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Hillsdale College Center for Military History and Strategy Hosts Talk on Reagan's Cold War Strategy

Historian and former National Security Council member William Inboden spoke on "Ronald Reagan: Cold Warrior and Peacemaker."

HILLSDALE, Mich. — Hillsdale College's Center for Military History and Strategy hosted historian and former National Security Council member William Inboden on Oct. 28 for a lecture titled "Ronald Reagan: Cold Warrior and Peacemaker." Inboden discussed Reagan's strategy for winning the Cold War through both coercion and diplomacy.

"While many universities neglect military history and strategy, CMHS seeks to promote the study of these topics as essential to preserving peace and constitutional liberty," said Mark Moyer, chair of military history. "Dr. Inboden is a distinguished scholar who recognizes the importance of our mission, and we are honored to have him."

According to Inboden, Reagan's intention of winning the Cold War — especially without turning it hot — defied conventional wisdom and drew ridicule from experts.

"Reagan viewed the Soviet Union as fragile and vulnerable and Soviet communism as an illegitimate system that should not and could not and would not endure," Inboden said. "Every previous U.S. Cold War president, up to and including Carter, had viewed the Cold War as a great power rivalry that happened to be a contest of ideas. Reagan reversed this. He took the opposite view. He saw the Cold War as a battle of ideas that happened to be a great power rivalry, and he viewed Soviet communism not as a rival system to be contained but as a vile idea to be defeated."

Inboden said that Reagan employed a two-pronged strategy, putting economic, political, ideological, and military pressure on the Soviet Union while showing goodwill to the Russian people, extending diplomacy to their leaders, and continually demonstrating the superiority of free economies over communist ones.

“Reagan leaves office, the Soviet Union and Berlin Wall are still standing, but the forces that were going to bring them down had already been put in place, especially by him, and less than a year later, the Berlin Wall comes down, and then the Soviet Union collapses peacefully just two years later,” Inboden said. “What a decade earlier had seemed ridiculously implausible, almost even a lunatic fantasy, of bringing the Soviet Union to a peaceful collapse, to a negotiated surrender, Reagan had brought about. It was not an accident. He did not get lucky. It was not an inevitability of the tectonic forces of history. It was a result of leadership and vision by a great American statesman.”

Inboden is director of the Alexander Hamilton Center for Classical and Civic Education at the University of Florida, where he is also a professor of history. He received his A.B. from Stanford University and his M.A. and Ph.D. from Yale University. A former senior director for strategic planning on the National Security Council in the Reagan administration, he is the author of several books, including “Religion and American Foreign Policy, 1945–1960: The Soul of Containment” and “The Peacemaker: Ronald Reagan, the Cold War, and the World on the Brink.”

For photos from previous events by the Center for Military History and Strategy, click [here](#). For photos of Hillsdale College, click [here](#).

For a high-resolution copy of the Hillsdale College clocktower logo, click [here](#).

About Hillsdale College

Hillsdale College is an independent, nonsectarian, Christian liberal arts college located in southern Michigan. Founded in 1844, the College has built a national reputation through its classical liberal arts core curriculum and its principled refusal to accept federal or state taxpayer subsidies, even indirectly in the form of student grants or loans. It also conducts an outreach effort promoting civil and religious liberty, including a free monthly speech digest, *Imprimis*, with a circulation of more than 6.6 million. For more information, visit hillsdale.edu.

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