollywood also marked the start of his drift away from the Democratic Party. Faced with the prospect that Warner Brothers would not renew his contract he bitterly complained about the ability of the IRS to take "as much as 91% of an actor's salary," even though actors only had a small window to maximize their earnings.³⁷ In 1952, though still a registered Democrat he urged Dwight Eisenhower to run for office.³⁸ The campaign also introduced him to Richard

³⁵ Morris, 314.

³⁶ Paul Lettow, *Ronald Reagan and his Quest to Abolish Nuclear Weapons*, (New York: Random House, 2005), 4.

³⁷ Morris, *Dutch*, 294

³⁸ Thomas Reed, *The Reagan Enigma* (Los Angeles: Figueroa Press, 2014), 43.

Nixon, whose own presidential bid Reagan would prominently support in 1960.³⁹ Reagan's time as a broadcaster and actor played a significant role in creating his style of political speech.

In office, Reagan used stories and cultural shorthand to communicate not just with the public but with his staff as well. While president, he often referenced the Gary Cooper western *High Noon* as a shorthand for the type of policy he wanted to pursue. Tom Reed, a former secretary of the Air Force and one of the principle authors of Reagan-era strategy document NSDD-32, recalls that mention of Cooper's character meant that Reagan wanted a policy that would "do what's right; deal with the risks [and] leave recognition for others."⁴⁰ Those close to Reagan soon recognized that stories offered a way to reinforce their arguments. Reagan's longtime friend and second National Security Advisor, Judge Clark, made use of movies to highlight certain countries and issues.⁴¹ These efforts fed Reagan's voracious need for stories and information, particularly ones that reinforced his deeply held views. Jack Matlock, then serving as part of the National Security Council, would use fake memos that told the story of the mounting pressures Mikhail Gorbachev faced in the Soviet Union.⁴² One such memo took the form of a message from Anatoly Chernyaev,

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Reed, *The Reagan Enigma*, 248.

⁴¹ Cannon, *Role of a Lifetime*, 156.

⁴² Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 195.

one of Gorbachev's lead foreign policy advisors, to the Soviet leader. Matlock filled the memo with "jokes and anecdotes" to show that Gorbachev "desperately needed some agreements" with the U.S. in order to continue his reforms at home.⁴³ Gorbachev needed show his people, and perhaps more importantly the hardliners on the Politburo, that Reagan was serious about arms control. This would allow him to continue his efforts to reform the economy and control military spending.

Jokes were also important to Reagan's communication, as in many ways they can carry the same message of a longer narrative in a shorter, more memorable format. Soon after taking up residence in the Oval Office, Reagan asked the State Department to collect popular Soviet jokes and include them in his briefings.⁴⁴ He would then use them in meetings, speeches, and even in the presence of Soviet leaders to punctuate his points. During the 1987 Washington Summit, Reagan offended Gorbachev early in the proceedings with a joke about a traveling scholar asking two young cab drivers what they want to do. The American responds that he has not decided yet, while the Soviet answers, "They haven't told me yet."⁴⁵ Anatoly Dobrynin, the long-time Soviet Ambassador to the U.S., recalls Reagan joking with him about the media response to his

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Steven F Hayward, *The Age of Reagan: The Conservative Counterrevolution, 1980-1989* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2009), 111.

⁴⁵ Cannon, *Role of a Lifetime*, 776.

misappropriation of Lenin quotes and ascribed it to the president's "habit of borrowing dubious quotations" to make his point.⁴⁶ A favorite Reagan joke was the lament of the Soviet worker that "they pretend to pay us, and we pretend to work."⁴⁷ Those hearing Reagan's jokes would immediately recognize that their punchlines touched on issues central to his argument. The cab driver demonstrates differing views on individual liberty, the worker's lament reflects on the economic inefficiency of the Soviet system, and jokes about Lenin attack the foundation of the Soviet state. Reagan correctly believed that an individual is more likely to remember and perhaps even retell a good joke, to an extent unlikely for a line from even the best-crafted speech to duplicate.

Reagan the Bookworm

That a former actor with the interpersonal skills of Reagan would take inspiration from film and humor is unsurprising. These were not the only source that Reagan drew on, however. Though it runs against the public perception of the president, he was a lifelong, voracious reader who would often read himself to sleep in the White House.⁴⁸ As a young man, Reagan was seldom without a book. While working as a lifeguard he would read Edgar Rice Burroughs' John Carter books. Edmund Morris hints in *Dutch* that Burroughs' walking cities with

⁴⁶ Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents* (New York: Time Books, 2005), 519.

⁴⁷ Hayward, *Age of Reagan*, 111.

⁴⁸ Cannon, *Role of a Lifetime* 293.

impenetrable glass shields facilitated Reagan's later embrace of Strategic Defense.⁴⁹ This perhaps overstates the importance of John Carter to Reagan, but some books he read as a young man left a permanent and indelible impression on him. Reagan admitted to Morris that reading *That Printer of Udell's* as an eleven year old made him "a practical Christian."⁵⁰

Dick, the protagonist of the book, sees his mother destroyed by his alcoholic father. The opening scene in the short novel depicts Dick unable to move the drunkard before discovering the body of his mother. Telling his dog "he can't hurt maw anymore," he leaves and spends sixteen years as a transient.⁵¹ Returning to Boyd, he distrusts Christians until a small group shows charity of deed instead of word. Dick slowly returns to society and engages with the community, speaking powerfully for the better "application of Christ's teaching" amongst the community.⁵² By the end of the book, the former tramp is a pillar of the community held in high regard as an ideal Christian and finally wins both the hand of the woman he pursues throughout the novel and election to Congress. The 11-year old Reagan strongly identified with the family situation of Dick. Reagan's father Jack was an alcoholic, and a formative moment in Reagan's life was the day he found his father passed out in the snow and had to drag him into

⁴⁹ Morris, *Dutch*, XII.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 40.

⁵¹ Harold Bell Wright, *That Printer of Udell's*, (Chicago: The Book Supply Company, 1903) 13.

⁵² *Ibid*. 114.

the house.⁵³ The simple narratives of overcoming adversity through steadfast faith and good works appealed to the future president, and shortly after reading the book, he asked to join his mother's church.⁵⁴

Whitaker Chambers' memoir, *Witness*, had a profound effect on Reagan's anti-communism. Lou Cannon, a White House reporter and Reagan biographer, notes that while president, Reagan could quote from memory the "passage where Chambers watches his sleeping daughter and decides he can no longer be an atheist."⁵⁵ In the passage, Chambers reflects that in that moment the baby "had begun invisibly, to lead us out of that darkness, which we could not even realize, toward that light, which we could not even see."⁵⁶ Just prior to this, he reacts with joy to the news that his wife not only is pregnant, but also to keep the child. Chambers describes a "wild joy" sweeping over him, and that "the Communist Parties and its theories... crumbled at the touch of a child."⁵⁷ He then notes that his rejection of Communist ideology came "not at the level of the conscious mind, but at the level of unconscious life."⁵⁸

The powerful implication of Chamber's assertion is that communism is an ideology of death and decay and that the path to freedom goes through religion.

⁵³ Morris, *Dutch*, 39.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁵⁵ Cannon, *Role of a Lifetime*, 293.

⁵⁶ Whitaker Chambers, *Witness*, (New York: Regnery Publishing, 1952), 273.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Witness is even more explicit on this point in the forward, which takes the form of a letter to the author's children. In it, Chambers articulates that "God alone is the inciter and guarantor of freedom" and that "[r]eligion and freedom are indivisible."⁵⁹ Reagan embraced this notion and often linked his most strident anti-communist statements with religion. Tom Reed, who also counts *Witness* as crucial in his own political formation, claims that Reagan identified with Chambers' sense that those under communist rule were screaming for freedom and sought to "rescue those in the clutch of the Soviet state."⁶⁰ He also recalls Reagan quoting from the book at length during meetings on how to deal with the Soviet threat.⁶¹

Reagan cited Chambers in his famous "Evil Empire" speech, delivered to the National Association of Evangelicals in 1983, incorporating the ex-communist's notion that the threat to the "Western World exists to the degree in which the West is indifferent to God."⁶² Reagan also referenced another famed work of religious scholarship in the speech, C.S. Lewis's *Screwtape Letters*. He used Lewis's sense that evil occurs not in "sordid 'dens of crime'" but in "clear carpeted, warm offices by quiet men" to attack those in the United States who

⁵⁹ Chambers, *Witness*.

⁶⁰ Reed, *Reagan Enigma*, 253.

⁶¹ Conversation with the Author, Austin, Texas, March 31, 2015.

⁶² Ronald Reagan, "Address to the National Association of Evangelicals," Orlando, Florida, March 8, 1983.

would establish moral equivalency between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.⁶³ Reagan argued that declaring the arms race “a great misunderstanding” is a cowardly attempt for critics to remove themselves from “the struggle between right and wrong and good and evil.”⁶⁴

Reagan continued to read actively throughout his time as governor and president. While managing his shadow campaign for president in 1968, Tom Reed recalls Reagan reading primarily books on current affairs.⁶⁵ Biographies remained a favorite throughout Reagan’s political career. At a state dinner in 1981, Reagan welcomed Edmund Morris warmly after an introduction from Senator Mark Hatfield. Reagan told Morris that he read *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt* in bed in the White House, while Nancy lay next to him reading *Edith Kermit Roosevelt: Portrait of a First Lady* by Morris’ wife Sylvia.⁶⁶ Morris later became Reagan’s authorized biographer thanks to lobbying by Hatfield on his behalf, a feat likely made easier by Reagan’s appreciation for *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*.

While seeking to broaden Reagan’s understanding of Russia, Jack Matlock provided a number of books for the president to read.⁶⁷ One in

⁶³ Reagan to National Association of Evangelicals
C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: Harper Collins, 1942)

⁶⁴ Reagan to National Association of Evangelicals

⁶⁵ Reed interview with the author, Austin, Texas October 16, 2014

⁶⁶ Morris, *Dutch* xiii.

⁶⁷ Matlock interview with author, Austin, Texas, September 23, 2014.

particular, Suzanne Massie's *Land of the Firebird: The Beauty of Old Russia*, struck a powerful chord. Reagan read the book just prior to the Geneva Summit and would interrupt preparation sessions to ask the Russian experts questions about Russian merchants in the 1830s.⁶⁸ Massie visited the White House often and played an important role in clarifying the distinction Reagan made between the Soviet system and the Russian people.

While still governor of California, Reagan told Nancy Reynolds, then his assistant for electronic media, "if you have a book around you never lack for friends."⁶⁹ Reading was a deeply personal act for him, and he would rarely discuss books publicly. Even Reagan's diary scarcely mentions books the president read, a stark contrast to the frequent appearance of movies in Reagan's personal musings. Lou Cannon believes that Reagan had "a reader's conceit that books were secret personal treasures" and thus did not care "if anyone else knew he was a reader."⁷⁰ Cannon's notion meshes well with Reagan's statement to Reynolds about books as "friends." A friendship is a personal and private relationship, complete in itself and needing little in the way of outside validation. Reagan would only violate this deep trust for a compelling reason.

⁶⁸ James Mann, *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan: A History of the End of the Cold War*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2009)

⁶⁹ Reed interview with the author, Austin, Texas October 16, 2014.

⁷⁰ Cannon, *Role of a Lifetime*, 293.

Reagan's reluctance to share his literary side makes his very public embrace of Tom Clancy's books fascinating. He received a copy of Clancy's first book, *The Hunt for Red October*, as a Christmas present from Nancy Reynolds in 1984. Reagan proceeded to read a third of the novel on Christmas Day and finished the rest soon after.⁷¹ The president then publicly praised the book as "unputdownable" and the "perfect yarn."⁷² In March, Reagan brought Clancy to the White House and *The Hunt for Red October* would debut on the *New York Times Bestsellers List* immediately after the meeting, almost nine months after its initial publication.⁷³ Reagan embraced the book in such a public way because it was effectively a fictionalized version of his administration's national security policy and represented another way to speak to the American public in a memorable and effective manner.

The Rise of Tom Clancy

Clancy was an unlikely person to serve as unofficial spokesman for the Reagan Administration. While working on the novel he wrote a friend that "the odds of becoming the next Frederick Forsythe are...somewhere between merely exponential and astronomical-incredible."⁷⁴ He assured his friend he would

⁷¹ Tom Clancy to Susan Richards February 5, 1985, accessed online at <http://piedtype.com/2013/10/05/tom-clancy-boy-writer-part-3/>

⁷² Patricia Blake, "One of Their Subs is Missing: An Insurance Broker's Novel has the White House Reading," *Time*, March 4, 1985.

⁷³ Edwin McDowell, "Publishing: Doing Right by a Book," *New York Times* 22 March 1985.

⁷⁴ Tom Clancy to Susan Richards February 5, 1983. Accessed online at <http://piedtype.com/2013/10/02/i-remember-tom-clancy/>

happily settle for a “book-jacket with [his] name on it.”⁷⁵ Clancy would defy those long odds and prove the exception to his belief that “writers normally die poor,” as upon his death he would leave behind an estate valued at eighty-two million dollars.⁷⁶

Clancy graduated from Loyola College in Baltimore after majoring in English and minoring in Physics. Denied an opportunity to join the military due to his vision, his co-author and friend Larry Bond notes he was nearly blind without his glasses, Clancy instead worked with his wife at a small insurance agency in Owings, Maryland.⁷⁷ A lifelong Republican, he notes that he voted for Reagan four out five times he could. The only time he did not was to cast a vote for George Bush in the 1980 primary.⁷⁸ Clancy explained this vote by asking God’s forgiveness and then stating, “NOBODY’S perfect” (emphasis Clancy).⁷⁹ He strongly supported the politics of Reagan. In March of 1981, he wrote his congressman, William Broomfield, to request a signed photo of the president. In forwarding the request, Broomfield identified Clancy and another autograph

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Clancy to Richards, February 5, 1983. Scott Dance and Justin George, “Tom Clancy 82M Estate focus of tussle between widow, lawyer,” *The Baltimore Sun*, September 18, 2014.

⁷⁷ Author interview with Larry Bond and Chris Carlson, Springfield, Virginia, October 20, 2014.

⁷⁸ Clancy to Richards, March 8, 1985.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

seeker as “faithful republicans.”⁸⁰ The White House responded positively and in July of 1981 mailed a signed photo inscribed to Clancy and his wife Wanda.⁸¹

Clancy also maintained a deep interest in the military in general and the Navy in particular. The location of his insurance company in Owings, Maryland, and its proximity to Annapolis and Washington proved advantageous as Clancy counted a number of naval officers among his customers. He used the opportunity to build his knowledge about naval procedures and capabilities and one, Lieutenant Commander Gregory Young, earned Clancy’s thanks at the end of *Hunt for Red October* for his assistance in providing technical expertise.⁸²

Clancy also built expertise through playing the tactical miniature game *Harpoon*, designed by former-Naval officer and future co-author Larry Bond. He noted in a letter that “after digesting” the game it would be easy to explain the concepts in his book to anyone.⁸³

Although Clancy had long harbored a desire to write novels, he did not begin to work on *Hunt* until early 1982. This is when he purchased *Harpoon* and began reaching out to Bond and others for technical assistance.⁸⁴ The

⁸⁰ Representative William Broomfield to Max Friedersdorf March 17 1981. WHORM Subject File Public Relations PR 005-01 008386-018157 Box 37, Ronald Reagan Library.

⁸¹ “PR 005-01 850327” WHORM Subject File Public Relations PR 005-01 008386-018157 Box 37, Ronald Reagan Public Library.

⁸² Tom Clancy “Acknowledgements,” *The Hunt for Red October* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1984)

⁸³ Tom Clancy to Susan Richards, November 1, 1984, Accessed online at <http://piedtype.com/2013/10/04/tom-clancy-boy-writer-part-2/>

⁸⁴ Tom Clancy to Larry Bond, February 19, 1982, Personal papers of Larry Bond.

inspiration for the plot of the novel came from the *Storozhevoy* mutiny of 1975.⁸⁵ In the mutiny, the ship's political officer led a crew of enlisted men in an effort to take over the Soviet destroyer and sail it to Sweden to gain asylum. The mutineers succeeded in taking control of the ship and getting it out of the Gulf of Riga and into the Baltic. However, Soviet aircraft disabled the ship's rudder before it could make it to Sweden. Soviet officials quickly tried and executed the political officer and several other mutineers received long jail sentences.⁸⁶ Clancy took the idea of Soviet mutiny and changed the setting to a submarine and the perpetrators to the ship's senior officers in order to give the mutiny a more realistic chance of succeeding.

From the start, Clancy had a grand vision of his project. He planned *Hunt for Red October* as the middle book of a trilogy and already had rough outlines of *Patriot Games* and the *Cardinal of the Kremlin* completed when he began work in earnest on *Patriot Games* in late 1982.⁸⁷ In addition, he planned two other novels with the rather abysmal working titles of *The Penache Procedure* and *The Pandora Process*. These books would depart from the Jack Ryan universe and center around a Coast Guard cutter and terrorist detonation of a nuclear weapon.

⁸⁵ Author interview with Larry Bond and Chris Carlson, Springfield, Virginia, October 20, 2014.

⁸⁶ Gregory Young, "Mutiny on the *Storozhevoy*: A Case Study on Dissent in the Soviet Navy" Naval Postgraduate School, March 1982, 29. The author later expanded the thesis into a book with co-author Nate Braden entitled *The Last Sentry: The True Story that Inspired the Hunt For Red October* published by the Naval Institute Press in 2013.

⁸⁷ Clancy to Richards, February 5 1983.

Though the two novels never came to fruition, Clancy incorporated the elements of the plot he described to Susan Richards into *Clear and Present Danger* and the *Sum of All Fears*.⁸⁸ Clancy began these projects without any hint of publisher interest and continued his day job at the insurance company. That Clancy could complete a 560-page draft of *Hunt for Red October*, early chapters of *Patriot Games*, and concepts for three other novels within a period slightly longer than a year while working fulltime provides insight into his future prolific output.⁸⁹

The Hunt for Red October's path to publication was an unusual one. The Naval Institute Press published the hardcover, and *Hunt* was the first original work of fiction the press released. Located on the campus of the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, the publisher's best-known book was *The Bluejackets' Manual*, a guide given to all naval recruits since 1902.⁹⁰ Clancy first came to the publishing house's attention by hand delivering a letter to the editor, which it subsequently published.⁹¹ The letter was the first time Clancy received compensation for anything he had written. After writing an article for the Naval Press Institute's journal *Proceedings*, he then approached them with the unsolicited manuscript of *Hunt*. Clancy's timing was fortuitous, as the publishers board of directors had just determined it would seek to publish fictional works that

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Robert Andrews, "'Tugboat' Surprises the Battleships of New York Publishing Industry," *The Associated Press*, March 11, 1985.

⁹¹ Author interview with Deborah Grosvenor, Austin, Texas, November 11, 2014.

were “wet.”⁹² In order to offset the costs of publishing the book, the publishers chose to sell the paperback rights before publication. Berkley Books, a division of Putnam, paid \$35,000 for the rights, an amount that Clancy’s editor Deborah Grosvenor viewed as decent but not high for a first time author.⁹³

In July of 1984, *Hunt for Red October* hit the shelves of bookstores around Washington DC and New York, signaling a career-change for the 37-year old insurance agent. The book received generally favorable though not exceptional reviews. A review in the *Wall Street Journal* states that Clancy rewards the reader “quite satisfactorily” with a thriller that is “great fun.”⁹⁴ *The Los Angeles Times* reviewer took a more ambivalent track, praising Clancy’s talent for making the “arcane information of U.S. and Soviet submarines approachable” but lamenting the “cardboard characters.”⁹⁵ Reviews like this would become commonplace for Clancy’s books. *Hunt*’s sales also exceeded publisher expectations. The first run of 16,000 sold out by November, as did half of a second run of 10,000 books.⁹⁶ The book sold particularly well in Washington DC, making the *Washington Post*’s local bestseller list in November.⁹⁷ Reagan’s December endorsement of the book greatly influenced sales. By March, just

⁹² Andrews, “Tugboat Surprises the Battleships of New York,” March 11, 1985.

⁹³ Author interview with Deborah Grosvenor, Austin, Texas, November 11, 2014.

⁹⁴ John Alden, “Bookshelf: The Cold War at 50 Fathoms,” *The Wall Street Journal* October 22, 1984.

⁹⁵ Richard Setlowe, “Adrift with Subplots,” *The Los Angeles Times*, December 28, 1984.

⁹⁶ Clancy to Richards November 1, 1984

⁹⁷ Clancy to Richards February 5, 1985

prior to Clancy's meeting with the president in the White House, sales passed 75,000 hard copies, and Clancy received word that the first paperback run would total 850,000 copies.⁹⁸ The presidential endorsement also led to features about Clancy in *Time* magazine, which hailed the book as a "gripping narrative" and gushed over the high-level officials in Washington that read and endorsed the book.⁹⁹ The article added a sense of real life intrigue when it noted that the Soviet Embassy in Washington "reportedly bought several copies, presumably for shipment to Moscow."¹⁰⁰ The article helped generate enough buzz around Clancy to earn him an invitation to appear on *Good Morning America*.¹⁰¹ With these accomplishments under his belt Clancy, rising star of the publishing world, prepared to meet the man who defined his trajectory.

Reagan and Clancy

On March 13, 1985, Clancy prepared to meet the president. Led into the oval office by Michael Deaver and Nancy Reynolds, he described stepping over the threshold as the equivalent of Dorothy stepping from "the wrecked house into Munchkinland."¹⁰² Instantly struck by Reagan, Clancy glowingly writes that the president "is a Mensch" (emphasis Clancy), and that the charisma and star-

⁹⁸ Tom Clancy to Susan Richards, March 8, 1985.

⁹⁹ Blake, "One of Their Subs is Missing," March 4, 1985.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Tom Clancy to Susan Richards, March 8, 1985.

¹⁰² Ibid.

quality of Reagan were on an “order of magnitude” more than expected.¹⁰³ He goes on to note that the president could “charm the fangs off a cobra” with a personality that “envelopes you like a cloud.”¹⁰⁴ Reagan asked about Clancy’s next book, and upon hearing it was about World War III inquired about who wins. Clancy responded “the good guys” to the approval of the president.¹⁰⁵ All of this took place in approximately five minutes, as Reagan had to go meet Henry Kissinger for lunch where they would discuss the recent death of Soviet leader Konstantin Chernenko.¹⁰⁶ The change in Soviet leadership was on Clancy’s mind as well, and he recalls that if Reagan could not charm “Garbage-ov” then “Ronnie can probably drive him into the pavement.”¹⁰⁷ Clancy and Reagan departed to their separate lunches, Reagan with Kissinger in the East Garden and Clancy with a mixture of administration officials and White House journalists.

In the Roosevelt Room, Clancy discussed the book with Secretary of the Navy John Lehman, who confided his response on reading it was to ask, “who the hell cleared” it.¹⁰⁸ Robert Merry, at the time a White House reporter working for *The Wall Street Journal*, recalls the lunch quickly turned into a lively and erudite” discussion between Clancy and the Navy Secretary over the “arcana of

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ronald Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries*, (New York; Harper, 2009), 435.

¹⁰⁷ Clancy to Richards, March 8, 1985.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

naval warfare and strategy.”¹⁰⁹ Clancy noted the discussion also covered the Strategic Defense Initiative, which he voiced support for, and the prospect of the use of nuclear weapons over which he and future National Security Advisor General Brent Scowcroft disagreed on the prospect of winning a nuclear exchange.¹¹⁰ Other attendees included Senator Hatfield, who asked Clancy to sign his book, despite being in Clancy’s words “a rather dovish fellow,” and the Director of the U.S. Information Agency and longtime friend of Reagan, Charles Wick.¹¹¹ The audience of the lunch, and the seriousness with which it participants recall, is indicative of the growing regard for Clancy within official Washington and that he was already establishing himself as an expert on issues of National Security.

Clancy’s only other visits to the Reagan White House came one week later. On March 19, he returned for a ceremony marking the arrival of the President of Argentina and for a State Dinner in the evening. While awaiting the arrival of the presidents, Clancy mingled with his fellow guests including Arnold Schwarzenegger.¹¹² After a brief welcome ceremony, the Clancys left the White House to prepare for dinner in the evening. In the receiving line, Clancy again felt the full force of Reagan’s charm before going to his table, where he sat with

¹⁰⁹ Robert Merry, “Tom Clancy and Ronald Reagan,” *The National Interest*, October 3, 2013.

¹¹⁰ Clancy to Richards, March 8 1985.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*

Michael Deaver. Following dinner, Clancy and his wife spoke briefly with Nancy Reagan, who took “her charm lessons from her husband,” and National Security Advisor Robert McFarlane who professed his love of the book, but also had to tell Clancy that he was nothing like the NSA, Jeffery Pelt, from *Hunt*. Clancy briefly mentions in a letter that he “floated an idea” on sea power and mobility that McFarlane liked, though unfortunately did not elaborate on what the idea was.¹¹³ After listening to some jazz music from Pete Fountain and watching the president and first lady dance, Clancy and his wife made their exit, though not before hearing that Hollywood producers approached Schwarzenegger about starring in a movie adaptation of *Hunt for Red October*.¹¹⁴

Clancy was clearly a hit in official Washington. Newspapers articles breathlessly listed the senior administration officials who read, and enjoyed, *Hunt for Red October*. Indeed, while at the state dinner, the photographer enthused to Clancy that “everyone in the White House” read the book.¹¹⁵ Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger was among the last in the administration to read the book, but quickly became its biggest public supporter, behind Reagan himself.

In August of 1985, the editors of the *Time Literary Supplement* approached Weinberger about taking part in an issue that asked prominent

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

public officials to review books that they felt deserved more attention.

Weinberger agreed, and his longtime secretary Kay Leisz passed him a copy of *Hunt*. Along with the book, she included a note expressing that she had it “on good authority” that “the big boss across the river” loved it.¹¹⁶ Weinberger read the book, and much like Reagan, recognized its potential for shaping cultural American public opinion on the administration’s policy. He glowingly reviewed the book, explaining that it offered “many lessons” for “those who want to keep the peace.”¹¹⁷ He also submitted the review to *The Wall Street Journal*, which also published it. Weinberger also glowingly reviewed Clancy’s third novel, *Patriot Games*, for the paper, stating that it gave “considerable insight into the minds and motivations of terrorists” and how “quietly heroic upholders of international peace and order” ensure the freedom of all.¹¹⁸ Putnam books would make use of Weinberger’s review as a blurb on the back of the book, lending the impression of official sanction.

Clancy’s second book, *Red Storm Rising*, was another hit with Reagan. He read it almost immediately upon its release in August of 1986, even going as far as to term it research for the upcoming arms control summit with the Soviet

¹¹⁶ Kay Leisz to Caspar Weinberger, August 14, 1985, Caspar Weinberger Papers, The Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Box 596.

¹¹⁷ Caspar Weinberger, “Caspar Weinberger,” *Times Literary Supplement* October 18, 1985.

¹¹⁸ Caspar Weinberger, “Heroes and Terrorists in a Deadly Game,” *The Wall Street Journal*, August 5, 1987.

Union at Reykjavik, Iceland.¹¹⁹ As Air Force One flew towards the summit, Reagan ventured to the back of the plane to discuss the book with his staff.¹²⁰ Those close to Reagan recognized how much he enjoyed the novels of Clancy and on occasion sought to turn it to their advantage. Charles Wick, the USIA director present at the 1985 luncheon, sought out Clancy's reaction to the agency's creation of WorldNet, a satellite television station aimed at spreading American viewpoints. Clancy toured the station's facilities and wrote an enthusiastic report back to Wick. He argued that "WorldNet has the potential to remake the world," and enthused that it had the "potential to become the most powerful, most useful, most cost-effective tool of American diplomacy."¹²¹ Wick, obviously delighted with Clancy's response, forwarded the letter to Reagan along with a note of thanks for his ongoing "support for USIA's efforts."¹²² The letter went through the National Security Council and Frank Carlucci, on the day he transitioned from National Security Advisor to Secretary of Defense, added a brief memorandum noting that Reagan was "familiar with" Clancy's work and "may find interesting Clancy's comments" on WorldNet.¹²³ Wick's efforts to seek

¹¹⁹ Cannon, *Role of a Lifetime*, 294.

¹²⁰ Ken Adelman, *Regan at Reykjavik: Forty-Eight Hours that Ended the Cold War* (New York: Broadside Books, 2014), 12.

¹²¹ Tom Clancy to Charles Wick, October 17, 1987 ID#525617, FG298, WHORM: Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library.

¹²² Letter, Charles Wick to Ronald Reagan, November 5, 1987, ID#525617, FG298, WHORM: Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library.

¹²³ Memorandum, Frank Carlucci to Ronald Reagan, November 23, 1987, ID#525617, FG298, WHORM: Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library.

out the author's view and Carlucci's endorsement of it in forwarding the letter to the president imply that both men expected Reagan to value Clancy's opinion and that they both agreed with the views Clancy expressed and his utility as an unofficial spokesman for the administration.

Reagan's treatment of the fourth Clancy novel *The Cardinal of the Kremlin* speaks most powerfully of the lasting affection the president held for the author's work. It was the only work of fiction present on the bookshelves behind Reagan's desk in his personal office after leaving the presidency.¹²⁴ The other forty-four books on the shelves are biographies about Reagan or books that hold some biographical significance to the former president. *The Cardinal of the Kremlin*, and its plotline centering on missile defense, falls squarely into the latter category. Its presence on Reagan's shelves a decade and a half after its publication speaks to how closely Reagan identified with it and more generally to the notion that the ex-president viewed Clancy's work as accurately depicting the administration's goals.

After his White House visit in March of 1985, Tom Clancy wrote a letter thanking Reagan for the opportunity and expressing what an honor it was to spend time with him in the Oval Office. Clancy tells Reagan that the thrill of being in the White House was one of three things "more important than monetary

¹²⁴ "Books from Personal Bookshelves From Behind Ronald Reagan's Desk at Office of Ronald Reagan," Ronald Reagan Library.

success,” along with his son recognizing his picture on the dust jacket and receiving a plaque with the twin dolphins of the submarine service.¹²⁵ He counts it as a personal honor that the book allowed the president “a few hours of respite” and concludes by expressing that “he would deem it a privilege” if he could “ever be of the slightest service” to Reagan.¹²⁶

Even though Reagan never took up Clancy on his offer, the author provided more than slight service to the president. Clancy did what Reagan often excelled at: turning policy into a narrative. The novels, video games, and movies that began with *Hunt for Red October* helped shape cultural narratives both inside and outside the administration and continued the shift in public discourse in a direction that favored the goals of Reagan.

¹²⁵ Letter, Tom Clancy to Ronald Reagan, March 14, 1985, WHORM Subject File Public Relations PR 005-01 008386-018157 Box 37, Ronald Reagan Library.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

Chapter Two

Up From the Depths: *The Hunt for Red October* and Military Morale

The Hunt for Red October opens with Marko Ramius, captain of the titular submarine, cold bloodedly murdering the boat's political officer. Standing over the body, he then substitutes the orders from fleet headquarters with new ones, intended to make the crew believe that the Soviet Union's most technologically advanced submarine is bound for Cuba. Ramius orders the activation of the nearly silent "caterpillar" drive and sets a westerly course. However, Ramius and his senior officers are not setting course for Cuba, but rather intend to sail into the U.S. Naval Base at Norfolk, Virginia, and defect, making a present of the *Red October* to their new homeland. This seems an easy prospect given that the vessel runs almost silently, making it difficult to detect on sonar especially when no one is looking for the boat to sail west. However, Ramius allows his ego to get in the way and before departing, mails a letter to the lead political officer of the fleet explaining his intentions in detail. The Soviet navy immediately recalls its other missile subs and launches the rest of the Atlantic fleet west in an attempt to catch and destroy the *Red October*.

As this takes place CIA analyst Jack Ryan flies to Washington D.C. from London carrying pictures of the Soviets newest subs and hoping to do some

Christmas shopping while back in the States. The escalation of Soviet fleet activity draws Ryan into the crisis, quickly taking him to the White House to explain the CIA theory of defection to the president and National Security Council. He then becomes the president's personal representative on an operation jointly conducted by the British and American navies to recover the wayward submarine. An enlisted sailor onboard an American submarine discovers a way to track the *Red October*, and eventually the Americans are able to contact Ramius directly. After Ryan's friend develops a plan for the U.S. to fake the *Red October's* destruction and repatriate the unknowing crewmembers to the Soviet Union, Ryan finds himself on the sub working with Ramius to drive it to the United States.

With the submarine's crew evacuated due to a faked radiation leak and a decoy sub scuttled by the Navy, Ryan's plan is poised for success. However, one of Ramius' protégés remains in the area after the withdrawal of most of the Soviet Fleet and detects the *Red October* moving towards the east coast. The Soviet sub fires on the *Red October*, damaging it, and then moves in for the kill. Ramius turns his boat towards the enemy and rams it, consigning the Soviet sub to a deep and watery grave as the *Red October* limps away to its new home. The United States wins its secret battle with the Soviet Union and strikes an important blow in the Cold War.

The Hunt for Red October's Appeal to Reagan

Even without the underlying themes that spoke to Reagan's policy goals, it is likely that he would enjoy Clancy's first book. Jack Ryan bears strong resemblance to Marshall Will Kane, Gary Cooper's character in *High Noon*. He becomes the protagonist very reluctantly. Ryan also serves as a moral grounding rod in the novel. Despite working for the CIA, he apologizes for deceiving an admiral by wearing a navy uniform, stating that he does not "like pretending to be what [he's] not."¹²⁷ That even this minor deception rankles Ryan helps to establish him as a character who will put what is right over what is necessary. Finally, in true Gary Cooper fashion, Ryan does not seek accolades for his work. After successfully completing his mission, he does not return to the White House seeking praise or political favor. Instead, he immediately boards a plane to head home, with a skiing Barbie in hand to mark the completion of his original mission. Ryan asleep on an eastbound Concorde is Marshall Kane and Amy walking away from town with discarded marshal's star in the dust.

Clancy's depiction of sex and violence was also more in keeping with the storytelling Reagan enjoyed than what was increasingly common in the era. In one of his letters to Susan Richards, Clancy describes the violent acts he "vicariously committed" in the draft of his book.¹²⁸ The total casualty count from

¹²⁷ Tom Clancy, *The Hunt for Red October* (Annapolis; Naval Institute Press, 1984), 102.

¹²⁸ Clancy to Richards, February 5, 1983.

the destruction of two subs, a helicopter crash, air-to-air combat, a murder, Soviet political machinations, and a shootout is approximately 210 dead and another half dozen wounded. Despite the high count, Clancy does not linger on the violence or engage in overly graphic descriptions of it. The most graphic descriptions, though still rather tame, have the clear purpose of hardening the resolve of Clancy's white hats. *Red October* only hints at sex. The most explicit comment in the book is that Skip Taylor, the Ryan friend involved in planning the operation, still has a zest for life that his oft-pregnant wife "could testify to."¹²⁹ In his *Wall Street Journal* review of the book, John Alden notes that the only positive trait of Ryan that Clancy does not expound upon is "his undoubtedly impressive technique in bed."¹³⁰ This trend largely holds throughout Clancy's work, though the author did entertain the idea of writing a romance novel while on a brief hiatus from the Ryan series.¹³¹ Clancy abandoned that project, likely to the benefit of his reading audience.

The relatively sanitary nature of *Hunt for Red October* appealed to Reagan, who disliked much of the explicit nature of modern culture. He lamented in his diary after viewing the 1982 film *An Officer and a Gentleman* that it was "a good story spoiled by nudity, language, and sex."¹³² Reagan was more

¹²⁹ Clancy, *Hunt for Red October* 45.

¹³⁰ Alden, "Cold War at 50 Fathoms," October 22, 1984

¹³¹ Author interview with Larry Bond and Chris Carlson, Springfield, VA October 20, 1984.

¹³² *Reagan Diaries*, 150.

tolerant of depictions of violence. He noted after viewing *Rambo: First Blood Part II* in 1985 that everyone “had a good time.”¹³³ He would also reference the film during the hostage ordeal of TWA flight 847, noting, “After seeing *Rambo* last night, I know what to do the next time this happens.”¹³⁴ *Hunt for Red October* fit very comfortably into the range of what Reagan viewed as acceptable and enjoyable examples of modern culture.

Hunt’s unnamed president also likely increased Reagan’s affection for the novel. Clancy clearly based his character on Reagan. Though a lawyer, rather than an actor, Clancy’s version was a collegiate “president of the dramatics society” capable of earning convictions through the force of his “sheer rhetoric.”¹³⁵ During Ryan’s first encounter with the president he recognizes “being blinded” by a “dazzling charm” that the president could “turn on and off like a spotlight.”¹³⁶ These sentiments serve as a predictor for the same force Clancy would feel upon meeting Reagan after the book’s publication in 1985.

Even the Soviets respect the president in *Hunt for Red October*. The Soviet ambassador serves as the president’s primary foil and views the president as a “bastard” who is “easy to underestimate.”¹³⁷ He further describes the president as “a strange man, very open, yet full of guile,” who is “friendly” but

¹³³ Ibid, 477.

¹³⁴ Hayward, *The Age of Reagan*, 436.

¹³⁵ Clancy, *Hunt for Red October*, 140.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 96

¹³⁷ Ibid, 184

“always ready to seize the advantage.”¹³⁸ The description echoes future Soviet leader’s statements about Reagan, in particular, Gorbachev’s frequent lament that Reagan kept “pocketing concessions” without giving much back.¹³⁹ In short, Clancy’s president is an intelligent negotiator, who charms those he needs and exercises the strategic vision to outmaneuver his opponents. This matches Clancy’s image of Reagan, an image that he would confirm in his White House visit. In addition to recognizing Reagan’s charm in the Oval Office, Clancy notes that the president is “smart” with the “twitchy alertness of a fox” which belies his “soft voice” and “very relaxed manner.”¹⁴⁰ The movie version of *Hunt for Red October* also hints at Reagan as inspiration for the depiction of the president. In the penultimate scene of the movie, the Soviet ambassador realizes that he is outmatched and outmaneuvered; sinking back into his chair as a smiling president contentedly eats jellybeans from a bowl on his desk.

For Reagan, the familiarity of the story and positive portrayal of himself in *Hunt for Red October* likely made the type he would view as a “friend.” However, they do not explain why Reagan chose to support the book so publicly and raise the profile of its author. *Hunt’s* portrayal of the exceptional competence and honor of those who serve their country and the clear moral distinction Clancy

¹³⁸ Ibid., 141.

¹³⁹ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*.

¹⁴⁰ Clancy to Richards, March 8, 1985.

makes between the US and USSR drove this. Clancy effectively captured two of the most important policy objectives of Reagan's first administration with the book, making it something worth the administration's effort to publicize given the potential to reach such a broad audience. *Hunt for Red October* afforded a unique opportunity for the administration to build upon the favorable trends in popular culture that Reagan and those close to him used to feed further efforts at reforming American national security posture.

Fixing a Hollow Military

In his commencement address to the 1981 graduating class of West Point cadets, Reagan spoke to the "widespread lack of respect for the uniform" of the United States military.¹⁴¹ Returning to the themes of his 1980 presidential campaign, he argued that the nation "shortchanged" the military in the wake of Vietnam by stripping benefits from the GI Bill, continuing low pay, and lingering resentment of those in uniform from the public.¹⁴² Arguing that the military deserved "better than a bare subsistence level," Reagan then listed the accomplishments of his young administration and remarks with pride that observers noted a "decided rise in quality" of those joining the military. The president noted that policy changes did not solely explain the rise in enlistments

¹⁴¹ Ronald Reagan "Address at the Commencement Exercises of the United States Military Academy," West Point, NY May 27, 1981.

¹⁴² *ibid*

and the quality of those joining. Instead, “a new spirit [was] abroad in the land,” which more than changes “to pay or benefits” led to a rediscovery of “how much there is to love in this blessed land.”¹⁴³ The unequivocal language of Reagan’s first major defense policy speech as president demonstrated recognition that the shaping of public narratives was a critical element for policy success. A memorandum from Caspar Weinberger shows how conscious the choice of language in the speech was. Weinberger wrote the president that the speech needed to “increase the appreciation and honor the American people feel for the uniformed services” which was a matter that the Secretary of Defense and Reagan “discussed before.”¹⁴⁴

Earlier drafts of the speech show the link in even stronger terms. A telling paragraph terms “the ingratitude and lack of respect” the nation showed the military over the last decade “a national disgrace.”¹⁴⁵ It singled out Hollywood for criticism noting, “The film industry’s pandering to this anti-American and anti-military sentiment was reprehensible.”¹⁴⁶ The margins of the draft lists the movies *Coming Home*, *Deer Hunter*, *Kent State*, and *Apocalypse Now* as the

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Memorandum, Caspar Weinberger to Ronald Reagan, April 17, 1981, Folder: “West Point Speech and Back Up File (1)”, Box 8 Speechwriting, White House Office Of: Research Office, 1981-1989, Ronald Reagan Library.

¹⁴⁵ Draft of Reagan’s Commencement at West Point, Folder: “West Point Speech and Back Up File (1)”, Box 8 Speechwriting, White House Office Of: Research Office, 1981-1989, Ronald Reagan Library.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

prime examples of Hollywood's complicity in destroying the public image of the military.¹⁴⁷ The passage did not make the final draft of the speech, likely over concerns that it would alienate the entertainment industry, which would need to play a significant role in shifting popular perceptions of the military.

The West Point speech also demonstrated Reagan's preference for fiction and familiar stories. Seeking to illustrate the sacrifice and patriotism of those in the military, he reached back to the stories of a favorite author from his time as an actor. Referring to a work by James Warner Bellah, whom Reagan cited as "our Rudyard Kipling," the president told the story of a dying officer speaking to a subordinate.¹⁴⁸ The dying man transfers command to the young officer, exhorting him to "do the nasty job" asked by his country or "forever after there will be the taste ash in your mouth."¹⁴⁹ Strangely, Reagan emphasized Bellah as an author of books, as Bella was widely known as the screenwriter for *Rio Grande*, starring John Wayne, and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, starring Jimmy Stewart. Reagan also worked with Bellah professionally. The two worked on a project entitled *Battle Mountain* that never made it to screens and Bellah wrote an episode of *General Electric Theater* entitled "Lash of Fear."¹⁵⁰ Bellah also

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Reagan, "Address at the Commencement Exercises of the United States Military Academy," May 21, 1981.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Hedda Hopper, "Looking at Hollywood: An Empty Camera Slices Ham Off an Egotistical Film Actor," *Chicago Tribune*, April 8, 1953.

"Lash of Fear," *General Electric Theater*, NBC, October 16, 1955.

wrote a failed TV pilot adapting the Reagan favorite, *High Noon*, for television. Reagan prioritized Bellah as a writer of fiction, arguably his least known role, demonstrates the importance the president placed on books.

Reagan similarly emphasized the literary credentials of Undersecretary of the Navy, and future senator, James Webb to achieve a similar effect. Speaking this time at the 1985 commencement of the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, he praised Webb's service in the Marine Corps, and then quoted from Webb's novel *Sense of Honor* to emphasize the higher nature of military service. The novel takes place at Annapolis amidst the Vietnam War and focuses on the indoctrination of a plebe into the academy's culture. Reagan cites an upperclassman telling the plebe about the difference between a military man and a politician; "The President and the Congress may suffer bad news stories. The military man suffers the deaths of his friends, early and often."¹⁵¹ Like his speech at West Point, Reagan again references the demoralization of the military in the 1970s and highlights how the situation "dramatically reversed" during his administration.¹⁵²

"A new appreciation for our men and women in military service" animated the land.¹⁵³ In contrast to the immediate post-Vietnam era, Americans now had

¹⁵¹ Ronald Reagan, "Address at the Commencement Exercises of the United States Naval Academy," Annapolis, Maryland, May 22, 1985.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

“faith” in the military to “make decisions” in a morally difficult environment.¹⁵⁴

This was because not only was the military meeting its recruiting goals, but also that it was bringing higher quality recruits into service. Reagan believed the men and women entering the military better embodied the nation’s values and that the “character” of those in service was superior.¹⁵⁵ The increase in quality was essential; as the Navy now possessed the “sophisticated equipment and high tech weaponry” needed in a modern fleet.¹⁵⁶ New and more powerful weapons required greater technical skill to use and stronger moral compasses to employ. Linking the quality of personnel with the idea of equipment on the cutting edge of technology reflected the core of how the Reagan administration sought to revitalize U.S. military strength.

Reagan took every opportunity to praise the character and quality of the U.S. military, and often favored fictional references to create a more heroic and memorable narrative. In his presidential message for Armed Forces Day in both 1981 and 1982 he referred to James Michener’s 1953 novella *The Bridges at Toko-Ri*, quoting a “commanding officer who thinks about the self-sacrifice” of his unit and asks “where do we get such men?”¹⁵⁷ In the 1981 version of the message, Reagan continued by noting that “today millions of Americans are

¹⁵⁴ Ibid

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ ibid

¹⁵⁷ Ronald Reagan, “Armed Forces Day Message,” May 16, 1981

Ronald Reagan, “Armed Forces Day Message,” May 15, 1982

asking themselves that same question” with “respect and affection in their hearts.”¹⁵⁸ The 1982 message answers the question. Reagan stated that the U.S. finds “them where we’ve always found them,” that those that serve are the highest caliber individuals produced by “the freest society man has ever known.”¹⁵⁹

The Armed Forces Day messages were not the first times that Reagan referenced Michener’s novella as president. Just one month into his presidency, Reagan awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor to Master Sergeant Roy Benevidez for his role in extracting a trapped group of green berets during the Vietnam War. At the end of his remarks, just before he read the award citation, Reagan told the story of the admiral on the bridge of an aircraft carrier marveling at the quality of his men. As he does in his 1982 address, Reagan decides to answer the character’s rhetorical question. The U.S. finds men and women of exceptional quality in the same places it always has, “in our villages and towns, on our city streets, in our shops, and on our farms.”¹⁶⁰ The question and answer seek to reforge the civil-military relationship by creating an explicit link between the aspirational values of America and its military. Reagan’s goal with such

¹⁵⁸ Armed Forces Day Message 1981

¹⁵⁹ Armed Forces Day Message 1982

¹⁶⁰ Ronald Reagan, “Remarks on Presenting the Medal of Honor to Master Sergeant Roy P. Benavidez,” Arlington, Virginia, February 24, 1981.

remarks was to cause Americans to better identify with the armed forces through emphasis on the local origins of service members.

In his memoir *Fighting for Peace*, Caspar Weinberger treats the award ceremony as a crucial event in the early days of the administration. It was an important public display that “not only did the President and Department of Defense” value the welfare of the military, but also that the “American people as a whole... respected, honored, and appreciated” it.¹⁶¹ He argues that Reagan’s actions “almost single-handedly” led the U.S. towards a more positive relationship with the military and marks the ceremony as a key first step.¹⁶² This is because the event marked a shift in tone from the previous administration, which had sought to award Benevidez’s medal in a quieter manner without presidential involvement.¹⁶³

Reagan’s repeated public use of *The Bridges at Toko-Ri* marks another instance of prioritizing novels over movies, as a movie based on the book came out in 1954. The movie starred William Holden, who was best man and one of two guests at Reagan’s second wedding, and Grace Kelly, a favorite of Reagan’s and the female lead of *High Noon*. More interesting is the role that Michener and his writing played as an informal instrument of U.S. policy during the 1950s and

¹⁶¹ Caspar Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace: Seven Critical Years in the Pentagon* (New York; Warner Books, 1990), 52.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

early 1960s as Reagan became increasingly politically active. Literature scholar Christina Klein argues that Michener “put his writing into the service of the government.”¹⁶⁴ The writer shared the views of his government about the Cold War in Asia and his writing reflected that. Michener also incorporated new technologies and weapons systems into his writing and wrote an article about the B-52 bomber that introduced American allies and the public-at-large to the new airframe.¹⁶⁵

Michener’s articles for newspapers and magazines focused on the individual heroism of the men of the military, with an emphasis on the navy. A 1952 article in the *Los Angeles Times* tells of a Navy pilot with the call sign “Bald Eagle.” The pilot’s commander determines that it is time to ground him, as “no man in the task force is required to risk his life more than four times in a row.”¹⁶⁶ However, before he receives word, the pilot takes off on a fifth mission and enemy fire downs his plane over the freezing waters off the North Korean coast. The story ends happily, as a destroyer rescues “Bald Eagle” from the sea and returns him to his ship. Michener concludes the article by quoting the admiral as stating that the “paperwork, from now on” will be the scope of the pilot’s duties.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 125.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ James Michener, “Enough Bravery for Bomber Pilot: Admiral Ground Navy’s Bald Eagle Who Cheated Death Five Times,” *The Los Angeles Times*, February 6, 1952.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

The heroic portrayal of US service members and sympathetic accounts of locals who the benefited from American presence were essential parts of Michener's work and powerfully influenced his broad readership at home. In 1962, Representative Daniel Inouye, the Medal of Honor recipient, and future long-time senator from Hawaii, praised Michener's work from the floor of the House. Inouye detailed Michener's many accomplishments and argued that his work made him "one of our most effective anti-Communist weapons in the worldwide struggle" and his efforts on behalf of Asia had made many parts of it "Communist-proof."¹⁶⁸ In *Cold War Orientalism*, Christina Klein notes that Michener served as "paraphraser" for the government's national security policy and that his ability to translate "Cold War ideology into popular narrative" made him invaluable to the government.¹⁶⁹ The writer transformed the terms and methods of the struggle into an account that "the man on the street could understand and accept."¹⁷⁰ The role of administration "paraphraser" is the one that Clancy would assume for Reagan, and much like with Michener's work, it would become difficult to find the line between Clancy's own thoughts and those of the government.

¹⁶⁸ Daniel Inouye, "James A. Michener," *Congressional Record-House*, September 17, 1962.

¹⁶⁹ Klein, *Cold War Orientalism*, 126.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

Reagan also sought non-traditional forums to praise the military before large audiences. One such example originates in September of 1982, when a Reagan supporter suggested to Michael Deaver, the assistant Chief of Staff for the president, that Reagan record a message for play at halftime of all National Football League games on Veterans Day weekend.¹⁷¹ The writer felt that the message should encourage “standing ovations to the veterans” and would serve as “an informal structure to promote patriotism.”¹⁷² Deaver agreed with the idea, though he decided to propose the message take place at halftime of college football games in order to avoid the possibility that labor unrest in the NFL would lead to a strike and cancellation of the message.¹⁷³ In the message played in stadiums across the country and aired nationally on television coverage of the games of November 13, 1982, Reagan praised the service of veterans of each major American war beginning with the First World War and concluding with Vietnam. He referred to the veterans “as an elite group of men and women” who even in times of peace keep the country “secure from foreign threats.”¹⁷⁴ Reagan

¹⁷¹ Letter, Ernest Marshall to Michael Deaver, September 3 1982. Folder: NCAA Football Halftime Address, Box 66, Speechwriting, White House Office of: Research Office, 1981-1989, Ronald Reagan Library

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Letter, Ernest Marshall to William Sadler, October 6, 1982, Folder: NCAA Football Halftime Address, Box 66, Speechwriting, White House Office of: Research Office, 1981-1989, Ronald Reagan Library

¹⁷⁴ “Presidential Taping: Salute to Veterans for NCAA Football Halftime November 8, 1982” Folder: NCAA Football Halftime Address, Box 66, Speechwriting, White House Office of: Research Office, 1981-1989, Ronald Reagan Library

used the opportunity to speak to a captive audience of millions of Americans in stadiums around the country and to encourage their participation in the tribute, causing a public showing of their support for the military in a manner still practiced at nearly every sporting event.

Veterans Day, Armed Forces Day, service academy commencements, and Medal of Honor occasions are, of course, times when it would be unusual for the president to do anything but proclaim the virtues of the military. However, these events were not exceptions to Reagan's normal rhetoric. The restoration of morale of service members and the public's faith in the military pervaded even speeches unrelated to national defense. At a 1982 fundraiser for Governor William Clements of Texas, Reagan recognized Master Sergeant Benavidez, the recipient of the Medal of Honor the previous year, before the governor.¹⁷⁵ The speech repeated themes of military revitalization under his administration and emphasized the need for continued work. The prominence Reagan gave to issues of military revitalization in a speech before donors demonstrates the crucial importance he placed on it and that he expected it to be of significance to his political base. This expectation demonstrates how importantly some of public regarded issues of military morale and readiness.

¹⁷⁵ Ronald Reagan, "Remarks at a Fundraising Dinner for Governor William P. Clements, Jr., in Houston, Texas," June 15, 1982.

The military was not the only organization for which Reagan sought to restore public regard and build morale. In 1975, the Church Committee began its investigation of the Central Intelligence Agency, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and National Security Agency uncovering significant abuses of the law by the agencies that led to a significant undermining of public opinion. The habitual excesses of the institutions and their less than stellar record of accomplishment left many Americans in doubt as to their capacity to perform their proscribed functions. Similar to the military, the intelligence apparatus suffered from strongly negative portrayals in popular culture. Movies like *All the Presidents Men* (1975) and books like *The Bourne Identity* (1980) by Robert Ludlum pilloried the intelligence community and depicted it as willing to do anything to protect itself, including the assassination of American citizens.

Reagan sought to reverse this trend as well. Speaking outside of CIA Headquarters at Langley, Virginia, in June of 1982, he asserted that the “days of such abuses” are past and that he had full confidence in the ability of the agency to perform its functions in “a way that is lawful, constitutional, and in keeping with the traditions of our way of life.”¹⁷⁶ Echoing language he used to describe military service members, he told the CIA employees that it was their “intellect and integrity” and their “wit and intuition” upon which the “fate of freedom rests

¹⁷⁶ Ronald Reagan, “Remarks on the Signing of the Intelligence Identity Protection Act,” Langley, VA June 23, 1982.

for millions.”¹⁷⁷ The members of the CIA were “heroes of a grim twilight struggle.”¹⁷⁸ Reagan expressed similar sentiments during closed-door remarks to members of the CIA’s covert action arm. He expressed his own and the country’s gratitude for their silent service he praised them for their skill and character as they upheld their country’s freedom.

Reagan also drew parallels in his speech between the treatment received by the military and the CIA during previous administrations. As with his West Point commencement speech, Reagan used the opportunity at Langley to highlight “nearly a decade of neglect and sometime over zealous criticism” the agency endured.¹⁷⁹ Reagan compared the present work at the CIA to that of Nathan Hale and that of the OSS during World War II. He also took the opportunity to recommend a book, *Piercing of the Reich* by Joseph Persico, which detailed the activities of a younger William Clark, Reagan’s Director of Central Intelligence.¹⁸⁰ Though no works of fiction appear in the speech, there was a literary contribution to the drafting of the speech. During the crafting of Reagan’s remarks the White House reached out to famed spy novelist John Le Carré about his introduction for the Bruce Page book *The Philby Conspiracy*.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Memorandum, Folder: CIA Visit/Bill Signing, Box 48, Speechwriting White House Office Of: Research Office, 1981-1989, Ronald Reagan Library

Clancy's characters fit perfectly into the new narrative of competent self-sacrifice that Reagan attempted to establish with his first-term public statements. The Americans in *Hunt for Red October* share above-average intelligence and virtue. Jack Ryan, the protagonist, sees his service in the Marine Corps cut short by a helicopter crash. However, after "four years as a stockbroker, betting his own money on high-risk issues and scoring big," Ryan became "bored with making money" and began his career at the CIA.¹⁸² Ryan was also a successful historian, with published and respected books on British naval history. In addition to incredible professional success, Clancy's hero also enjoys a strong marriage to an excellent surgeon, an adoring young daughter, and a toddler, Jack Ryan Jr. Ryan's virtue goes without question, and he readily confesses his CIA affiliation to anyone, be it a US admiral or Soviet sub commander, rather than risk deception. He also harbors remarkably few career ambitions, has "no ambition to celebrity" and seeks no recognition for his work.¹⁸³ Only his physical appearance is "unremarkable," though at 6'1" he is taller than average though a bit out of shape due to "miserable English weather."¹⁸⁴ Knighted by the Queen of England for his heroic exploits, which Clancy later revealed in *Patriot Games*, Ryan is at ease speaking his mind to British lords, US admirals, and senior policy

¹⁸² Clancy, *Hunt for Red October*, 44.

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, 36.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*.

makers. Only the president is able to overwhelm him. In short, Jack Ryan is an impossible amalgamation of Reagan's ideal traits for someone serving his country to exhibit.

Ryan's extreme integrity would likely be enough by itself to draw Reagan's interest, as the president consistently showed a fondness for heroes that resembled those found in 1950s westerns. However, Ryan is not the only character to show such traits. The US naval officers of *Hunt* are Ryan's equal in their status as paragons. Clancy describes Admiral Joshua Painter, the commander of the aircraft carrier USS Kennedy, as "a gifted tactician and a man of puritanical integrity."¹⁸⁵ CIA director Admiral James Greer is able to remain in the navy "past retirement age...through brute competence."¹⁸⁶ Clancy compares Greer's intellect to legendary Admiral Hymam Rickover, regarded as the father of the nuclear submarine fleet, but notes that Greer "was a far easier man to work for."¹⁸⁷ Commander Bart Mancuso, skipper of the submarine that successfully finds the Red October, is "one of the youngest submarine commanders in the U.S. Navy" and shows the intelligence to both trust his instincts and listen to his subordinates.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, 102.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, 37.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, 58.

Even retired naval officers live up to the high standards set by Ryan. Skip Taylor was a fast rising officer before an accident caused by a drunk driver costs him a leg. Medically retired, Taylor continues his service as a civilian professor at the Naval Academy. He also embodies Ryan's refusal to seek rewards, turning down an offer to come back onto active service and command a submarine since doing so would "just be taking someone else's slot."¹⁸⁹ Instead, he settles for a good look at the captured submarine. The only US officer in the book with a negative trait is Admiral Charles Davenport, the Director of Naval Intelligence, who is "supposed to be a bastard to work for."¹⁹⁰ Beyond this relatively minor flaw, Davenport displays the same competence as the rest of his brethren.

Equally important is the portrayal of Sonarman Second Class Ronald Jones, the sole enlisted service member to receive significant attention in the book. He reflects exactly the higher quality of recruit that Reagan referred to in his commencement addresses and the Weinberger identified in his memoirs. Jones dropped out of the California Institute of Technology due to a prank gone wrong and joined the navy to rehabilitate his name and foster a return to school. He has an IQ of 158 and listens to classical music in his spare time. Extremely competent on his equipment, Jones is also capable of making important

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, 309.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, 40.

decisions and plays the decisive role in identifying and locating the Red October. Clancy drives home his point about the quality of the enlisted in the American military by having Soviet officers marvel over Jones' competence upon meeting him in the book's final act.

The FBI also receives positive attention in *The Hunt for Red October*, as they are able to expose a Soviet mole on the staff of Senator Donaldson, who chairs the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. Clancy depicts the counter intelligence efforts of the FBI as exceptional and notes that they had "been onto" the Senator's chief of staff "for some time."¹⁹¹ The directors of the FBI and CIA then negotiate with Donaldson promising not to prosecute his aide if the senator agrees to resign. Donaldson acquiesces when he realizes the potential fallout the prosecution could bring to his office, and the CIA turns the aide into a double agent. The extreme competence of the FBI and CIA nets a major intelligence coup while simultaneously striking a blow against the oversight established in the wake of the Church Committee.

The characters in *Hunt for Red October* are unapologetically idealized archetypes of virtue in service, better suited for a fable than a thriller with pretensions of realism. The simplistic design did not escape the notice of the book's reviewers. *The Wall Street Journal* reviewer noted that Jack Ryan "is

¹⁹¹ Ibid, 271.

simply too good to be true” and that “virtually everyone in the book is a caricature.”¹⁹² Americans are “uniformly intelligent, imaginative, capable, and disciplined.”¹⁹³ However, he still gives the book a positive review, calling the work “great fun.”¹⁹⁴ The *Los Angeles Times* took a more ambivalent view, noting that despite “cardboard characters,” the work “never sinks.”¹⁹⁵ However, Reagan’s love of the book rested in this simplicity of design that critics lambasted. Clancy’s work simplified the Cold War into the same sort of easily digestible and acceptable narrative that Reagan had previously experienced with Michener. Like Michener, Clancy was able to reach the middlebrow audience of America and have them bring Reagan’s Cold War fable into their homes to the benefit of the administration.

Confronting the “Evil Empire”

Reagan set the tone for his first-term dealing with the Soviet Union in his inaugural address. Speaking for the first time as president, he told the country that there was no weapon more powerful than “the will and courage of free men and women.”¹⁹⁶ Reagan then noted that this was a weapon that American “adversaries in the world [did] not have,” in a clear reference to Soviet

¹⁹² Alden, “Cold War at 50 Fathoms”

¹⁹³ Alden, “Cold War at 50 Fathoms”

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Setlowe, “Adrift with Subplots”

¹⁹⁶ Ronald Reagan, “Inaugural Address,” Washington DC, January 20, 1981.

oppression.¹⁹⁷ The tone continued with Reagan's commencement addresses at Notre Dame and West Point in May of 1981.

The administration viewed the speeches as opportunities to "articulate a fresh and coherent national strategy" to "satisfy the curiosity of domestic and foreign audiences" about Reagan's intentions.¹⁹⁸ The speeches would also "swing the President's full weight behind key ideas" that were "struggling to penetrate the bureaucracy."¹⁹⁹ The president needed to draw the contrast of "an imperial Soviet Union" and an America that respects self-determination and rule of law. Importantly, the speeches would paint the Soviet system as "hostile to human rights and economically ruinous."²⁰⁰

At Notre Dame, Reagan's intent was to outline the U.S. understanding of human rights and highlight the important role it needed to play in "the economic betterment of mankind."²⁰¹ In the speech, Reagan stated that the "West won't contain communism, it will transcend communism."²⁰² Foreshadowing his address to the British Parliament one year later, Reagan then went on to argue that the West will dismiss communism and all it portended as a "bizarre chapter

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Memorandum, Carnes Lord to Richard Allen, April 27, 1981, Folder: "West Point Speech and Back Up File (1)", Box 8 Speechwriting, White House Office Of: Research Office, 1981-1989, Ronald Reagan Library.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ronald Reagan, "Address at Commencement Exercises at the University of Notre Dame," South Bend, Indiana, May 17, 1981.

in human history” the “last pages” of which were then being written.²⁰³ Reagan then took advantage of the setting of the country’s most prominent Catholic school to cast the struggle into religious terms.

Reagan cited William Faulkner’s 1950 Nobel Prize acceptance speech, where the author spoke about how the human possession of a soul made humanity immortal and ensured man “would not only endure” but prevail over the modern world.²⁰⁴ The president’s use of Faulkner’s word immediately after discussing the West’s ability transcend communism leaves little doubt over what humanity needed to overcome. Reagan then referenced Pope John Paul II’s *Dives In Misericordia*. The November 1980 letter from the Pope speaks out against both Communism and Liberation Theology. Reagan expanded on John Paul’s argument that the rhetoric of class struggle was a “distortion of justice.”²⁰⁵ The president quoted that such systems leave their populations “stripped of fundamental human rights” in the name of “an alleged justice.”²⁰⁶ In contrast to this, the American commitment to “a law higher than [its] own” and “belief in a Supreme Being” left it the stronger nation and the only superpower capable of offering true freedom.²⁰⁷

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia* November 30, 1980.

²⁰⁶ Ibid

Reagan Commencement Address at Notre Dame, May 17, 1981.

²⁰⁷ Reagan Commencement Address at Notre Dame, May 17, 1981.

The West Point speech spoke more explicitly about security concerns with the intent of highlighting the “militaristic imperialism” of the Soviets that then posed a threat “so grave as to cause all nations to rethink their fundamental assumptions” about security.²⁰⁸ Reagan never mentions the Soviet Union by name in the speech, instead referring to it as a “great society” that was “marching to a different drumbeat,” threatening a “retreat into the dark ages.”²⁰⁹ The president highlighted the compulsory nature of the Soviet system noting, “The citizens in that society have little more to say about their government than a prison inmate has to say about the prison administration.”²¹⁰ That the Soviet military used conscripts stood in contrast to the recent US move towards an all-volunteer force. Reagan’s juxtaposition of the two creates a clear implication that the United States worthiness stems from the willingness of its population to defend it freely, a willingness absent from the Soviet Union.

Historians generally overlook the twin commencement addresses of May 1981 when discussing Reagan’s ideological definition of the Cold War. The “evil empire” speech to the National Association of Evangelicals in 1983 and his address to the British parliament that promised to leave “Marxism-Leninism on the ash-heap of history” draw more attention and linger in the public

²⁰⁸ Carnes Lord to Richard Allen, April 27, 1981

²⁰⁹ Reagan, Address at West Point Commencement, May 21, 1981.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

consciousness.²¹¹ This is understandable; the more famous speeches had a directness and drama that earned a higher profile. However, the commencement addresses at Notre Dame and West Point remain important. They established the tenor of US-Soviet relations for Reagan's first term and demonstrate the continuity of thought and message that dominated the administration from 1981 to 1985. The speeches marked the beginning of what Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin termed "an uncompromising new ideological offensive."²¹²

Hunt for Red October fit into the offensive in both content and tone. The book incorporates the cruelties and inefficiencies that Reagan accused the Soviet Union of, often with the same language that Reagan used. A pivotal early scene in the book depicts an aged veteran of World War II working in the mailroom of the Kremlin. The worker expresses disdain for the politburo and delays delivery of a letter from Ramius that announces the Red October's defection. The mail worker notes he has more than enough time to meet his quota of deliveries and that in setting the letter aside he is rebelling in some small measure against his oppressors. He ruefully tells himself "as long as the bosses pretend to pay us, we will pretend to work," a variation on one of Reagan's favorite jokes about the Soviet Union.²¹³

²¹¹ Reagan, Address to National Association of Evangelicals, March 8, 1983.

Reagan "Address to British Parliament", London, England June 8, 1982.

²¹² Dobrynin, *In Confidence* 477.

²¹³ Clancy, *The Hunt for Red October*, 18.

The cruelty of the Soviet Union pervades *Hunt for Red October*. References to gulags abound. Ramius notes that the living quarters on the submarine “would shame a gulag jailer,” and even considers allowing the ship’s political officer to live just so he can face time in Siberia.²¹⁴ Clancy gives the average Soviet a quiet resignation to the system of cruel imprisonment and depicts the politburo as favoring it only when a quick execution is impossible. Ramius is a beneficiary of the extreme violence of the Soviet Union in Lithuania, as his father led the purges and mass deportations, earning a high rank and privileged life for his son as a result.

Clancy also uses Ramius to accuse the Soviets of fostering an unfair system. Due to his Lithuanian origins, Ramius cannot become an admiral despite being the most capable Soviet submarine operator by a large margin. The death of Ramius’ wife furthers the impression of unfairness and inefficiency. She dies after an operation because the surgeon arrived drunk, botching the procedure, and creating an infection. However, there is no medicine available to stave off the infection, as factory workers placed distilled water into the vials in order to meet unreasonable quotas imposed by the central government. However, no one faces punishment for the death. The surgeon is the son of a

²¹⁴ Ibid, 8.

high ranking official and thus immune and there is no way to trace the fake medicine back to its origin due to the inefficient and overly bureaucratic system.

The faults of the Soviet Union that Clancy highlights in the book are common talking points of the Reagan administration. However, it is Ramius' epiphany that leads to his defection that most strongly appealed to Reagan and mirrored his belief in the inevitability of western victory in the Cold War. Religion leads Ramius away from communism. Ramius' grandmother secretly baptized him as a Catholic and read him bible stories as a young child. This helped lead him to "commit the gravest sin in the Communist pantheon;" becoming "individual in his thinking."²¹⁵ Ramius buries his religion by the time he reaches adolescence, but standing at his wife's grave, he realizes the true impact of his society's atheism. The system "robbed him of a means to assuage his grief with prayer" and stole "the hope—if only an illusion—of ever seeing [his wife] again."²¹⁶ The Soviet regime robbed Ramius of his humanity by stripping away his religion, and Ramius turns back to his faith in order to reclaim himself.

Ramius' realization that freedom and humanity spring from a higher power echoes the real-life turn from communism of Whitaker Chambers, chronicled in *Witness*. However, the differing nature of the real life and fictional moments of faith are telling. Chamber's epiphany came from the existence of new life in the

²¹⁵ Ibid, 26

²¹⁶ Ibid, 33.

form of his daughter and the opportunity afforded her by a free society. Ramius' awakening comes from the death of all he loves and his recognition that the Soviet state smothered what was decent and free. Ramius' decision to defect to the United States becomes a journey from a society of death to one of life.

The Best Weapons

Technology is an important theme in *The Hunt for Red October*. Throughout the novel Clancy shows the superiority of American systems to their Soviet counterparts. A key sequence in the novel occurs amid escalating tensions as the Soviet fleet moves west to search for the Red October. After a Soviet fighter fires on an American one injuring the weapons officer in the plane, the U.S. responds in a way that establishes its superiority but deescalates the situation. A flight of A-10 Warthogs launched from the U.S. flies undetected to the Soviet fleet, jammed the radars of the Soviet flagship and then surrounded it with magnesium flares. The message was that if the US "were serious [the Soviets] would all be dead now."²¹⁷ The Soviet admiral then recognizes that his fleet is in a potentially compromised position and changes its operations to demonstrate less aggression.

An earlier sequence in the book depicts a Soviet pilot envious at the ability of F-15s to outmaneuver and out range his own plane. The pilot also expresses

²¹⁷ Clancy, *The Hunt for Red October*, 211.

anger at “his own intelligence officer for telling him he could sneak up” on the Americans, who obviously have vastly superior radar and air traffic management capabilities.²¹⁸ Weapons systems are not the only advantage the Americans have. Computers also play an important role; Skip Tyler’s use of a Cray-2 supercomputer allows for independent verification of Jones’ ability to track the Red October. The Cray is “one hell of a machine,” able to produce “over two hundred pages of data” in just under twelve minutes.²¹⁹ The U.S. not only has better weapons but it can also process more information than the Soviets can providing a decisive advantage to them in the event of armed conflict.

The Red October’s nearly silent propulsion drive threatens to undermine the U.S. advantage in technology. This the navy not only needs to track the sub, but also to find a way to keep it after the defection of Ramius becomes public. At the end of the novel, with the submarine safe in Norfolk there is already “a select group of engineers and technicians” on board inspecting the boat.²²⁰ The urgency in examining the submarine to learn its secrets, demonstrates the fear of the implications of allowing the Soviets technical superiority in any realm could have. The *Cardinal of the Kremlin*, Clancy’s fourth book, opens with the scuttling of the submarine, after the US learned everything it could from the vessel. Ryan,

²¹⁸ Ibid, 176.

²¹⁹ Ibid, 145.

²²⁰ Ibid, 387.

observing the boat before it sinks notes “there couldn’t be much left of her” and that the examination of the Red October left a series of welding scars making the boat looking like “Frankenstein’s monster.”²²¹ With secrets revealed, the navy sends the submarine to the depths, lest the Soviets realize the Americans still had it.

Modernizing the military was a critical component of Reagan’s strategy of “peace through strength.” NSDD-32 noted that the U.S. needed to close a gap “between strategy and capabilities,” and that to do this the country needed “to undertake a sustained and balanced force development program.”²²² It also laid out a blueprint for achieving this; the US would improve readiness, upgrade command and control, increase sustainability and mobility, and modernize the force.²²³ In his commencement address at the Air Force Academy in 1984, Reagan spoke on the importance of technology in war. He reflected on the sense that the forces of Napoleon and Caesar moved at similar rates, and “neither army worried about air cover.”²²⁴ Yet in the 52 years between Reagan’s own graduation from Eureka College and the graduation of the cadets he addressed technology went “from open cockpits to lunar landings, from space

²²¹ Tom Clancy, *The Cardinal of the Kremlin* (New York: Putnam Books, 1988), 18.

²²² NSDD-32

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ronald Reagan, “Address at Commencement Exercises at the United States Air Force Academy,” Colorado Springs, Colorado, May 30, 1984.

fiction to space shuttles.”²²⁵ A graph depicting the change in technology would depict the present era as a line that “would leap vertically off the page.”²²⁶ Staying on the leading edge of this line was critical, as to Reagan “technology, plus freedom, equal[ed] opportunity and progress.”²²⁷

In his address at the Naval Academy the next year, Reagan highlighted the progress made on modernizing the force. He noted the navy took delivery of twenty-five new ships the previous year, and that the Ticonderoga, the “first Aegis equipped guided-missile cruiser” was emblematic of the new “advanced weapons systems and sophisticated equipment” beginning to debut in the military.²²⁸ Reagan also referenced the growing role of “Poseidon and Trident submarines,” in deterring nuclear war.²²⁹ The type of submarines he mentions, better known as Los Angeles and Ohio class submarines, were more advanced than their Soviet counterparts and both programs greatly expanded under Reagan.

As Reagan read *The Hunt for Red October* in December of 1984, he was increasingly confident that the gap between strategies and capabilities that NSDD-32 spoke of was rapidly closing. A look ahead at foreign policy conducted

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ronald Reagan, “Address at Commencement Exercises at the United States Naval Academy,” May 22, 1985.

²²⁹ Ibid.

by the National Security Council in advance of Reagan's second term noted, "America's strength has been revitalized."²³⁰ The study highlights the "improved U.S. military strength" from the success of first term programs as essential to the restoration.²³¹ The Clancy novel helped reinforce this view in Reagan's mind. It presented his first term accomplishments as a story, and showed a Cold War environment gradually becoming more favorable to the United States. The two powers in the book have a rough parity in terms of strength, but the US is clearly gaining ground in the fields of technology and its stronger system of government allows it to react faster than the communist behemoth. Clancy put the president's view of the geo-political situation into a narrative that grabbed Reagan's attention and added to his belief that he was following the correct course. *The Hunt for Red October* served as a fitting marker of the end of Reagan's first term. The next two years would see the advantage in the Cold War shift dramatically, as the U.S. and NATO, caught and then overtook Soviet military power in short order. Clancy's second novel, *Red Storm Rising*, captured these trends and served a similarly important purpose in confirming Reagan's beliefs about military power, nuclear war, and the Russian people.

²³⁰ Memorandum, "U.S. Foreign Policy a Look Ahead" May 18, 1984, Folder: Foreign Policy Background for President's Trip to Europe-Notebook (1 of 2), RAC Box 8, NSC Executive Secretariat: Trip File, Ronald Reagan Library.

²³¹ Ibid.

Chapter 3

Weathering the Storm: Peace through Strength

As Air Force One traveled east towards Reykjavik, Ronald Reagan moved to the back cabin to socialize with his staff and to help the flight pass faster. Although the upcoming summit hung over the conversation, Reagan focused less on arms control than on the host country itself. He retold a story about an astronaut who told that the moon was a more hospitable location than the training grounds used to simulate it near the American airbase at Keflavik, Iceland.²³² Reagan also spoke at length about the book he had just read, the recently released *Red Storm Rising* by Tom Clancy. In the weeks leading up to the summit, Reagan read the book, terming it “research,” as one of the key plot lines centers on Iceland and its strategic importance to NATO.²³³ Though many took the remark as a joke, like most of Reagan’s jokes and stories it contained elements of truth. The plotlines of *Red Storm Rising* near-perfectly encapsulated

²³² Ken Adelman, *Regan at Reykjavik: Forty-Eight Hours that Ended the Cold War* (New York: Broadside Books, 2014), 12.

²³³ Lou Canon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 294.

the way Reagan viewed the Cold War and captured both how and why he believed the United States would prevail.

Red Storm Rising is about a notional Third World War, begun by the Soviets after a terror attack cripples their energy industry. As Clancy promised during his visit to the Oval Office, “the good guys” win, though that by itself is not what appealed to Reagan.²³⁴ The appeal of *Red Storm Rising* to Reagan came from the fact that its four major plotlines matched Reagan’s vision of what a major war with the Soviets would look like, both in conduct and results. The plot follows the war in central Europe, convoy operations in the north Atlantic, the Soviet conquest of Iceland, and political deliberations in Moscow.

The book begins with a terrorist attack on the primary Soviet fuel refinery in western Siberia. The destruction of the facility creates a potential economic crisis, which threatens to collapse the Soviet economy unless the Soviets are able to control new sources of oil. The politburo sets its sights on Iran but realizes the Soviet Union need to “eliminate NATO as a political and military force” to prevent interference with their efforts to conquer Persian oil fields.²³⁵ Viewing NATO as “divided and soft,” the Soviets believe a quick strike into West Germany will fracture the alliance permanently and give them free rein in

²³⁴ Tom Clancy to Susan Richards March 8, 1985. Accessed online at <http://piedtype.com/2013/10/06/tom-clancy-boy-writer-part-4/>

²³⁵ Tom Clancy, *Red Storm Rising*, (New York: Putnam and Sons, 1986), 32

southwest Asia.²³⁶ The Soviets then embark on an aggressive course to prepare their armed forces over a four-month period and stage another terrorist attack in the Kremlin itself, which leaves several children dead. This attack becomes the *casus belli* and the Soviets invade.

In the early days of the war, the Soviets enjoy tremendous success, pushing into West Germany and successfully seizing Iceland in a surprise amphibious assault. The narrative then centers on the U.S. and NATO efforts to stave off further advances and reinforce Europe. On the continent, NATO forces blunt the advance due to technical and doctrinal superiority and the ability of its generals and planners to shift strategies on their own volition. The stalemate that follows is not sustainable for NATO, however, and the need for resupply makes the convoy activity in the North Atlantic critical to the ultimate strategic success of the allies.

The Soviet capture of Iceland is critical in this regard, as it expands the operational range of Soviet aircraft and creates a significant hole in the air support available to NATO convoys. The Soviets use this advantage to cripple an American aircraft carrier, casting further doubt on the ability of the U.S. to resupply Europe. Ultimately, NATO is able to reestablish air superiority and control the Atlantic due to its ability to gather and share intelligence across the

²³⁶ Ibid, 34.

alliance and conduct efficient, perfectly timed strikes against Soviet air assets. The success of the convoys in resupplying NATO in Europe effectively destroys the possibility of a conventional victory for the Soviet Union and sets the stage for a coup in Moscow, which ends the war.

The broad scope of the book and use of multiple protagonists allowed Clancy and his co-author Larry Bond to examine what modern warfare would look like and present their readers with a near exhaustive look at the strengths and weaknesses of both sides. In particular, the book offers strong commentary on the role of technology, the value of alliances, the character of U.S. service members, and the importance of political openness and flexibility. Finally, and crucially for its appeal to Reagan, *Red Storm Rising* is a World War III scenario in which the United States wins without engaging in a nuclear exchange with the Soviet Union.

Problems with the Bomb

Nuclear weapons are not entirely absent from *Red Storm Rising*. As the book approaches its climax and it becomes clear to the Soviets that they cannot win conventionally, hardliners in the politburo attempt to bring about the use of nuclear weapons. This initiative ultimately results in a coup, placing a more moderate leader in charge and ending the war. Clancy and Bond constructed their narrative intentionally to demonstrate that only the “truly mad” would

advocate the use of nuclear weapons.²³⁷ Anti-nuclear sentiments are nearly universal throughout the book between both American and Soviet leaders. Early in the book Mikhail Sergetov, a member of the Politburo, laments the money spent on “unproductive holes” with the ability to “kill the West ten times over.”²³⁸ Even when the war is desperate, Alekseyev, the commander of Soviet forces, views the secretary general as “crazy” and “mad” for suggesting the possibility of using tactical nuclear strikes.²³⁹ It is also notable that U.S. planners never discuss employing nuclear weapons, even though the weapons in Europe were ostensibly there to mitigate the Soviet advantage in conventional forces. This is because the technical advantage of NATO forces served the same purpose, allowing for a non-nuclear balancing of forces.

The abhorrence of nuclear weapons present in *Red Storm Rising* is a mirror to Reagan’s own view of the weapons. Reagan reacted strongly to the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II. The sense that the weapons would bring about an apocalypse led him to support both the immediate abolition of nuclear weapons and the internationalization of atomic energy.²⁴⁰ Reagan planned to read Norman Corwin’s anti-nuclear poem “Set

²³⁷ Larry Bond, interview by author, tape recording, Springfield, Virginia, October 20, 2014. *Red Storm Rising*, 625.

²³⁸ *Red Storm Rising* 28.

²³⁹ *Ibid*, 628.

²⁴⁰ Paul Lettow, *Ronald Reagan and his Quest to Abolish Nuclear Weapons*, (New York: Random House, 2005), 4.

Your Clock to U-235” at a public rally in 1945 until Warner Brothers Studios intervened and prevented his attendance.²⁴¹ As he became more politically active, Reagan maintained his criticism of the role of nuclear weapons in policy. While conducting his shadow campaign for the Republican nomination in 1968, he compared mutually assured destruction to “two westerners standing in a saloon aiming their guns to each other’s head – permanently.”²⁴² Such a situation limited policy options and forced accommodations to what Reagan viewed as a toxic geopolitical standoff.

Reagan did not moderate his skepticism about nuclear weapons after assuming the presidency. In a December 1981 meeting with representatives from the Vatican, Reagan referred to nuclear weapons as “the last epidemic of mankind.”²⁴³ Speaking to U.S. troops in on a 1983 visit to Camp Liberty near the demilitarized zone in South Korea, he argued “a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought” and then promised to “continue to pursue one of the most extensive arms control programs in history.”²⁴⁴ His viewing of *The Day After*, a made-for-TV movie about the effect of a nuclear war on a small Kansas town, a month before this speech served to strengthen his resolve “to see there is never

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid, 23.

²⁴³ Henry Nau, *Conservative Internationalism: Armed Diplomacy Under Jefferson, Polk, Truman, and Reagan*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 178.

²⁴⁴ Ronald Reagan, “Remarks to American Troops at Camp Liberty Bell,” (Speech, Seoul, Korea, November 13, 1983)

a nuclear war.”²⁴⁵ Reagan’s dismissal of the concept of mutually assured destruction and unwillingness to accept that the only way to be safe from attack was to be vulnerable to it, led him to make the Strategic Defense Initiative a centerpiece of his security policy.²⁴⁶ The willingness to share the technological breakthroughs of the program with the Soviets harkens back to his early desire for the internationalization of atomic energy and speaks to his universal disdain for nuclear weapons.

Historians often paint a different picture of Reagan’s stance on nuclear weapons, with the most prevalent view arguing that Reagan experienced an epiphany in the latter half of his first term, which led to his anti-nuclear crusade. James Mann notes in *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan* that Reagan gave voters no notion that he favored abolition during his 1976 and 1980 campaigns.²⁴⁷ Instead, Reagan utilized harsh rhetoric about the Soviet Union, casting the Cold War into Manichean terms. This heightened tensions and appeared to make nuclear war more likely. A March 1982 poll reflects this sentiment, as forty-five percent of respondents answered that a nuclear war was more likely, while only eighteen percent felt the threat had decreased.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁵ Ronald Reagan *The Reagan Diaries* edited by Douglas Brinkley (New York: Harper Collins, 2009), 273

²⁴⁶ Lettow, 23.

²⁴⁷ Mann, 40.

²⁴⁸ Mary Thornton, “45% in Poll say Chance of Nuclear War on the Rise,” *The Washington Post* March, 24 1982.

Reagan's defense policy during his first term also seems to contradict any notion that he sought to eliminate nuclear weapons. Strategic forces received a significant increase in funding, as Reagan sought to modernize all three legs of the U.S. nuclear triad: ballistic missiles, bombers, and submarines. The administration launched five-point program to design a new Peacekeeper intercontinental ballistic missile, re-launch the B-1 bomber program, modernize the existing bomber force, improve the Trident missile launched by submarines, and develop a more robust command and control system.²⁴⁹ Reagan also endorsed a program to produce over 17,000 additional nuclear weapons by 1987, a significant increase over existing plans.²⁵⁰ The result of the program was that by 1985, U.S. nuclear forces were more lethal and technically advanced than at any previous point in U.S. history. The focus on strategic modernization in Reagan's first term presents a strong contrast to the focus on arms reduction in his second, which produces the tantalizing narrative of Reagan's sudden reversal that dominates the current historiography.

However, the shift in tone is less stark when viewed through the context of Reagan's vision of how to achieve peace. Reagan viewed military strength as essential to establishing peace, and identified establishing a "sound East-West

²⁴⁹ Briefing Book, "Selected National Security Issues" December 1985, Folder: Selected National Security Issues December 1985 [Copy 1], RAC Box 9, NSC Executive Secretariat: Trip File, Ronald Reagan Library.

²⁵⁰ Judith Miller, "Reagan Endorses Rise in Atomic Warheads by 380 Over Carter Goal," *The Washington Post*, March 22, 1982.

military balance” as “absolutely essential” to peace.²⁵¹ When he assumed office, Reagan and his national security advisors perceived a stark gap between the capabilities of the U.S. and the Soviet Union, which enabled the Soviets to pursue aggressive policies. NSDD-32 takes the “loss of U.S. strategic superiority” and the “overwhelming growth of Soviet conventional forces capabilities” as givens, indicative of a critical imbalance in strength.²⁵² Reagan blamed détente for the emergence of the disparity, and felt continuation of the policy would only weaken the U.S. and ensure continued Soviet gains. In one 1978 radio address, he stated that détente is “what a farmer has with his turkey, before Thanksgiving.”²⁵³ The only way peace with the Soviets was achievable would be to demonstrate an equal resolve and strength. This necessitated the creation of parity between the military capabilities of both states before entering into serious negotiations.

With regard to nuclear weapons, this meant that Reagan had to oversee an increase in U.S. strategic capability before attempting meaningful arms reductions. In his 1982 address at the commencement of Eureka College, Reagan identified the “growing instability of the nuclear balance” as the “main

²⁵¹ Ronald Reagan, “Address at Commencement Exercises at Eureka College,” (speech, Eureka, Illinois, May 9, 1982).

²⁵² National Security Decision Directive Number 32, available at <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/reference/Scanned%20NSDDS/NSDD32.pdf>

²⁵³ Mann, 23.

threat to peace posed by nuclear weapons today.”²⁵⁴ Just three months before Regan responded to calls for a nuclear freeze by agreeing that it was a good idea, but only after the U.S. achieved parity with the Soviet Union.²⁵⁵ In the press conference acknowledging his support for a future freeze Reagan went further, stating his “goal [was] to reduce nuclear weapons dramatically” and responding to a press question about the potential of winning a nuclear conflict by stating, “Everybody would be a loser if there is a nuclear war.”²⁵⁶ These comments came a full year and half before Reagan’s supposed conversion and indicate greater continuity in his anti-nuclear views than is commonly acknowledged.

Reagan’s strong anti-nuclear stance put him at odds with many of the leading voices in foreign policy and the Pentagon. Reagan would lament in his memoirs that many in the Pentagon still “claimed a nuclear war was winnable.”²⁵⁷ Following the near-breakthrough at Reykjavik, the Joint Chiefs approached Reagan and argued against continuing to pursue the elimination of nuclear weapons entirely. The Chiefs were unanimous in their view that the existing conventional deterrent force was inadequate and in their insistence that bringing it up to par would require an investment of “tens of billions of dollars” over a

²⁵⁴ “Address at the Commencement Exercises of Eureka College.”

²⁵⁵ Jack Nelson, “Reagan Urges Nuclear Freeze: But Only After U.S. Catches up with Russia,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 1, 1982.

²⁵⁶ Ronald Reagan, “The President’s News Conference,” (Press Conference, Washington D.C., March 31, 1982).

²⁵⁷ Mann, 42.

period of at least a decade.²⁵⁸ General John Wickham, the Army Chief of Staff, expressed significant reservations about the willingness of NATO allies to participate to the extent an all-conventional deterrent would require.²⁵⁹ John Poindexter, Reagan's National Security Advisor, reversed his earlier support for the Reykjavik proposal to eliminate all offensive nuclear weapons shortly after returning. He wrote to Reagan that eliminating all offensive ballistic missiles would return the U.S. to a situation similar to "that which [it] faced in the 1950s" leaving only a "chance" of stopping a conventional assault, rather than the strong deterrence the current arsenal represented.²⁶⁰

Others from the right lined up to attack Reagan's stance. Former president Richard Nixon and his Secretary of State Henry Kissinger wrote an op-ed for *The National Review* arguing that the proposed deal would reopen the "gap in deterrence of conventional attack" due to the inability of the U.S. to sufficient conventional power to match that of the Soviets.²⁶¹ Brent Scowcroft, the national security advisor to President Ford, also expressed deep reservations about the proposed deal, asserting that it might lead to "absolute disaster."²⁶²

²⁵⁸ Transcript, "JCS Meeting with the President," December 19, 1986, folder JCS Response-NSDD 250, 12/19/1986 (1 of 4), RAC Box 12, Robert Linhard Files, Ronald Reagan Library.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Memorandum, John Poindexter to Ronald Reagan, "Why We Can't Commit to Eliminating All Nuclear Weapons within 10 Years," October 16, 1986, RAC Box 3, Alton Keel Files, Ronald Reagan Library.

²⁶¹ Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger, "A Real Peace" *The National Review*, May 22, 1987, 34

²⁶² Mann, 47

Scowcroft had also discussed the potential of winning a nuclear war with Tom Clancy at a White House luncheon in March of 1985, where the two “differed a bit” about whether a “controlled nuclear war” was possible.²⁶³ Decades later, when Kissinger also publicly advocated for the abolition of nuclear weapons Scowcroft remained a sceptic, instead arguing nations should expend energy to reduce the likelihood of the weapons use.²⁶⁴ Not all the opposition came from the right. In the same issue of *The National Review*, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee Les Aspin, who would later be secretary of defense under Bill Clinton, argued that it would take another ten divisions in Europe to make the Reykjavik framework feasible.²⁶⁵ Opposition extended beyond the United States, as NATO allies expressed genuine concern about what a non-nuclear U.S. would mean for their security. U.S. Information Agency Director Charles Wick wrote Poindexter immediately following the conference to say that European stations were “amazed” at the sweeping nature of the proposals and that Europe feared the United States might be “strategically decoupled from Europe.”²⁶⁶ The sweeping proposals at Reykjavik brought swift and uniform

²⁶³ Clancy to Richards, March 8, 1985.

²⁶⁴ Bartholomew Sparraow, *The Strategist: Brent Scowcroft and the Call of National Security*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2015), 550.

²⁶⁵ George Will, “...Another Ten Divisions...” *The National Review*, May 22, 1987.

²⁶⁶ Memorandum, Charles Wick to John Poindexter, “SDI and INF Dominate Revitalized Strategic Debate in post-Reykjavik Europe,” October 17, 1986, folder Post-Iceland (3 of 4), RAC Box 2, Alton Keel Files, Ronald Reagan Library.

criticism; the United States could not afford to eliminate its nuclear weapons because without them, there was little hope of repelling a Soviet ground invasion.

Reagan expected the criticism the Reykjavik proposal elicited and tried to turn it to his advantage during the negotiations. As Reagan pleaded with Gorbachev to relent on SDI, Reagan stated that the “most out-spoken critics of the Soviet Union over the years, the so-called right-wing, and esteemed journalists” would react strongly against the ten-year framework to eliminate nuclear weapons.²⁶⁷ Reagan said the critics “were kicking his brains out” for considering the elimination of ballistic missiles, a problem Gorbachev did not have since he threw his critics in jail.²⁶⁸ Gorbachev wryly noted that if Reagan believed that he should check recent articles about Gorbachev in *Pravda* and refused to relent.²⁶⁹ Though Reagan’s appeal fell upon deaf ears, it demonstrates how well Reagan grasped the likely response to the sweeping proposals. Despite the expected outcry, Reagan was willing to move forward and engage in a difficult political battle to ratify an agreement to eliminate offensive ballistic missiles because he viewed the strategic situation in Europe differently from his critics. Reagan felt that by the fall of 1986, the conventional

²⁶⁷ “Memorandum of Conversation,” October 12 1986, FO006-11, WHORM : Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library.

²⁶⁸ Ibid

²⁶⁹ Ibid

forces of the United States and its allies were more than a match for their Soviet counterparts, making the ballistic missiles an unnecessary evil.

Reagan said as much to Nixon in an April 1987 meeting at the White House, arguing that the United States and NATO together had “enormous superiority over the Soviet Union.”²⁷⁰ For Reagan, this superiority came from the fact that both the combined gross domestic product and combined population of the West were greater those that of the Soviets. Reaching the point where Reagan had sufficient confidence in the conventional capacities of both the U.S. and its allies was the work of his first term.

As Reagan embarked on his reelection campaign, his administration began to trumpet the revitalization of the United States as a powerful global actor. While this is the norm in the public statements of a president seeking another term, the narrative’s presence in internal policy documents and insider discussions is particularly notable. A May 1984 National Security Council study of foreign policy priorities in the second term argued that Reagan’s actions over the previous four years had “greatly enhanced” both American military strength and the confidence of U.S. allies in the resolve and capacity of America to “protect the rights of free men and women everywhere.”²⁷¹ A December 1985

²⁷⁰ Mann, 54.

²⁷¹ Memorandum, “U.S. Foreign Policy a Look Ahead” May 18, 1984, Folder: Foreign Policy Background for President’s Trip to Europe-Notebook (1 of 2), RAC Box 8, NSC Executive Secretariat: Trip File, Ronald Reagan Library.

NSC review of selected national security issues began by lauding the administration's record over the previous five years as "one of progress and accomplishment."²⁷² It went on to argue that the "refurbishment of [U.S.] deterrent capability and strengthening of [U.S.] alliances" prevented Soviet aggressing despite Moscow's "frequent saber-rattling and truculence."²⁷³ The document also cited significant improvements in NATO's conventional defenses, highlighting the "better use of emerging technologies" as crucial to the effort.²⁷⁴ Crucially the document also engaged with the question of how to "maintain [U.S.] ability to deter attacks" despite the movement towards "lower levels of nuclear forces."²⁷⁵ In this area, the NSC determined the explicit objective of the U.S. should be to rely on an "increasing contribution" from "primarily non-nuclear systems."²⁷⁶

Deus Ex Machina

Developing the "non-nuclear systems" needed to wean the U.S. from nuclear deterrence was a major initiative of the first term of Reagan's presidency. The administration began construction of thirty-four new combat ships, acquired nearly four thousand new and state of the art M-1 Abrams tanks, and expanded support for new infantry fighting vehicles resulting in the Army's Bradley Fighting

²⁷² "Selected National Security Issues," December 1985.

²⁷³ Ibid

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

Vehicle and the Marines Light Armored Amphibious Vehicle.²⁷⁷ Additionally, the administration sought to expand aerial capabilities. During Reagan's first term, the Apache attack helicopter, Blackhawk support helicopter, and F-117 stealth fighter entered into service.²⁷⁸ Other investments in new armaments and communication systems meant that the U.S. military in 1986 was a more lethal and precise force than when Reagan assumed office. The NSC review cited each member of the JCS and all the Unified and Specified Commanders in Chief as stating that "by every measure of common sense" conventional military forces were more ready for combat than in 1980.²⁷⁹ This assessment by the major military commanders and his national security staff left Reagan with a strong sense that the U.S. military was now strong enough to forego offensive nuclear weapons, a sense that *Red Storm Rising* reinforced immediately before Reykjavik.

Clancy's books often place technology in a starring role, and *Red Storm Rising* is no exception. The new and in-development technology advanced by the Reagan administration plays a critical role in the narrative. Though still a classified program at the time of publication, the F-117 stealth fighter appears as the F-19a in a chapter titled "The Frisbees of Dreamland."²⁸⁰ The fighters wreak

²⁷⁷ "Selected National Security Issues," December 1985.

²⁷⁸ Ibid

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ *Red Storm Rising*, 162.

havoc on Soviet supply lines and radar sites throughout the novel, leading to serious logistics problems and establishing near-complete U.S. control of the skies in the early days of the war. The Abrams tank is almost entirely responsible for establishing a stalemate in Germany, despite the significant difference in the size of available forces between the Soviets and the West. During a critical exchange in the early days of fighting, a Soviet armored regiment faces a depleted U.S. tank company reinforced by a company of dismounted infantry. The resulting battle goes poorly for the Soviets due to effective integration of the U.S. tank with A-10 Warthogs, costing them nearly a third of their strength.²⁸¹ A conversation between Soviet commanders makes it clear that this is not an atypical battle. The implication of this is that the better weapons of the U.S. and its allies allowed them to destroy Soviet units at a ratio that approached ten to one, enough to nullify the feared Soviet advantage in conventional forces.

The allied forces are also able to synchronize their activities in a superior way to the Soviets thanks to the EWCS platform, which provided a highly accurate view of the battlefield. The result of this advantage is that NATO makes efficient use of its forces, an essential consideration when outnumbered. Friendly aircraft strike exactly when the Soviets mass, in one instance allowing

²⁸¹ *Red Storm Rising*, 324

just four aircraft to destroy a battalion of Soviet artillery. The Soviets are able to achieve a major breakthrough only when they dedicate all their available fighter aircraft to force the allied radar aircraft off station, providing a brief window to organize their attack.²⁸² The superior battlefield picture and technical ability to identify the location of transmissions also allows NATO to target command elements of the Soviet army to devastating effect. Clancy and Bond incorporated the precise targeting of enemy leadership into *Red Storm Rising*, an emerging doctrine at the time.²⁸³ Throughout the book, Soviet leaders alternate between awe and frustration about the capabilities of NATO forces, recognizing that they played a decisive role in the conflict.

The Value of Friends

The United States alone does not win Clancy's fictionalized Third World War. Though the United States plays the largest role, the contributions of NATO are crucial. NATO is able to secure its convoys by destroying a majority of the Soviet bombers that had previously heavily damaged a U.S. aircraft carrier. U.S. submarines deliver the deathblow, but this result comes only after a coalition that involves Britain and Norway tracks the bomber to their airbases.²⁸⁴ Similarly, a joint British-U.S. effort retakes Iceland, as British SAS are the first forces to

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Larry Bond Interview.

²⁸⁴ *Red Storm Rising*, 478.

return to the island and link up with the American squad that had eluded capture.²⁸⁵ Clancy consciously drew a stark contrast when depicting the relationship of Warsaw Pact nations, painting a confrontational, unproductive relationship.²⁸⁶ As the Soviets plan their initial advance into West Germany, East Germany understandably forbids the planned use of chemical weapons after reading a report detailing the likelihood that the chemicals would drift east back across the border.²⁸⁷ Politburo members would later lament that they were not able to use the weapons even though the “political cost” was “too great.”²⁸⁸ Additionally, there are few references to Warsaw Pact nations taking part in the fighting, and the Soviets bear nearly the entire burden of the war themselves. Clancy’s depiction of a strong NATO and uncertain Warsaw Pact fit in precisely with Reagan’s worldview.

Rehabilitating transatlantic ties was another early goal of the Reagan administration. The briefing paper Reagan received from the NSC for his 1984 trip overseas highlighted that while the situation was better than in 1980, the danger of “political and economic retrenchment” in Western Europe remained high and that the U.S. needed to combat “Europessimism” by pursuing policies to restore European political war to support U.S. Cold War policies.²⁸⁹ It further

²⁸⁵ Ibid, 491.

²⁸⁶ Larry Bond Interview

²⁸⁷ Ibid, 82.

²⁸⁸ Ibid, 627

²⁸⁹ “U.S. Foreign Policy a Look Ahead”

argued that “maintaining and strengthening the Atlantic Alliance [was] key to world prosperity and peace.”²⁹⁰ Just eighteen months later, the NSC review of key security issues argued that relations with European allies were “on a stronger and steadier course.”²⁹¹ It argued that the personal efforts by Reagan to build relationships with European leaders, the increase of military support to the continent, and increased economic outreach played significant roles in creating a better outlook for the alliance.²⁹² The report also noted some of the immediate dividends of the improved relationships, citing the renewal of basing rights in Spain, Portugal and Greece, agreements to restrict the trade of militarily valuable technologies with the Soviet Union, and increased allied outlays in defense spending as proof.²⁹³

There was also significant doubt within the administration about the strength of the Warsaw Pact and the extent to which Moscow could count on its client states in the event of war. In his book *Reagan and Gorbachev*, Jack Matlock, part of the National Security Council from 1983 until Reagan appointed him Ambassador to Moscow in 1987, recalls asking a military officer providing a security briefing where the Soviets would place Warsaw Pact nation units within

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ “Selected National Security Issues,” December 1985

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Ibid.

their military formations.²⁹⁴ The implication was that the Soviets could not count on their loyalty and would have to choose whether betrayal would come on their flank or from their rear. Reagan's doubt as to the support of Warsaw Pact nations for Soviet military efforts meant that calculating the military strength was not as simple as adding together the numbers available and instead required active consideration of exactly how hard the satellites would fight. These considerations only further muddied the perceived Soviet conventional advantage.

Identity Problems

A final important part of the appeal of *Red Storm Rising* to Reagan was in Clancy's portrayal of the difference between the Soviet system and the Russian people. Reagan detested the Soviet system but believed that the Russian people were victims of it rather than diehard loyalists and enemies of the U.S. He reflected this publicly in his January 1984 address to the nation, which included the story of a Russian and American couple meeting. Reagan includes in the speech a reference to his "openly expressed" distaste for the Soviet System but in Reagan's story, the Russian couple, Anya and Ivan, and the American couple, Jim and Sally, would not discuss the "differences between their respective

²⁹⁴ Jack Matlock, *Superpower Illusions: How Myths and False Ideologies Led America Astray and How to Return to Reality*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010)

governments” but rather would “touch on their ambitions and hobbies.”²⁹⁵ The story served to humanize the Russian people and place them in stark contrast to their government. Reagan concluded the speech by saying that if “the Soviet Government wants peace, then there will be peace,” demonstrating clearly whom he believed to be the aggressor in the Cold War.²⁹⁶

Matlock, who helped edit the Ivan and Anya speech, shared Reagan’s view of the split between people and system and sought to build upon this inclination of the president after joining the NSC.²⁹⁷ Matlock worked within government and brought in academics and writers from outside of Washington to provide a more complete view of the Russian people. Suzanne Massie was one of the writers Matlock brought in, and her book *Land of the Firebird: The Beauty of Old Russia* spoke strongly to Reagan. Much like with *Red Storm Rising* he read it immediately prior to a major summit, this time in Geneva in 1985, and viewed it as preparation for his talks with Gorbachev.²⁹⁸ Massie viewed the Russian people in a very positive light and would speak to Reagan often about them, even occasionally serving as a backchannel for communication with Moscow.²⁹⁹ A key difference between Reagan’s treatment of Clancy and

²⁹⁵ Ronald Reagan, “Address to the Nation and Other Countries on United States-Soviet Relations,” (Speech, Washington D.C., January 16, 1984)

²⁹⁶ “Address to the Nation and Other Countries on United States-Soviet Relations”

²⁹⁷ Jack Matlock Interview

²⁹⁸ Mann, 64.

²⁹⁹ Ibid, 64.

Massie is that while he saw Massie far more often and over a longer period, he did not publically endorse her books as he did with *Hunt for Red October*. This implies that he viewed Massie as a teacher and Clancy as a messenger.

Clancy shared Reagan and Massie's distinction between the Soviet system and the Russian people, and he wrote *Red Storm Rising* partly to reflect this.³⁰⁰ While some scenes depict Soviet callousness and cruelty, such as widespread execution of officers and the planned use of chemical and nuclear weapons, these practices come across as functions of the communist system rather than an indictment of the individual. There is a notable exception to this aspect of the book, which comes when Soviet paratroopers brutally gang rape a pregnant Icelandic woman before she is rescued by an American officer, who proceeds to extra judiciously execute the perpetrators. However, Clancy did not intend those actions to reflect upon the Russian people but rather to reflect the way the Soviet system treats those it forcibly subjugates. The Soviet protagonists, Sergetov and Alexseyev, both frequently express revulsion with the cruelty and inflexibility of their government's ways and eventually seize an opportunity to reform it.

Equally important to this sense are the pieces of Russian culture that Clancy chooses to include in the narrative. Just prior to the start of hostilities,

³⁰⁰ Larry Bond Interview.

Commander Robert Toland, an American intelligence analyst, notes the showing of *Battleship Potemkin* on Soviet television. He notes that the Moscow State Symphony and Chorus redid the audio, but that despite this there are over twenty uses of the words Russia or Russian, something he thought the Soviets were “trying to get away from.”³⁰¹ The passing reference raises the question of identity within the Soviet Union and points to a divergence between Soviet and Russian identities.

Clancy reinforces this point at the end of the novel with the meeting between Alexseyev and General Robinson, the Supreme Allied Commander of European Forces (SACEUR). Alexseyev is surprised to learn that Robinson speaks Russian, and Robinson explains it away by talking of his love for the plays of Anton Chekov.³⁰² Chekov’s plays often evoke questions of Russian identity. In particular, Chekov’s final play “The Cherry Orchard,” first performed in 1904, depicts strong conflict between traditional Russian values and the notion of Marxist modernity. The play often seems prescient in depicting the struggle over the future and the ultimate usurpation of traditional norms and values.³⁰³

George Kennan, the noted American strategist and author of the “Long Telegram,” also took a large part of his understanding of Russia from the works

³⁰¹ Red Storm Rising, 88.

³⁰² Ibid, 647.

³⁰³ Anton Chekov, “The Cherry Orchard” in *Plays* translated by Elisaveta Fen (London: Penguin, 1954).

of Chekov, even going as far as to identify a part of him as a “Chekovian self” which was “much more genuine than [his] American one.”³⁰⁴ Robinson follows up his admission of passion for Chekov’s plays by stating that after it inspired him to learn the language he went on to “read a good deal of Russian literature.”³⁰⁵ Again the emphasis is on Russian, rather than Soviet culture, highlighting the divide between the two identities.

The combination of anti-nuclear sentiment, military triumph through reliance on alliances and technology, and a sense that it is the system and not the people that are the problem gave *Red Storm Rising* significant appeal to Reagan. That Reagan read the 642-page novel within two months of its release speaks to this appeal. So too does the fact that Reagan not only spoke publicly about it, but also initiated conversations about it, despite his normal reluctance to discuss his reading. In many ways, *Red Storm Rising* was a fictionalized version of the administration’s own classified view of foreign relations; in particular, it almost perfectly embodies the central tenets of the NSC review of national security issues conducted in December of 1985. As such, it was the perfect vehicle to build popular support for the administration’s defense outlook. However, for *Red Storm Rising* to fill this role it meant that it could not rely overly

³⁰⁴ George Kennan, *The Kennan Diaries* edited by Frank Costigliola (New York: W. W. Norton and Co, 2014), 374.

³⁰⁵ *Red Storm Rising*, 647

heavily on suspension of disbelief. An overly fanciful story has dubious value from a policy standpoint, as critics could easily dismiss its arguments.

Rolling the Dice

Realism is an area where the Clancy novels excelled. Although they often made use of unconventional tactics, Clancy invested significant effort to make sure they were at least within the bounds of reality. *Red Storm Rising's* use of the container ship *Julius Fucik* provides a good example of this. In the book, the Soviets use the ship as a clandestine transport for an airborne regiment and its equipment and then use it to conduct an amphibious assault, which succeeds in capturing Iceland.³⁰⁶ There are few, if any, actual war plans that call for the use of commercial shipping to stage assaults. However, the *Julius Fucik* was an actual container ship used by Soviet shipping, allowing Clancy and Bond to use its real specifications to determine that it was possible for the ship to transport the regiment and all of its equipment and have enough space to stage operations.³⁰⁷ *The Hunt for Red October* contained a similar unconventional tactic, when the *Red October* finally escapes the *Konovalov*, its Alfa-class pursuer, by ramming it. Submarines generally do not seek to collide with one another; however, Clancy recognized that, based on the physical specifications of each submarine, the *Red October* would survive the encounter, leaving the

³⁰⁶ *Red Storm Rising*, 177.

³⁰⁷ Larry Bond Interview.

Konovalov in no condition to pursue. Clancy's use of seemingly farfetched scenarios largely came about from the demands of the plot, but the attention to ensuring the solution fell within the bounds of reality and prevented outright rejection of the book by educated readers.

Clancy's research into technical specifications lent his books a great degree of authority. Reagan noted the accuracy in his White House meeting with Clancy, asking the author how he achieved it. Clancy demurred in his answer, instead telling the president that the characters were the hard part.³⁰⁸ While this is likely true, Clancy did devote significant time to researching and fact checking technical details. As part of the research for *Red Storm Rising*, Clancy and Bond traveled to Vienna to talk internal Soviet politics with Arkady Shevchenko, who defected to the U.S. while serving as the UN undersecretary general.³⁰⁹ Clancy had previously called Shevchenko's book *Breaking with Moscow* "pure dynamite" for the way it described the Soviet system, and its influence on Clancy's work is evident.³¹⁰ The authors also went to Norfolk to discuss joint operations with NATO personnel stationed there, providing more authenticity to the way the allies interacted in the novel. Trips to military installations allowed the authors to observe fighter scramble procedures and the operation of M1 tanks, and Clancy

³⁰⁸ Clancy to Susan Richards, March 8, 1985.

³⁰⁹ Larry Bond interview

³¹⁰ Clancy to Susan Richards, March 8, 1985.

received a ride on a submarine.³¹¹ All of this contributed to the realism of the language used by soldiers and the way the novel depicts the weapons systems.

While the research trips and interviews contributed greatly to the realism of *Red Storm Rising*, the most important contributor was war-gaming. The novel is rooted in a war game conducted by the Center for Naval Analysis, a federally funded research and development center tied to the Navy. Larry Bond worked on the war-game, which analyzed how the U.S. would resupply Europe in the event of Soviet invasion. He mentioned it to Clancy, who then proposed that the two work together on a book about it.³¹² The book transformed the central findings of the war game into a narrative digestible by all.³¹³ Although the book's scope far exceeds that of the war game, the scenario it describes intentionally brought the supply issue and the naval war to the fore of the narrative.³¹⁴

The CNA war game was not the only one to have significant influence on the book. While still in the Navy, Larry Bond disliked the official, classified game used by the service, as in addition to design problems the secrecy of the game limited its utility. He designed a game called *Harpoon* as an alternative and ultimately marketed it through *Dungeons and Dragons* co-creator Dave Arneson's Adventure Games. Clancy purchased a copy as he researched *Hunt*

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Larry Bond Interview

³¹³ Peter Perla, interview by author, notes, October 23, 2014, Arlington, Virginia. Perla still works with the CNA and is referred to there as the "Peyton Manning of war gaming."

³¹⁴ Larry Bond Interview.

for *Red October* and wrote a laudatory letter to Bond, which was the start of their relationship.³¹⁵ *Harpoon* did more than introduce the co-authors and became a method for validating the scenarios used in *Red Storm Rising*. Most prominently, Clancy and Bond used it to fact check the chapter titled “The Dance of the Vampires,” in which Soviet bombers heavily damage an aircraft carrier, and the air battle over Keflavik.³¹⁶

The purpose of war gaming is not to identify what will happen but rather what could, allowing for games to serve as important analytical tools for military and civilian planners. In addition, as Peter Perla, a longtime CNA war gamer, notes, war games can have a “greater emotional impact” on participants than a simple discussion about a plan.³¹⁷ This is because individual decisions determine success or failure, forcing personal investment in the scenario. The resulting lessons then last longer because of the emotional tie. A novel can have a similar impact, since, if well done, it can force the reader to emotionally identify with the protagonist and form a more memorable connection to a given policy or situation. The realism of the account was central to the book's influence. Reagan reading the book before Reykjavik is deeply significant. Clancy's portrayal of the ability of NATO to successfully wage a limited World War III and

³¹⁵ Ibid

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Peter Perla Interview.

win reinforced the president's belief that nuclear weapons were unnecessary and far too dangerous to have a place in modern statecraft. The book is not why Reagan and Gorbachev nearly agreed to eliminate nuclear weapons at the conference, but it did provide Reagan with additional evidence that doing so would not undermine the American strategic position.

Chapter 4

Techno Thriller Rising: Clancy in the Wider World

In November of 2000, Tom Clancy guest starred on the television show *The Simpsons*. He appears at a panel for authors entitled “The Future of Reading,” along with fellow writers Amy Tan and Maya Angelou. During a question and answer phase Lenny, a drinking buddy of the main character, admits to being a “techno thriller junkie” and asks if rain makes the B-2 bomber more detectable.³¹⁸ As Clancy begins his answer, Lenny interrupts, admitting he intended the question for Angelou. A chagrined Clancy hands the microphone to the poet, who responds, “The ebony fighter awakens, dabbled with the beads of a dewy morn. It is a Mach 5 child, forever bound to suckle at the shriveled breast of Congress.”³¹⁹ The gag assumes a certain degree of knowledge about the writers involved. It is telling that the show’s writers viewed Clancy’s background and work as essentially common knowledge in order to create a joke based on subverting expectations.

By the late 1990s, Clancy became one of the most prominent voices on the military within the United States. In addition to his fiction, he co-wrote books

³¹⁸ “Insane Clown Poppy,” *The Simpsons* Fox, November 12, 2000

³¹⁹ Ibid.

with generals on tactics and strategy, wrote technical heavy descriptions of aircraft carriers and submarines, and licensed his name to two franchised novel series, *Net Force* and *Power Plays*. Combined with a series of movies and growing expansion into video games, it would be nearly impossible for an American adult to not have at least a vague familiarity with Clancy and the content of his work by the dawn of the new millennium. For many Americans, he introduced the newest military hardware and provided hints as to its capabilities and employment. Clancy's role became exactly what Reagan and Weinberger hoped it would be after reading *Hunt for Red October* and his continued prominence long after the Reagan administration left office helped ensure the survival of many core elements of its policy.

Weinberger and Clancy

Clancy had no more ardent acolyte within the Reagan administration than Caspar Weinberger, Reagan's long time Secretary of Defense. Following his service in World War II, which included time on General MacArthur's staff, Weinberger ventured into California politics, winning election to the California assembly for the first time in 1952. As he rose in the Republican Party in the state, he took on a side job as a book reviewer for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. He took up writing not for financial gain, as he was largely financial independent thanks to his success both as a politician and as lawyer, but rather because of the formative role reading played in his life.

In his memoir, *Fighting for Peace*, Weinberger recalls that he was fortunate to have access to a large number of books in his family's library and that he was a "rapid and avid reader."³²⁰ In particular, Winston Churchill's *The World Crisis* had a tremendous impact on the young Weinberger, helping to make him a lifelong anglophile. He even attempted to join the Royal Air Force in 1940, though poor depth perception prevented his recruitment. He did carry a copy of Churchill's book with him throughout the war, rereading it multiple times.³²¹ Weinberger credits Churchill for creating in him an understanding of peacetime readiness and the importance of public discourse in building and maintaining morale.³²² These themes would come to define his tenure as Secretary of Defense. It is likely that Weinberger took significant pride when he received word that Churchill read Weinberger's positive review of *A History of the English Speaking People's* and that the publisher opted to use a blurb from his review to advertise the book.³²³ Churchill remained a hero to Weinberger throughout his life, and upon his nomination to Secretary of Defense attempted to

³²⁰ Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace* 18.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Ibid, 20-21.

³²³ R.T. Bond to William Hogan, May 2 1956, Folder "Book Reviews 1948-1959," Box 891, The Papers of Caspar Weinberger, The Library of Congress
"All This and Churchill Too," Folder: "Book Reviews 1948-1959," Box 891, The Papers of Caspar Weinberger, The Library of Congress

borrow the National Portrait Gallery's painting of the British leader for display in his office.³²⁴

Reading helped form Weinberger's political identity as well. As a teenager, he came to believe that reading newspapers was an inadequate way to engage with political discussions. To remedy this, he wrote his Congressman and soon began receiving the *Congressional Record* and read it regularly, including sections containing speeches inserted to extend the record but actually delivered.³²⁵ His engagement in such a borderline masochistic behavior from a young age demonstrates how much value he placed on the written word.

Weinberger's career as a book reviewer lasted from 1948 until he joined Reagan in Sacramento in 1966. The bulk of the time was with the *San Francisco Chronicle*, where his reviews would appear on a weekly basis. At times Weinberger would also fill in for his editor Joseph Jackson, who had a syndicated column that also ran in the *Los Angeles Times*. Weinberger generally reviewed books on military history, politics, and British history, unsurprisingly given his interests. He also showed a fondness for biographies, to the extent that his former editor William Hogan reached out to him to provide a review of *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt* in 1979.³²⁶ After Edmund Morris became Regan's official

³²⁴ Kay Liesz to Caspar Weinberger, July 17, 1981, Box 599, The Papers of Caspar Weinberger, The Library of Congress.

³²⁵ Weinberger, 3.

³²⁶ William Hogan to Caspar Weinberger, January 23, 1979, , Folder "Book Reviews 1948-1959," Box 891, The Papers of Caspar Weinberger, The Library of Congress.

biographer, Weinberger sent a copy of his earlier review to the author, expressing his deep admiration for the work.³²⁷

As Secretary of Defense, Weinberger continued his voluminous reading. He was a participant in a history book of the month program, and routinely ordered multiple books at a time through the program.³²⁸ His interests largely remained centered on British History and World War II. He also avidly read newspapers and demonstrated a keen interest in ensuring the administration's positive portrayal within them. Weinberger wrote an angry response to the editors of *The Washington Post* after a David Broder column accused the administration of subverting the Constitution.³²⁹ He also engaged in less lofty discourse that had broader appeal when he responded to Ann Landers in her column. Landers previously published a letter critical of waste and overspending in the Pentagon, prompting the secretary to lament to her that he wished people would focus more attention "to the remedial steps" the Pentagon recently employed to cut waste.³³⁰ While on the surface it seems silly for the sitting Secretary of Defense to engage with a syndicated advice columnist, the letter

³²⁷ Caspar Weinberger to Edmund Morris, November 24, 1987, Part III Box 43, The Papers of Caspar Weinberger, The Library of Congress.

³²⁸ Book Order Form, April 15, 1985, Box 596, The Papers of Caspar Weinberger, The Library of Congress

³²⁹ Caspar Weinberger to The Editor of the Washington Post, June 24, 1983, Box 596, The Papers of Caspar Weinberger, The Library of Congress

³³⁰ Ann Landers, "Wife's Sickness Doesn't End Vows," October 22, 1984, Box 600, The Papers of Caspar Weinberger, The Library of Congress

represented a way to extend the administrations message to a broader demographic and continue to shape public opinion in non-conventional ways.

Weinberger viewed fiction as a way to shape public opinion positively and took extra efforts to work with authors he favored. In 1984, he agreed to work with Allen Drury, author of *Advise and Consent*, on a book about the Pentagon. Weinberger knew Drury work from his days as a book reviewer, and provided favorable reviews of *Advise and Consent* and *A Senate Journal*.³³¹ Drury reached out to Weinberger in January of 1984 about meeting to discuss his new book idea, saying he knew that Weinberger “would want to know what [Drury] had in mind” for the project.³³² He closed the letter praising the work done by the administration to date. Weinberger agreed and his secretary set up a meeting with Drury to discuss the book.³³³ The meeting went well, and Weinberger then agreed to allow Drury to shadow him and arranged for a building pass to the Pentagon to allow the author to conduct further research.³³⁴ The resulting novel, *Pentagon*, attempted to demonstrate the dangers of bureaucracy and waste but failed to overcome dismal reviews to have any significant popular impact.

³³¹ William Hogan, “Clark Kerr Speaks on the University,” *The San Francisco Chronicle*, October 30, 1963.

³³² Allen Drury to Caspar Weinberger, January 5, 1984, Box 600, The Papers of Caspar Weinberger, The Library of Congress.

³³³ Caspar Weinberger to Allen Drury, date unknown, Box 600, The Papers of Caspar Weinberger, The Library of Congress

³³⁴ Caspar Weinberger to Allen Drury, April 24, 1984, Box 600, The Papers of Caspar Weinberger, The Library of Congress.

However, Weinberger's active involvement in the project demonstrated his faith that Drury, a Pulitzer Prize winning author and a conservative who Weinberger knew and respected, could influence public opinion to assist him in reforming the Pentagon.

Weinberger took the opportunity to return to his role as book reviewer when the *Time Literary Supplement* reached out to him to review a work of fiction that deserved "to be better known."³³⁵ His secretary then passed him a copy of *Hunt for Red October* and recommended he review it, noting that she had "it on good authority that our big boss across the river thoroughly enjoyed" it and that Reagan was "almost singlehandedly responsible for its zoom to the top of the Best Sellers list."³³⁶ Weinberger took his secretary's advice and provided the *Time Literary Supplement* with a glowing review that *The Wall Street Journal* also published. In the review, Weinberger praised the "vast and accurate" technical detail and argued that it contained "many lessons" for "those who want to keep the peace."³³⁷

Weinberger did not review Clancy's second book, *Red Storm Rising*, though he does make favorable mention of it in his later writings.³³⁸ Other

³³⁵ Jeremy Treglown to Caspar Weinberger, August 9, 1985, Box 596, The Papers of Caspar Weinberger, The Library of Congress.

³³⁶ Kay Liesz to Caspar Weinberger, August 14, 1985, Box 596, The Papers of Caspar Weinberger, The Library of Congress.

³³⁷ Caspar Weinberger, "Caspar Weinberger," *Times Literary Supplement* October 18, 1985.

³³⁸ Caspar Weinberger, "Patriot Games," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 5, 1987.

reviewers, however, made note of the book's focus on Weinberger's influence in the Pentagon. The *New York Times* review of the book notes that "there is particularly good news" in it "for Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger."³³⁹ The good news is that "American technology works" and the review then provides a litany of current Pentagon programs that succeed in Clancy's World War III. Even the title of the review "Virtuous Men and Perfect Weapons," suggests that the book embraces the programs and objectives of the Weinberger Pentagon.

Clancy's third book, *Patriot Games*, also appealed to Weinberger, and he again took the time to review the book for *The Wall Street Journal*. He noted that the book depicts technological capabilities "up to the limit of declassified information" and that "authenticity, and hence believability" are the hallmark of Clancy's work.³⁴⁰ Putnam, Clancy's publisher, used a portion of the review Weinberger's blurb that the book reached "a high pitch of excitement" on the cover of future editions, lending the appearance of official sanction to the work. Weinberger likely intended this as readers of *Patriot Games* would be imbibing the most closely held policy beliefs of the soon to depart cabinet member.

The most telling book review Weinberger authored while Secretary of Defense is his 1986 review of Robert Ludlum's *The Bourne Supremacy*. He

³³⁹ Robert Lekachman, "Virtuous Men and Perfect Weapons," *The New York Times*, July 27, 1986.

³⁴⁰ Weinberger, "Patriot Games"

actually reached out to *The Wall Street Journal* before the book's publication and requested the opportunity to review it.³⁴¹ This implies a level of foreknowledge about the themes of the book, and given the negative nature of Weinberger's review the existence of antipathy towards *The Bourne Identity*, the first book in the series. The review is among the harshest that Weinberger produced in his career. Weinberger criticized the "weak characterization" and complained that too many of the characters in the book are "one-dimensional."³⁴² The criticism of wooden characters was particularly ironic, given Weinberger's effusive praise for Clancy's characters. The general critical consensus around Clancy's work accuses the author of the same bland characterization that Weinberger ascribes to Ludlum. Weinberger revealed the true source of his irritation with Ludlum's characters later in the review. He noted, "The required LeCarre syndrome" has "full reign," and complained that Ludlum took extra effort to show "those on our side are also guilty of several violations of good conduct."³⁴³ It was the suggestion that American agents were anything less than Clancy's paragons of virtue that offended Weinberger.

³⁴¹ Claudia Rosett to Caspar Weinberger, February 18, 1986, Part III: Box 43, The Papers of Caspar Weinberger, The Library of Congress.

³⁴² Caspar Weinberger, "The Bourne Supremacy," *The Wall Street Journal*, The Caspar Weinberger Papers, The Library of Congress.

³⁴³ Weinberger, "Bourne Supremacy"

The sole positive that he found in the work was that the character of Marie was able to draw Bourne back “to necessary government service.”³⁴⁴ In addition, Weinberger noted, in what is an immense understatement, that some characters demonstrate “reasonably skilled espionage talents.”³⁴⁵ However, despite the “considerable compulsive fascination” Ludlum creates and the author’s impressive “narrative skill to keep one turning the pages,” Weinberger petulantly noted that the *Bourne Supremacy* was “a book that one can put down [emphasis Weinberger’s].”³⁴⁶ He concluded the review by seeking an answer for Ludlum’s popularity. What Weinberger most feared about the book was that people would read it and “may really think this [was] the way the government’s business [was] done.”³⁴⁷ The sentiment reveals that Weinberger’s true concern with the book was that it may undermine the positive shifts in popular attitudes towards the government and he thus felt compelled to attack the book with a review that stretched the reader’s credulity in the reviewer’s impartiality.

Weinberger’s emphasis on the importance of fiction in political discourse continued after he left office. Angered by the defense policy pursued by the Clinton Administration, Weinberger sought to warn the American people about the consequences of the deterioration of American strength the policy

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

engendered. Writing to Margaret Thatcher asking her to write the forward to his forthcoming book, he noted the project came about because the U.S. let its “defense stagnate.”³⁴⁸ Interestingly, Weinberger choose to convey his warning through a series of “fictional war games” rather than a standard policy centric book. He argues in the introduction that fiction was often better at “exposing threats as well as exposing our own limitations.”³⁴⁹ The vignettes that follow are a throwback to the Reagan administration for the way they advocate for missile defense, advanced military technology, and ensuring the quality and training of members of the military.

The pre-publication publicity effort for *The Next War* reveals that the roles of Clancy and Weinberger reversed in the decade after the publication of *Patriot Games*. Weinberger now turned to Clancy for a blurb praising the former defense secretary’s fiction. Peter Schweizer, the book’s coauthor, noted that they had saved “the entire back of the dust jacket” for Clancy’s comments.³⁵⁰ The authors saved a significant amount of space despite already having comments from Margaret Thatcher, Henry Kissinger, and Gen. Jack Vessey in hand that proved more substantial than what Clancy ultimately supplied. Despite

³⁴⁸ Caspar Weinberger to Margaret Thatcher, June 25, 1996, Part III: Box 41, The Caspar Weinberger Papers, The Library of Congress.

³⁴⁹ Caspar Weinberger and Peter Schweizer, *The Next War* (Washington DC: Regnery Publishing, 1996), xxiv.

³⁵⁰ Peter Schweizer to Tom Clancy, August 20, 1996, Part III: Box 41, The Caspar Weinberger Papers, The Library of Congress.

this, Clancy's comments still received the most prominent placement on the cover. This is because for many Americans, particularly ones likely to purchase a book by Weinberger, Clancy was now the leading voice on defense issues.

Clancy and the Pentagon

Caspar Weinberger was not the only fan of Tom Clancy working on the south side of the Potomac. Uniformed service members eagerly embraced Clancy's work and were an important driver of *Hunt for Red October's* early sales. Military support for the novel buttressed its credibility and authenticity, which benefitted both Clancy and the armed forces. The Pentagon supported Clancy's novels for the same reasons that Reagan and Weinberger did, they built support for the military and cast investments in new weapons and technology in a positive light.

The Navy was among the earliest supporters of Clancy's work and actively sought to legitimize his efforts. In February of 1985, they invited Clancy to the Pentagon for a lunch to discuss the book. Prior to the meal, Vice Admiral Nils Thurman, the deputy Chief Naval Officer for Submarine Warfare, with a large plaque and the intersecting brass dolphins of a submariner.³⁵¹ In his letter thanking Reagan for the White House invitation, Clancy counted his honorary induction as a submariner as one of the three most meaningful events that came

³⁵¹ Clancy to Richards, March 8, 1985.

from writing the book.³⁵² Six admirals attended the lunch that followed, demonstrating the amount of support for the novel in the upper reaches of the Navy. In addition, he told Clancy that every officer attending the Prospective Command Course, the course that trained all future submarine captains, would receive a copy of his book.³⁵³

Red Storm Rising also received a warm official reception from the Navy. That it was a fictionalization of a Department of the Navy sponsored war game likely contributed, along with the essential role that the Navy plays in winning the fictional World War III. The Naval War College included the book in its curriculum shortly after its publication, which further blurred the line between work of fiction and government document. The syllabus for “Ops-Session 2” refers to *Red Storm Rising* as a war game, and asserts that it is a “very true to life story.” It also lauds the book’s portrayal of “coordination between services as well as allies,” use of technology, and the politics involved in beginning and ending wars.³⁵⁴ The stated objectives for the case study included introduction of “officers to various maritime, national, and alliance strategies,” to demonstrate the importance of “joint and combined operations,” and to “evaluate military decisions.” The audience for the coursework consisted primarily of senior

³⁵² Clancy to Reagan.

³⁵³ Clancy to Richards, February 5, 1985.

³⁵⁴ “OPS Session 2—Red Storm Rising: A Case Study,” U.S. Naval War College, Personal Papers of Larry Bond.

officers in both the U.S. and allied navies with the potential to command large ships and advance to the highest ranks of their respective services.

The Navy worked with Clancy prior to the publication of *Red Storm Rising*. He and his co-author Larry Bond were able to interact with the staff of the Supreme Allied Command Atlantic (SACLANT) in Norfolk, Virginia, as research for the book. Clancy recounts his interactions with the SACLANT director of public affairs as a real pleasure, and Bond recalls that the trip significantly contributed to the accuracy of the book.³⁵⁵ In particular, Clancy enjoyed the opportunity to work with British officers, who seemed to talk tactics more and talked “a little more freely” in general than their American counterparts did.³⁵⁶ The favorable reception from British officers also showed the growing international support for Clancy’s writing, particularly within Britain and other NATO members.

The full magnitude of the Navy’s support for Clancy becomes apparent in the debate over the 1990 National Defense Authorization Act. Appearing before a subcommittee of the House Armed Service Committee, Vice Admiral Daniel Cooper, the assistant-CNO for Undersea Warfare faced a question about a recent Clancy article that stated that the British provided superior training for their

³⁵⁵ Clancy to Richards, February 5, 1985
Author Interview with Larry Bond.

³⁵⁶ Clancy to Richards, February 5, 1985

submariners than the Americans. The questioner, Representative Norman Sisisky, noted that Clancy had “a big following as a big naval expert” and wanted to provide the admiral an opportunity to rebut the author.³⁵⁷ Cooper understandably disagreed with Clancy’s article, and mentioned that he had been waiting for an opportunity to correct the record. However, even in criticizing the author, Cooper also sought to praise him. He stated, “There is nobody I like more than Tom Clancy,” and called him a “fine individual” and a “real patriot.”³⁵⁸ Cooper went further, arguing that because he “love[s] Tom Clancy” and the author did “a lot for the submarine force” it was particularly discouraging to see such criticism.³⁵⁹ During Cooper’s response, Representative Duncan Hunter interjected that Clancy helped “the Navy immensely,” and drew rapid agreement from the admiral.³⁶⁰

Even as he argued against the issues that Clancy raised, Cooper sought to show the criticism as the result of differing interpretations and opinions rather than a lack of expertise. Cooper differed with Clancy on the amount of conservatism that the Navy encouraged in its submarine commanders. However, he framed his remarks in a way that did not directly refute Clancy.

³⁵⁷ “Hearings on National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1990—H.R. 2461 and Oversight of Previously Authorized Programs,” (Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1990), 333.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 335.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 333.

Instead, Cooper focused on the intense training that submarine officers received and argued that the “strict process” led to the selection of the “smartest people” that he could “possibly find.”³⁶¹ The indirect engagement of Clancy’s critiques left the author’s expertise intact on the public record and avoided damage to an asset that the Navy viewed as important to its public affairs battle.

Clancy’s friends in the military extended beyond the Navy, and he could count on having access to flag officers in any of the services. He struck up a particularly close relationship with General Colin Powell. The two meet at a 1988 awards ceremony in Nashville while Powell was serving as Reagan’s National Security Advisor. Powell remembered that the two “hit it off right away” since Clancy was “deeply involved in military affairs” and Powell was “a soldier.”³⁶² The two stayed in touch over the years, and Powell introduced Clancy to his second wife, Alexandra Llewellyn, who was also Powell’s cousin. Upon Clancy’s death, Powell noted that he had lost a “dear friend.”

The friendship also had professional benefits. Clancy credits Powell in the acknowledgements of *Clear and Present Danger* for giving him the idea for the novel.³⁶³ The idea stemmed from conversations between the two “about the work the military was doing in South America to cut the flow of drugs.”³⁶⁴ At the

³⁶¹ Ibid, 334.

³⁶² Eliza Gray, “Colin Powell Remembers Tom Clancy,” *Time*, October 2, 2103.

³⁶³ Tom Clancy, *Clear and Present Danger*, New York: Putnam, 1989.

³⁶⁴ Gray, “Colin Powell Remembers Tom Clancy

time of the conversation, Powell was still serving as National Security Advisor and would have significant knowledge of anti-drug efforts and a desire to build favorable opinion about the military operations in order to rehabilitate the NSA after Iran-Contra and maintain public support for military operations in South and Latin America.

Clancy on the Hill

Clancy books quickly became favored props and rhetorical devices for Congressmen pressing for increased military spending. Shortly after the release of *Red Storm Rising*, Senator Dan Quayle held a copy aloft, rhetorically his colleagues if they had read the book. If they had, he continued, then they would realize that ““ASAT technology is what wins the war.”³⁶⁵ Congressman Walter Jones of North Carolina made similar use of the novel as he introduced a bill to expand the Merchant Marine. He noted the key role of shipping in the book, and argued that its portrayal of the importance of the Merchant Marine had “more impact than all the charts and graphs [Congress] could put together.”³⁶⁶

Clancy’s fiction also impressed Newt Gingrich. Just a week after the release of *Red Storm Rising*, he held it up in a floor debate as the “best single

³⁶⁵ Walter Hixson, “Red Storm Rising: Tom Clancy Novels and the Cult of National Security,” *Diplomatic History*, Volume 17, Issue 4, October 1993.

³⁶⁶ Walter Jones, “Introduction of a Bill to Amend the Merchant Marine Act, 1936,” *Congressional Record*, December 19, 1987, 36671.

illustration of how a major conflict would work in the real world.”³⁶⁷ He then went on to quote from length from the book and used it as the centerpiece of his argument for more investment in anti-satellite technology. He felt that the book showed that “opposition to anti-satellite technology may well be the most irrational position on the left this week.”³⁶⁸ Gingrich was not just using Clancy’s work for publicity or an attempt to tie himself to a popular piece of culture. Soon after publication, Gingrich invited Clancy and Bond to lunch at the Capitol, and the co-authors engaged in a series of informal discussions with Congressmen about defense policy.³⁶⁹ When answering a question from then-Congressman Dick Cheney about the capabilities of the Russian Navy, Larry Bond was surprised to discover the future Secretary of Defense and Vice President was studiously taking notes.³⁷⁰ Interactions like this were common, nearly impossible to trace, and can play a large but unacknowledged role in shaping how people view the world.

Congressional representatives made use of more than just Clancy’s fiction. Articles written by the author frequently appeared in congressional debate, and members took every opportunity to reference Clancy’s work and insert it into the record. The exchange between Admiral Cooper and

³⁶⁷ Newt Gingrich, “National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1987,” *Congressional Record* August 13, 1986, 21173.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁹ Larry Bond Interview.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

Representatives Sisisky and Hunter explored previously in this chapter demonstrated the care with which they handled disagreements with the author, as all three professed their respect for Clancy's expertise and all he had done for the Navy. Conservative hawks in particular embraced Clancy and sang his praises from the floor.

Senator Jesse Helms, a prominent conservative who played a significant role in Reagan's election, referred to a letter that Clancy wrote him while speaking against a proposal to share research and development of new weapons with Japan. Helms noted that he had the "privilege to attend the Army-Navy game" with the author and found him a "thoughtful and reflective man" who understood "the importance of U.S. leadership in technology."³⁷¹ Helms then quoted a letter Clancy wrote to the Business and Industrial Council that not only spoke out against the proposed technology sharing, but also questioned how the U.S. could "refer to Japan as an ally." He argued that an "alliance is an exchange of services and interests" and that Japan was not doing its part. Thus, if wanted "some good fighter planes" then they should "purchase the planes, for cash, just as [Clancy] purchased Nikon cameras and Sony electronics."³⁷² After

³⁷¹ Jesse Helms, "Disapproving the Export of Technology to Co-Develop or Co-Produce the FSX Aircraft with Japan," *Congressional Record- Senate*, May 16, 1989, 9220

³⁷² *Ibid.*

inserting the letter into the record, Helms noted that he had nothing to add to it and that it reflected the sentiments of the American people.

Use of Clancy was not limited to Republicans, however. Representative Thomas Downey, a Democrat from New York, spoke after Gingrich in the debate on anti-satellite technology. Referring to the previous marks, he noted they were “a remarkable argument, based on fiction” in favor of the technology.³⁷³ Downey admitted that he was not sure if this was a case of “life imitating art or fiction imitating reality,” but in either case he was sure that “there was no clearer example” of how “arms control has enhanced U.S. security than in the ASAT program.”³⁷⁴ However, Downey disagreed with the contention that the program needed more funding, arguing that the present Soviet capability was a “model-T compared to the ASAT that [the US] could deploy.”³⁷⁵ The implication of Downey’s statement is that he accepted Clancy’s portrayal as realistic and as proof that it required no further investment.

Robert Dornan, a Republican representative from California, entered the debate on the side of Gingrich. He began with a reference to Homer’s *The Odyssey* implying that ASAT would serve as Ulysses’ wooden stake that he used

³⁷³ Thomas Downey, “National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1987,” *Congressional Record* August 13, 1986, 21174.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid*

³⁷⁵ *Ibid*.

to blind Polyphemus and protect his men.³⁷⁶ Dornan then returned to the example of convoy security that Gingrich used to argue for more investment in the technology. Although he did not directly reference Clancy, he accepted the original metaphor and then expanded upon it with a literary reference of his own.

Dornan also made direct use of Clancy on the floor of the House. In a statement supporting the Strategic Defense Initiative, he included a recent *Wall Street Journal* article written by Clancy.³⁷⁷ The article equates opponents of SDI with Luddites and criticizes a recent Office of Technology Assessment report that argued that the technology would never work. Dornan stated that this was “the best analogy” he had heard on the issue, and enjoined his colleagues to “read Mr. Clancy’s commentary and contemplate his analysis.”³⁷⁸ The frequent reference to Clancy within the halls of Congress shows the benefit of the narrative structure that the author used. It made questions of technology more accessible and understandable and as a result found itself at the center of debates about U.S. defense spending.

Clancy and the Public

Though commonly hailed as the first “techno-thriller,” *Hunt for Red October* was not the first of its kind. Instead, British General Sir John Hackett’s

³⁷⁶ Robert Dornan, “National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1987,” *Congressional Record* August 13, 1986, 21174.

³⁷⁷ Robert Dornan, “OTA-The Home of Modern Day Luddites,” *Congressional Record* April 28, 1988, 9484.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

The Third World War: August 1985 is the first modern example of the genre. Published in 1978, the book is remarkably similar to *Red Storm Rising*. As the title suggests it depicts a World War III scenario, and as in Clancy's war game naval power plays a decisive role in ensuring the survival of Western Europe and the victory of NATO. The book also ends with a coup in Moscow against hardliners; however, in Hackett's book this takes place after a limited nuclear exchange that sees the Soviets destroy Birmingham and NATO destroy Minsk. Hackett wrote the book with an express political purpose, as a retired general he and his co-authors, a group of similarly retired flag officers, felt that the conventional deterrent in Western Europe was insufficient to deter Soviet aggression. The concluding chapter of the book notes that "if the crisis of 1985 had occurred in 1977" it would be "scarcely conceivable the Soviet plan...could have failed."³⁷⁹

The early draft of the book actually had the Soviets winning easily due to the continued "damage of the locust years" of the 1970s.³⁸⁰ However, after consulting with colleagues still on active service Hackett realized such a narrative would "cause more harm than good."³⁸¹ He then changed the state of world

³⁷⁹ John Hackett, *The Third World War: August 1985*, (New York: MacMillan, 1978)

³⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 138.

³⁸¹ Stephen Webbe, "World War III: A Novel Warning," *The Christian Science Monitor*, August 7, 1980.

powers that underlined the novel to depict a rushed rearmament beginning in 1978. The crash program proves just enough to fend off the Soviet assault.

The Third World War became a bestseller in paperback form, debuting on *The New York Times* list in the ninth position on June 1, 1980.³⁸² Berkley Books published the paperback version, and its success likely influenced their decision to buy the rights to Clancy's first book prior to its publication. Universal also purchased the movie rights, though a film never made its way into production.³⁸³ The book also received attention in the Soviet Union, where newspapers accused Hackett of allowing the use of his name on what was in reality a report authored by NATO.³⁸⁴ Like *Hunt for Red October*, *The Third World War* found its way into the hands of world leaders. British Prime Minister James Callaghan read the book and felt it important enough to share with President Jimmy Carter, who also reportedly enjoyed it.³⁸⁵ Hackett's book also served as an inspiration to and influence on Clancy's writing. Larry Bond recalls discussing the book with Clancy as they worked on *Red Storm Rising* and Clancy quotes Hackett before the prologue of *Clear and Present Danger*.³⁸⁶

However, Hackett did not find the same lasting success that Clancy did. Despite credentials and access that outstripped Clancy and the use of a similar

³⁸² "Paperback Best Sellers: Trade," *The New York Times*, June 1, 1980.

³⁸³ Webbe, "World War III: A Novel Warning"

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ Larry Bond interview with Author, October 20, 2014. *Clear and Present Danger*.

message, *The Third World War* would be his only bestselling thriller. A sequel released in 1982 flopped critically and commercially, and Hackett shifted from writing novels to writing history. There are many reasons why Clancy found more lasting success as the writer of thrillers than Hackett. Most importantly, Clancy's narrative skills are much better. *The Third World War* lacks central characters, routinely incorporates military reports, and uses enough jargon to make the book somewhat inaccessible. Reviewers of *The Third World War: The Untold Story*, the 1982 sequel, also noted numerous inaccuracies in the use of weapons systems and noted that the "rush of events" made much of Hackett's work anachronistic.³⁸⁷ The harsh criticism of American tactics and organization likely did not help its reception, nor did the criticism of the number of women in the US military. In just four years, Hackett allowed his work to become a relic, something that Clancy avidly worked to avoid. *The Third World* also did not receive the same level of official support that *Hunt for Red October* did. Hackett did not receive invitations to White House events, there were no prominent officials positively reviewing it, and Carter's endorsement came from hearsay rather than the explicit and enthusiastic way that Reagan endorsed Clancy.

What the success of Hackett's book does show, is that by 1980 the American public welcomed the shift in the portrayal of national security in culture

³⁸⁷ Fred Haynes, "War Games Superpowers Play," *The Washington Post*, October 24, 1982.

that Reagan was advocating. Deborah Grosvenor, the editor of *Hunt for Red October*, argues that the book's success is due in large part to its timing.³⁸⁸ Had Clancy submitted the book in mid-1970s or mid-1990s she believes that it would not have exploded into the public consciousness in the way that it did. The “new spirit” that Reagan referred to in his West Point address did exist, and it had a profound impact on the cultural portrayal of the Cold War.³⁸⁹

In 1985 as *Hunt for Red October* ascended the best seller's list, two Sylvester Stallone films demonstrated a resurgent nationalism as they dominated at the box office. Only *Back to the Future* would out gross *Rambo: First Blood Part II* and *Rocky IV* in 1985, and both movies would earn more than 125 million at the box office.³⁹⁰ Both the *Rambo* and *Rocky* movies feature the titular hero prevailing over a Soviet villain (Ivan Drago in *Rocky* and Lt. Col. Podovsky in *Rambo*) as a way of reasserting American superiority in the Cold War. In 1986, the trend in cinema continued as *Top Gun* ruled the box office earning over 175 million during its theatrical run.³⁹¹ It would be fair to view *Top Gun* as a two-hour long recruitment video for the Navy, and it certainly demonstrates the Clancy themes of superior people and weapons as the way to defeat communist aggression.

³⁸⁸ Deborah Grosvenor interview with author, November 11, 2014.

³⁸⁹ Reagan, Address at Commencement Exercises of the United States Military Academy, May 21, 1981.

³⁹⁰ “1985 Domestic Grosses,” boxofficemojo.com

³⁹¹ “1986 Domestic Grosses,” boxofficemojo.com

The trend towards positive portrayal of US foreign policy and military operations was not universal. In addition to *Top Gun*, 1986 also saw the release of the Oliver Stone directed *Platoon*, which won Best Picture and grossed over 130 million at the box office. The movie portrays an amoral, mission-less military in Vietnam, and evokes the movies that the first draft of Reagan's West Point speech criticized. Graphic novels also offered a counterpoint to the jingoism and militarism of the Reagan administration. The 1986-87 comic run of *Watchmen* by Alan Moore imagines a Nixon administration that stretches into the 1980s and shows streets riddled with crime and domestic problems that the White House ignores as it provokes the Soviet Union. Throughout the series, the famed "Doomsday Clock" of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists ticks closer to zero, causing the stories villain to fabricate an alien threat and destroy major cities across the globe to force the two sides to come to peace.³⁹² Frank Miller's 1986 *Dark Knight Returns* features Ronald Reagan miscalculating the importance of Corto Maltese, a stand in for Grenada, to the Soviets, prompting a nuclear exchange. Reagan appears on television glad in a full protective suit and laments that the Soviets are "bad losers" as he enters his bunker.³⁹³ Superman prevents the missile from destroying American forces on the island, and Miller uses the next page of panels to demonstrate the horrifying effects of a nuclear

³⁹² Alan Moore, *Watchmen*, (New York: DC Comics, 1987)

³⁹³ Frank Miller, *The Dark Knight Returns* (New York: DC Comics, 1986)

detonation on the representative of truth, justice, and the American Way.

Although not culturally insignificant, movies like *Platoon* and graphic novels like *Watchmen* and *Dark Knight Rises* did not reflect the mainstream in the same way that movies like *Rambo*, *Rocky*, and *Top Gun* did.

What set Clancy's work apart from popular movies like the *Rambo* and *Rocky* series and cult classics like *Red Dawn* was the realism of the books. The planes used in *Top Gun* did not actually exist, but everything in *Red Storm Rising* was real. Thus, his books served to both entertain and educate. Clancy's books did this in large numbers, and it would be difficult for someone to escape consuming some aspect of Clancy's work during the 1980s. The success of the hardcover version of *Hunt for Red October* led Berkley Books to order a first print run of 800,000 copies and would ultimately sell over three million copies of the book.³⁹⁴ *Red Storm Rising* was an immediate commercial success, debuting on the *New York Times* bestseller list at number two, behind Danielle Steele's *Wanderlust*.³⁹⁵ By the end of the month, it ascended to the top spot and sold over a half million copies.³⁹⁶ Despite its release late in the year, *Red Storm Rising* would rank second on year-end bestseller lists, trailing only Stephen King's *It*.³⁹⁷

³⁹⁴ Clancy to Richards, March 5, 1985

³⁹⁵ "Best Sellers," *New York Times*, August 3, 1986.

³⁹⁶ "Best Sellers" *New York Times*, August 24, 1986. Edwin McDowell, "Author of 'Hunt for Red October' stirs up a 'Red Storm'" *The New York Times* August 12, 1986

³⁹⁷ "The Books of the Century" <http://www.ocf.berkeley.edu/~immer/books1980s>

Red Storm Rising also began a four-year period that saw a new Clancy book finish either first or second in total sales for the year.³⁹⁸ Clancy slowed his pace in the 1990s, only releasing a new book every other year. Of these books, only 1994's *Without Remorse* failed to win one of the top two spots, as it finished fourth in sale for the year.³⁹⁹ The first movie based on a Clancy book, *Hunt for Red October*, was an immediate commercial success finishing as the sixth highest grossing movie of 1990.⁴⁰⁰ Movie adaptations of *Patriot Games* and *Clear and Present Danger* came out in 1992 and 1994, with Harrison Ford replacing Alec Baldwin as Jack Ryan and earned two hundred million between them, finishing fourteenth and seventh at the box office.⁴⁰¹ Clancy also expanded into video games in the late 1980s. There were three separate adaptations of *Hunt for Red October*, and Sid Meier, best known for the *Civilization* games, created a game based on *Red Storm Rising* for Micropose.⁴⁰² The video games allowed for further interaction with Clancy's world and provided increased familiarization with the military technology they depict.

The onslaught of media turned Clancy into perhaps the most visible or recognized expert on military technology to the average American. The Maryland insurance agent became the celebrity commentator, with the ability to

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

³⁹⁹ "The Books of the Century" <http://www.ocf.berkeley.edu/~immer/books1990s>

⁴⁰⁰ "1990 Domestic Grosses," boxofficemojo.com

⁴⁰¹ "1992 Domestic Grosses," boxofficemojo.com. "1994 Domestic Grosses," boxofficemojo.com.

⁴⁰² Larry Bond interview with author, October 20, 2014

make complex technology and tactics accessible. His presence facilitated the ongoing movement towards the embrace of the military and its weapons and provided an alternate way for millions to imbibe Reagan's defense policy.

Conclusion: Cultural Legacies

In the final chapter of *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said takes aim at the 1991 war with Iraq. While his characterization of the conflict as part of a “cultural war against Arabs” rings hollow, he does identify a crucial change of American cultural perception of its own power.⁴⁰³ He criticizes the administration of George H.W. Bush for portraying the war “as a painless Nintendo exercise” and for propagating the “image of Americans as virtuous, clean warriors.”⁴⁰⁴ Popular culture embraced these images. The war crossed into the cultural realm, as companies marketed the war with t-shirts, patriotic commercials, and even trading cards.⁴⁰⁵ The short period of hostilities, small number of American casualties, and prominent public gratitude of Kuwait reinforced the cultural themes that Reagan introduced during his presidency. American technical superiority changed the conflict from a war into “a turkey-shoot.”⁴⁰⁶ Images of miles of flaming wreckage of Iraqi tanks and trucks attested to the reemergence

⁴⁰³ Said, 301

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁵ McAlister, 241. As a 7 year old, I was very proud of my complete collection of Pro Set Desert Storm Trading Cards.

⁴⁰⁶ Rick Atkinson and William Claiborne, “Allies Surround Republican Guard, Say Crippled Iraqis Are Near Defeat,” *The Washington Post*, February 27, 1991.

of American military power, and created a sense that interventions could be clean, quick, and decisive.

The media portrayed American service members, from Colin Powell as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs down to privates in the field, as representatives of the best America had to offer. Melani McAlister notes in *Epic Encounters*, that the media identified the military as “a microcosm of the US population... drawn from small towns and communities around the nation.” The military represented the “diversity of the United States.”⁴⁰⁷ Such language mirrors Reagan’s answer to the query of Michener’s Admiral Tarrant who marveling at the sacrifice of his command asks, “Where did we get such men?”⁴⁰⁸ Reagan responded as he presented the Medal of Honor to Master Sergeant Roy Benevidez that, “We find them where we've always found them, in our villages and towns, on our city streets, in our shops, and on our farms.”⁴⁰⁹ The combination of military success and public support of Desert Storm marked the culmination of the policies started while Reagan was in the White House. The war was a Tom Clancy novel come to life.

The relationship between Ronald Reagan, the American Public, and Tom Clancy’s novels shows the importance of popular culture in shaping the

⁴⁰⁷ McAlister, 250

⁴⁰⁸ James Michener, *The Bridges at Toko-Ri*, (New York: Fawcett Books, 1953), 126.

⁴⁰⁹ Reagan, “Remarks on Presenting the Medal of Honor to Master Sergeant Roy P. Benavidez,” Arlington, Virginia February 27, 1981.

discussion and acceptance of policy. The books provided a compelling and memorable narrative to their readers, and then served as a mental touchstone for them as they considered the policy of the Reagan administration. Though Clancy took significant inspiration from Reagan's strategy, the exchange was not one way. Clancy's ability to turn Reagan's strategic thinking into a relatable and realistic narrative reinforced Reagan's confidence in his policy, even as aspects of it faced withering criticism from both ends of the political spectrum.

Additionally, the prominence Clancy achieved in popular culture demonstrated to Reagan that his efforts to change American mentalities from the defeatist attitudes prevalent in the 1970s to a triumphal narrative were also working. It is difficult to imagine Clancy achieving the same level of readership and acclaim if *The Hunt for Red October* came out in 1974 or 1994 instead of in 1984. The success he found is due in large part to the administration's efforts to shape popular narratives about American strength, the military, and the Cold War. At its most powerful, the interactions between political leaders, the public, and contributors to popular culture become a mutually reinforcing cycle. Each shapes the ideas and actions of the others and helps set the conditions for durable strategy.

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