Reagan and the Cold War

Task: Read/interpret the following documents and group them into one of three categories:

- Military strength/superiority
- Morality and freedom
- Negotiations and dialogue

After you have decided what category the document best fits, briefly summarize the meaning of the document in your handout.
Document 1:
Ronald Reagan in a presidential debate with Jimmy Carter, October 1980:

I believe with all my heart that our first priority must be world peace and that use of force is always and only a last resort when everything else has failed, and then only with regard to our national security. We cannot shirk our responsibility as the leader of the free world because we are the only one that can do it, and therefore the burden of maintaining the peace falls on us. And to maintain that peace requires strength. I have seen four wars in my lifetime. I am a father of sons. I have a grandson. I do not ever want to see another generation of young Americans bleed their lives into sandy beachheads in the Pacific or rice paddies and jungles in Asia or the muddy battlefields of Europe.

Document 2:
Evil Empire speech, March 1983

Reagan's March 8, 1983 speech to the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida, is his first recorded use of the phrase "evil empire" in reference to the Soviet communist regime. Reagan stated:

Yes, let us pray for the salvation of all of those who live in that totalitarian darkness—pray they will discover the joy of knowing God. But until they do, let us be aware that while they preach the supremacy of the State (communist government & way of life), declare its omnipotence over individual man, and predict its eventual domination of all peoples on the earth, they are the focus of evil in the modern world.... So, in your discussions of the nuclear freeze proposals, I urge you to beware the temptation of pride—the temptation of blithely declaring yourselves above it all and label both sides equally at fault, to ignore the facts of history and the aggressive impulses of an evil empire, to simply call the arms race a giant misunderstanding and thereby remove yourself from the struggle between right and wrong and good and evil.

Ramifications of the speech:
In the "evil empire" speech, which also dealt with domestic issues, Reagan made the case for deploying NATO nuclear-armed missiles in Western Europe as a response to the Soviets installing new nuclear-armed missiles in Eastern Europe. Eventually, the NATO missiles were set up and used as bargaining chips in arms talks with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, who took office in 1985. In 1987, Reagan and Gorbachev agreed to go further than a nuclear freeze. In an atomic age first, they agreed to reduce nuclear arsenals. Intermediate- and short-range nuclear missiles were eliminated.
The Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), also known as Star Wars, was a program first initiated on March 23, 1983 under President Ronald Reagan. The intent of this program was to develop a sophisticated anti-ballistic missile system in order to prevent missile attacks from other countries, specifically the Soviet Union.

Document 4:
Military spending from 1950-2010
Dear Mr. General Secretary:

As you assume your new responsibilities, I would like to take this opportunity to underscore my hope that we can in the months and years ahead develop a more stable and constructive relationship between our two countries. Our differences are many, and we will need to proceed in a way that takes both differences and common interests into account in seeking to resolve problems and build a new measure of trust and confidence. But history places on us a very heavy responsibility for maintaining and strengthening peace, and I am convinced we have before us new opportunities to do so. Therefore, I have requested the Vice President to deliver this letter to you.

I believe our differences can and must be resolved through discussion and negotiation. The international situation demands that we redouble our efforts to find political solutions to the problems we face. I valued my correspondence with Chairman Chernenko, and believe my meetings with First Deputy Prime Minister Gromyko and Mr. Shcherbitsky here in Washington were useful in clarifying views and issues and making it possible to move forward to deal with them in a practical and realistic fashion.

In recent months we have demonstrated that it is possible to resolve problems to mutual benefit. We have had useful exchanges on certain regional issues, and I am sure you are aware that American interest in progress on humanitarian issues remains as strong as ever. In our bilateral relations, we have signed a number of new agreements, and we have promising negotiations underway in several important fields. Most significantly, the negotiations we have agreed to begin in Geneva provide us with a genuine chance to make progress toward our common ultimate goal of eliminating nuclear weapons.

It is important for us to build on these achievements. You can be assured of my personal commitment to work with you and the rest of the Soviet leadership in serious negotiations. In that spirit, I would like to invite you to visit me in Washington at your earliest convenient opportunity. I recognize that an early answer may not be possible, but I want you to know that I look forward to a meeting that could yield results of benefit to both our countries and to the international community as a whole.

Sincerely,

Ronald Reagan

His Excellency
Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev,
General Secretary, Central Committee,
Communist Party of the Soviet Union
Moscow, U.S.S.R.
Document 6:
President Reagan’s speech in Berlin, Germany, June 1987

We welcome change and openness; for we believe that freedom and security go together, that the advance of human liberty can only strengthen the cause of world peace. There is one sign the Soviets can make that would be unmistakable, that would advance dramatically the cause of freedom and peace. General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization, come here to this gate. Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate. Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!

Document 7:
List of summits between Reagan and Gorbachev

The Geneva Summit, November 1985

The first meeting between President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev took place in Geneva, Switzerland in November 1985. Reagan and Gorbachev discussed all areas of U.S.-Soviet relations. Overall, the two leaders used the meetings to feel out each other's positions. Although no significant agreements were made, the two leaders agreed to meet again. The Geneva Summit is seen today as a success as Reagan and Gorbachev were able to start the process that led to a thawing of Cold War tensions, and the eventual signing of the INF Treaty in 1987.

The Reykjavik, Iceland Summit, October 1986

Arms control negotiations between the Soviet Union and the United States stalled following the Geneva Summit. General Secretary Gorbachev proposed to President Reagan in September 1986 that the two leaders meet the next month to inject urgency into the stalled arms control negotiations. President Reagan immediately agreed.

Over two days of meetings in October 1986 failed to produce any arms control agreements. General Secretary Gorbachev and Reagan, however, seemed on the verge of agreeing to a sweeping arms control agreement that would in principle work towards the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. President Reagan would say that he could not agree to the deal because General Secretary Gorbachev insisted that any agreement incorporate limits on testing of the Strategic Defense Initiative. General Secretary Gorbachev left believing that no agreement was reached because President Reagan did not come to the meeting prepared to reach any agreement.

The Reykjavik Summit is now seen as significant turning point in arms control negotiations. Although no agreement was reached at the time, Reagan and Gorbachev in principle agreed on the need to reduce their nuclear arsenals. Gorbachev also recognized that Reagan would not negotiate SDI. Over the next couple of months Gorbachev dropped his insistence that SDI be linked to any arms control agreement, and when Reagan and Gorbachev met again in Washington in December 1987, all they had to do were sign the documents agreeing to eliminate their intermediate range nuclear weapons (The INF Treaty), the most sweeping arms control reductions treaty ever signed by that time.
THE WASHINGTON SUMMIT, December 1987

General Secretary Gorbachev came to Washington in December 1987 to sign the INF Treaty documents and to persuade President Reagan to agree to a further arms control agreement, a START agreement. The START negotiations started from the principle that both sides would eliminate 50% of their offensive ballistic missiles. To accomplish this goal, however, General Secretary Gorbachev insisted that Reagan agree to delay deployment of SDI until both sides had eliminated their offensive weapons. This way, Gorbachev argued, one side would not have an advantage over the other. Reagan, however, insisted that SDI could not be part of any arms control negotiations. After the Washington Summit Reagan encouraged his advisers to continue to seek a START agreement, but that he would not make any agreement limiting SDI.

THE MOSCOW SUMMIT, May 1988

President Reagan traveled to Moscow in May 1988. General Secretary Gorbachev was hoping to use the Summit as an opportunity for Reagan and Gorbachev to agree to the START Treaty, but soon after Reagan arrived, it became very clear that Reagan was not interested in further arms control agreements. Reagan spent most of the Summit, instead, talking about human rights. The Summit is probably best remembered for Reagan's statement to reporters, outside the Kremlin, declaring that he no longer thought of the Soviet Union as an "evil empire."

Meeting on Governor’s Island (NYC), December, 1988

Reagan and Gorbachev had a short visit in December 1988 on Governor's Island, right outside Manhattan in New York City. President-elect George H.W. Bush was also present. No substantive issues were discussed, and President-elect Bush interesting chose to observe. The meeting is probably most significant for President-elect Bush's lack of participation. Although Bush had been involved with most of President Reagan's most important foreign policy decisions, he would upon taking office immediately signal that he was freezing negotiations between the United States and Soviet Union until he had a chance to develop his own approach. Bush, it seems, unlike Reagan was not convinced that the Soviet Union was no longer an "evil empire." It took over three years for Bush and Gorbachev to sign the START Treaty, which was reached in 1991.

Source for summit summaries: [http://www.thereaganfiles.com/the-summits.html](http://www.thereaganfiles.com/the-summits.html)