

[The Gipper Won the Cold War?](#)

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Should the Gipper get all the Credit, or some of the Credit, or little of the...?

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Note: Yes this is an H-WAR blog post, not an H-DIPLO blog post.

Recently, at one of my other favorite web locations, Ryan Evans' *War on the Rocks*, I came across this title and this quotation in the blurb for a podcast:

[1]
"HOW THE GIPPER WON" —

"As Inboden [one of the podcasters] points out, many of Reagan's signature victories, including his pivotal role in defeating the Soviet Union in the Cold War, seem inevitable in retrospect, but at the time, they were often seen as anything but inevitable. Reagan's unwavering faith in his vision for the country was often at odds with expert assessments. Inboden and Gavin discuss the faith, fortunes, and failures that marked Reagan's presidency."

First, the question—these how questions presume, do they not? In this case not "why," not "to what extent," but rather the tired (white) great man approach of "how." Okay, chill out Mr. Kuehn, right?

Wrong. The Cold War ended, and it ended in the United States' and the West's favor, a macro-historical validation of the strength of market-capitalist driven political economy over that of top-down authoritarian command economies (TDACE). Did people play a role? Sure they did, some on one side even joined the U.S. Navy because they thought in terms of democracy losing to communism (not market-capitalism losing to TDACE), and didn't want to be accused of shirking should they ever have children. George Kennan and Sam Huntington wrote about these things in the 1940s and 1950s and described the forces in play that many thought would eventually lead to the triumph of the West. After Vietnam, sure, it did not seem so sure. Post-war malaise in one of the many hot wars of the Cold War. But that malaise seems to have obscured the larger tides of history from the Great White Knight riding in from California to deliver the world. So, what were the other factors? Were any of more import than President Reagan's unwavering

commitment? Was the US already rearming? How would Reagan not being elected have affected that? And of course, political economy is important, but how important?

Bang! Let the dialog/conversation begin.

[1] [Podcast William Inboden and Francis J. Gavin, How The Gipper Won," at *War on the Rocks*, November 26, 2022.](#)

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