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The Thinker, The Doer and The Decider:
Zbigniew Brzezinski, Cyrus Vance and
the Bureaucratic Wars of the Carter
Administration

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PhD

2018

The Thinker, The Doer and The Decider:
Zbigniew Brzezinski, Cyrus Vance and the
Bureaucratic Wars of the Carter Administration

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Abstract

When President Jimmy Carter entered the White House, he desired a decision-making structure that would be collegial and provide him with a diverse range of policy options from his principal advisors, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski. However, their differing outlooks coupled with a desire to control and manage U.S. foreign policy led to a furious and bitter battle to influence the administration's agenda. This thesis analyses the relationship between Vance and Brzezinski and their struggles for the ear of the president.

It was a conflict exacerbated by the institutional rivalry between the National Security Council and the State Department as they battled with one another to affect policy. As issues arose, the president's advisors, supported by their constituencies, jostled to orchestrate the administration's strategies and approach. Subsequently, tensions increased as the conflict between Vance, Brzezinski and their departments developed into unbridled bureaucratic warfare within the Carter administration.

This study utilises the bureaucratic politics paradigm to illustrate how the influence of advisors and organisations can impact on presidential decision-making. While President Carter wanted to be the main decision maker in his administration, his insistence on a system that provided him with a range of advice precipitated the struggles between Vance and Brzezinski. As their disputes intensified, Carter was unable to effectively manage the views and advice of his advisors and formulate a clear strategy. As this thesis demonstrates, the bureaucratic politics model provides an effective framework to analyse the development and implementation of U.S. foreign policy.

While historians have neglected or played down the significance of their clashes, this thesis argues that the rivalry between Vance, Brzezinski, and their respective departments had a clear and visible effect on U.S. foreign policy. The bureaucratic wars raged throughout Carter's time in office, contributing to a tapestry of inconsistencies that resulted in the administration's inability to create a settled foreign policy agenda.

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This work is dedicated to my grandfather, Ronald Spencer, who meticulously read and provided feedback on each chapter of my thesis. I am extremely grateful for his contribution to my work. As a child, he sparked my interest in history, with stories from his life, his days of service during World War Two and, more recently, his attempts to re-trace his father's steps through Europe during the Great War. Throughout my life, he has been a considerable source of guidance, encouragement and a pillar of support. He has instilled in me a set of values and ethics that I will always carry with me. He is my role model - a hardworking, dedicated, loyal family man and a trusted confidant who continues to inspire me today. I will always value his influence.

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academic staff in the Department of Humanities who have always been approachable and provided support whenever necessary.

During the course of my research, I worked at a number of archives in the United States and in Europe and I would like to thank the staff at the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library in Georgia in particular, for always being friendly and attentive during my visits and helping me from afar in providing requested materials. I must also recognise the work of the staff at the Library of Congress, the National Archives at College Park, the Sterling Memorial Library at Yale University, the Seeley G. Mudd Library at Princeton University, the Fenwick Library at George Mason University and the Roosevelt Study Center in Middleburg, Netherlands.

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Last but by no means least, I would like to recognise my family and friends for the love and support they have provided throughout this process and life in general. My parents, Carol and Ray, have selflessly supported me in my endeavours and stuck by me through some challenging times over the years as well as giving me the time and space to do my work. None of what I achieved could be done without their love and support. From the bottom of my heart, I am extremely appreciative.

Author's Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the Faculty Ethics Committee on 05/05/2015.

I declare that the Word Count of this Thesis is 87, 638 words.

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Signature:

Date: 16/07/2018

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List of Abbreviations

ABC	American Broadcasting Company
ACDA	Arms Control and Disarmament Agency
ADST	Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
AWACS	Airborne Warning & Control System
CBS	Columbia Broadcast System
CENTO	Central Treaty Organization
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DCIA	Director of the Central Intelligence Agency
FAO	Broad Opposition Front (Nicaragua)
FIS	Foundation for Iranian Studies
FLNC	Congolese National Liberation Front
FNLA	Front for the National Liberation of Angola
FRUS	Foreign Relations of the United States
FSLN	Sandinista National Liberation Front (Nicaragua)
GAC	General Advisory Committee on Arms Control and Disarmament
ICBM	Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JCPL	Jimmy Carter Presidential Library
LJPL	Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library
MEMCON	Memorandum of Conversation
MIA	Missing In Action
MIRV	Multiple Independently Targetable Re-Entry Vehicle
MPLA	Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola
NAMRU	Naval Medical Research Unit
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration (US)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

NIE	National Intelligence Estimate
NSC	National Security Council
OAS	Organisation of American States
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OMB	Office for Management and Budget
PBS	Public Broadcasting Service
PRC	People's Republic of China
PRC	Presidential Review Committee
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organisation
PRM	Presidential Review Memorandum
ROC	Republic of China
SALT	Strategic Arms Limitation Talks
SAVAK	Organization of National Intelligence and Security (Iran)
SCC	Special Co-Ordination Committee
SLBM	Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile
UN	United Nations
UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
USIS	United States Information Service
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
USUN	United States Mission to the United Nations

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Introduction

When answering the question of when he first became aware of tensions between Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates paused. He had joined the National Security Council (NSC) from the CIA as Brzezinski's special assistant in May 1977 to assist with streamlining the bureaucratic process around intelligence. This gave him a ringside seat to the national security advisor's troubled relationship with the secretary of state. After a momentary stillness, Gates replied, 'almost immediately.'¹

The acrimonious Vance-Brzezinski relationship became a hallmark of the Carter presidency and their struggles came to have a significant impact on U.S. foreign policy. Their conflict, born out of philosophical differences, as well as competing interpretations of the role of the United States should play in the international arena, developed into a broad bureaucratic war for the ear of the president. Their respective constituencies, the State Department and the NSC, allowed them to escalate tensions from the moment the Carter administration entered the White House. As the then Secretary of Defense Harold Brown noted, 'they were at sword's point from day one.'²

The 1947 National Security Act created the position of assistant to the president for national security affairs, or as it is commonly known, the national security advisor. Since then, the president's advisors have waged numerous bureaucratic battles to control and influence U.S. foreign policy. The national security advisor, aided by the National Security Council staff, represented a challenge to the secretary of state and the State Department, the historical vehicle of policy development. When President John F. Kennedy entered the White House in January 1961, he wanted an NSC system that provided him with the information he needed and allowed him to be the main decision maker within the

¹ Robert M. Gates, Telephone Interview with the author, March 17, 2016.

² Harold Brown, *Star Spangled Security: Applying Lessons Learned Over Six Decades Safeguarding America* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2012), 43.

administration. Critical of what he perceived to be an ineffective and overbearing State Department bureaucracy, he appointed McGeorge Bundy as his assistant for national security affairs, with the brief of simplifying the NSC structure to adhere to his wish to be at the centre of foreign policy decision-making.³ As Bundy reduced its size, he streamlined the NSC system by creating various committees that responded to the president's demands to quickly formulate policy. As the administration sought to develop strategies and responded to crises, coupled with Kennedy's frustration with the lack of innovation emanating from Secretary of State Dean Rusk and his department, Bundy and the NSC's influence steadily increased.⁴

When Lyndon Johnson became president following Kennedy's assassination, he retained the services of Bundy, his staff and the existing process. Rather than dismantle his predecessor's system for generating policy ideas, Johnson relied heavily on Bundy, whose assertiveness increased as he advocated for the escalation of the U.S. presence in South Vietnam. Despite harbouring cordial relations with Rusk, Bundy regularly circumnavigated the secretary of state and department officials. By his own admission, his actions created an element of 'institutional difficulty.'⁵ Bundy's departure from the Johnson administration coincided with calls for greater co-ordination of foreign policy matters with the State Department as opposed to the NSC. His replacement, Walt Rostow, received the title 'special assistant to the president' with no mention of 'national security affairs' but the changes were cosmetic. Johnson continued to rely on the NSC and although Rostow never

³ David J. Rothkopf, *Running The World: The Inside Story of the National Security Council and the Architects of American Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2006), 84-85.

⁴ John P. Burke, *Honest Broker?: The National Security Advisor and Presidential Decision Making* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2009), 58-59.

⁵ Ivo H. Daadler and I.M. Destler, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office: Profiles of the National Security Advisers and the Presidents They Served: From JFK to George W. Bush* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009) 41-43; Andrew Preston, *The War Council: McGeorge Bundy, the NSC, and Vietnam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 52.

eclipsed Bundy's influence, he enjoyed an elevated position within the foreign policy apparatus.⁶

Upon entering the White House in 1969, President Richard Nixon's desire to control all aspects of foreign policy, coupled with his distrust of the State Department, led him to give the NSC and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger a pre-eminent role in the development of policy.⁷ Both Nixon and Kissinger shared the view that interfering bureaucracies like the departments of state or defense hindered policy development and during the transition period, they agreed upon a system that centralised decision-making within the White House. On inauguration day, Nixon revealed to his cabinet that the NSC would 'be the principle forum for consideration of policy issues' and assigned full control of key committees to Kissinger.⁸ With foreign policy centralised within the White House, Nixon and Kissinger excluded Secretary of State William Rogers from the decision-making process with the national security advisor and the NSC staff taking control of policy development.⁹

After Jimmy Carter succeeded Gerald Ford in 1977, he appointed Cyrus Vance, a former deputy secretary of defense and New York attorney, as secretary of state, who vowed to re-establish the State Department's role as the primary office for foreign policy development and implementation. Carter's pick for national security advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, a Polish academic at Columbia University and foreign policy expert, believed the precedent set by Bundy and Kissinger entitled him to co-ordinate foreign policy within the confines of the White House, with the assistance of the NSC staff. When the Carter

⁶ Karl F. Inderfurth and Loch K. Johnson, eds., *Decisions of the Highest Order: Perspectives of the National Security Council* (Pacific Grove: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1988), 93.

⁷ John Dumbrell and David M. Barrett, *The Making of US Foreign Policy*, Second Edition (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 65.

⁸ Daadler and Destler, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 57.

⁹ I.M. Destler, Leslie H. Gelb, and Anthony Lake, *Our Own Worst Enemy: The Unmaking of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984), 203.

administration entered office, both departments fought for supremacy over the foreign policy agenda.

This dissertation examines the relationship between Vance and Brzezinski and their conflicting roles as foreign policy makers. President Carter appointed both men on the assumption that the pair would work collegially with one another to provide a range of advice and policies that he could consider, however, their divergent ideologies and approaches laid the foundations for a bitter rivalry for control over the administration's agenda. As one former official defined it, 'the main battle of the Carter years was between the Columbia professor and the Wall Street lawyer.'¹⁰ The conflict also became exacerbated by bureaucratic tensions emanating from the institutional rivalry between the NSC and the State Department as they battled with one another to affect policy. Alongside the tensions between Vance and Brzezinski, the bureaucratic wars between the two departments, produced a disjointed decision-making process that proved detrimental to the administration's foreign policy agenda.

What this dissertation aims to expose is the bureaucratic processes by which Carter made foreign policy, the changing nature of that process from 1977 to 1980, and circumstances that led to these changes. To achieve this, the dissertation investigates the bureaucratic wars, the ideas and machinations that underpinned the State Department and NSC staff, the ways in which Vance and Brzezinski manipulated their positions in the Carter administration, and how they took advantage of the foreign crises that plagued Carter's tenure. Although he claimed credit for his attempts to redefine American foreign policy as the first post-Vietnam president and instituted a series of policy initiatives that resulted in the Panama Canal treaties, the Camp David Accords, an arms control agreement with the Soviet Union, a negotiated settlement on the issue of Rhodesia as well as normalised relations with the People's Republic of China, his presidency became beset by a series of

¹⁰ Leslie H. Gelb, *Power Rules: How Common Sense Can Rescue American Foreign Policy* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009), 57.

crises around the globe. Proxy wars in the Horn of Africa, Angola and Cambodia, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, revolutions in Nicaragua and Iran, the hostage crisis as well as the ongoing energy challenge disrupted his agenda. Against this backdrop, the Vance-Brzezinski relationship hampered the administration's ability to tackle these issues.

Theoretical Framework: Bureaucratic Politics

White House Chief of Staff Hamilton Jordan wrote in his memoir that the decision-making structure within the administration between the president, Vance, and Brzezinski operated as follows: 'Zbig would be the thinker, Cy would be the doer, and Jimmy Carter would be the decider.'¹¹ After his election, President Carter chose a model of decision-making that relied heavily on the input of his two principal foreign policy advisors who, despite their divergent attitudes and worldviews, offered the president a range of advice. As a one term governor of Georgia, he had little exposure to foreign affairs and believed appointing conflicting advisors would provide an opportunity to consider a variety of ideas before he arrived at a conclusion. His preferred method broadly reflected the bureaucratic politics model whereby decisions become influenced by the input of individuals and/or departments within the executive branch.

The model rose to prominence in the 1960s among political scientists and historians of American politics. The model was designed to understand decision-making through institutions and the interactions of individuals that develop personal and professional differences. Among the leading advocates of the bureaucratic model was Graham T. Allison who developed the theoretical framework in his work *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*. Allison built upon the work of political scientists Gabriel A. Almond, Richard E. Neustadt and Samuel P. Huntington in debating the influence of organisations on presidential decision-making. Almond first asserted, that national elites, rather than the president, help construct foreign policy agendas. Neustadt similarly, presented the idea of

¹¹ Hamilton Jordan, *Crisis: The Last Year of the Carter Presidency* (New York: Putnam, 1982), 47.

the commander-in-chief as a ‘presidential clerk’ and contended that decision-making, rather than being directed solely by the president of the day, came from a variety of internal and external sources. Huntington, a colleague of Brzezinski’s who later served on his NSC staff, meanwhile argued that issues surrounding defence and national security was the result of collective negotiations between top administration officials rather than being singularly directed by the president. Like Neustadt, Huntington went as far as to question the power and authority of the president in relation to foreign policy and defence issues.¹²

Analysing the Kennedy administration’s reaction to the missile crisis, Allison argued that no single actor influenced policy making, but rather a range of contributors aided the administration’s response. Decisions during the crisis, Allison observed, became the result of bargaining, a series of negotiations and debates between various officials who advanced their own strategies and approaches.¹³ The decision to blockade Cuba, ultimately the proposal of Robert McNamara, came about through a collective dismissal of alternative options such as strategic strikes and the deployment of marines. Overall, Allison asserts that the input of numerous political actors contributes to a final decision or policy. Morton H. Halperin, a foreign policy expert who served in Lyndon Johnson’s Defense Department and Nixon’s NSC, wrote a corroborating essay along with Allison that insisted, ‘decisions seldom reflect a single coherent, consistent set of calculations about national security interests...the “maker” of government policy is not one decision maker, but rather a conglomerate of large organisations and political actors.’¹⁴

In his original text Allison forwarded two other decision-making frameworks, the rational actor and organisational process model. The rational actor, or Model I, which

¹² Gabriel Almond, *The American People and Foreign Policy* (New York: Praeger, 1950); Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership* (New York: John Wiley, 1960); Samuel P. Huntington, *The Common Defense: Strategic Problems in National Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961).

¹³ Graham T. Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1971), 144-145.

¹⁴ Graham T. Allison and Morton H. Halperin, “Bureaucratic Politics: A Paradigm and Some Policy Implications,” *World Politics* 24 (Spring 1972): 53; *Ibid*, 42.

Allison identifies as the most common paradigm utilised by political scientists, proposes that decisions are the result of careful analysis of issues by policymakers. A course of action is reached by individuals considering a range of alternatives assessed against potential risks, problems and consequences as well as the goals and objectives of the government. Essentially, it is the selection of the 'alternative whose consequences rank highest in the decision-makers' payoff function.'¹⁵ Model I views decision-making as a simplified process of elimination where decisions are weighted against various factors to arrive at the most effective and rational course of action.

Allison himself takes issue with the theory, noting that it is based on assumptions surrounding the goals, objectives and actions of national governments when reaching decisions. In sum, the model supposes that policymakers have all the relevant information at their disposal to calculate the risks and benefits, which underpin their final decisions. As Allison notes, an 'explanation consists of showing what goal the government was pursuing when it acted and how the action was a reasonable choice, given the nation's objective.'¹⁶

Moreover, the rational actor model neglects the role of government organisations and political actors within the policy process and does not consider the vast bureaucratic apparatus of decision-making. Allison therefore proposes Model II, organisational process, where policy is not developed by individuals but rather a 'conglomerate of semi-feudal, loosely allied organisations, each with a substantial life of its own.' Because government is a labyrinth of departments and organisations, it requires decentralisation and careful co-ordination when confronted with policy issues. While the rational actor interprets decisions as the result of careful dissemination by policymakers, organisational processes implies that policies are formed through government departments.¹⁷

¹⁵ Allison, *Essence of Decision*, 28-32.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 4-13.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 67.

Because government is so vast and issues are sometimes complex, the president assigns responsibly for formulating ideas to specific agencies whose expertise covers the policy issue. Reacting to their own standard operating procedure, Allison proposes that much of the groundwork is laid by government organisations and presented to the president who often accepts their analysis as the basis of their decision. As Allison notes, ‘government leaders can trim the edges of this output and can exercise some choice in combining outputs. But most of the behaviour is determined by previous established procedures.’¹⁸

A key aspect that Allison neglects with the rational actor as well as the organisational process model, is the degree to which competition and bureaucratic conflict affect the policy process. As David Welch notes, he neither considers the role of assertive advisors, small group dynamics and inter-agency relationships.¹⁹ Allison himself acknowledges that Model II ‘balances the classical model’s efforts to understand government behaviour as choices of a unitary decision maker.’ Both models consider decision-making to be the result of careful analysis and co-ordination between unified actors and organisations. However, neither model considers that individuals or organisations may not act in unison and that their differing personal and institutional objectives may not correspond with colleagues across the executive branch.²⁰

While organisational process argues that the input of institutions using standard operating procedures generate outputs, it does not address the ‘social element’ to the policy process and the interaction between individuals and organisations, as decision-making is susceptible to input and interference across the executive branch.²¹ Indeed, the contribution of various actors often produces competition and disagreement amongst officials to affect policy. Bureaucratic rivalry is a common aspect of decision-making as individuals and

¹⁸ Ibid, 78-88.

¹⁹ David A. Welch, “The Organizational Process and Bureaucratic Politics Paradigms: Retrospect and Prospect” 17, no. 2 (Fall 1992): 117.

²⁰ Allison, *Essence of Decision*, 144.

²¹ Bruce Russett, Harvey Starr, and David Kinsella, *World Politics: The Menu for Choice*, Ninth (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2010), 175.

institutions jostle with one another to encourage a course of action, which reflects their beliefs and/or advice. As J. Garry Clifford noted, ‘diversity and conflict permeate the policy process.’ This creates variable levels of conflict and competition within the executive branch. ‘Policy flows’ Clifford notes, ‘from an amalgam of organisations and political actors who differ substantially on a particular issue.’ Officials from organisations such as the military, the Departments of State, Defense and the CIA frequently ‘compete to advance their own personal and organisational interests to influence decisions.’²²

The bureaucratic politics model rose to prominence during the 1960s and 1970s, at a time when the supremacy of the NSC under Bundy and Kissinger underlined the increased influence of the committee on foreign policy. Political scientists and former diplomats have added their contributions to the growing literature on the growth of bureaucratic institutions and their impact on foreign policy decision-making. The Iran-Contra scandal of the 1980s thrust the framework back into the public sphere while in the 2000s, in the wake of 9/11, it reappeared in response to the development of new institutions that came to affect administration policy. However, in the recent edition of *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, the chapter on bureaucratic politics was removed and many of its key themes amalgamated into a general analysis of international relations theories to make way for new methodologies on American foreign affairs.²³

This study utilises the bureaucratic politics model to illustrate how decision-making within the Carter administration became subject to debates between Vance and the State Department and Brzezinski and the NSC. Whereas as other theories, such as thick description focus on individuals, this thesis addresses the roles of institutions and the power they yield to illustrate how they can utilise their bureaucratic strength to influence

²² J. Garry Clifford, “Bureaucratic Politics,” in *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, ed. Michael J. Hogan and Thomas G. Paterson, Second Edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 93.

²³ Robert Jervis, “Theories of International Relations,” in *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, ed. Michael J. Hogan and Frank Costigliola, Third Edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 9.

proceedings and ultimately policy. The example of the Carter administration demonstrates the value of the bureaucratic politics paradigm in understanding decision-making and policy development with respect to U.S. foreign policy. Carter gave Brzezinski and the NSC a role to formulate strategy while Vance and the State Department took on the role of implementing policy. However, contrary interpretations of their roles coupled with their different approaches towards U.S. foreign policy precipitated a struggle for control of the administration's agenda. Carter's inability to utilise the advice of his key advisors subsequently produced an inconsistent and at times incoherent foreign policy agenda, which reflected the tensions between Vance and Brzezinski but also encouraged bureaucratic warfare within the administration.

This thesis also evaluates the roles of the president, as 'the decider' within the administration, in managing internal debates and questions whether the commander-in-chief is fully in control of foreign policy. It analyses the roles of the president's key advisors, the secretary of state and the national security advisor, to consider how they influenced policy development and implementation with special consideration given to their ideologies, personalities and interpretations of their roles within the administration to understand the bureaucratic wars of the Carter administration. Finally, the thesis also examines the institutional rivalry between the State Department and the NSC to appreciate how bureaucratic institutions affect the policy process and foreign policy more generally. The growing declassification of documents, coupled with the increasing number of oral history testimonies from former administration members, reveal the extent to which the State Department and the NSC influenced U.S. foreign policy during the Carter presidency. However, the current historiography has somewhat ignored that development. Whereas the secondary literature has tended to focus on individuals within the administration, the bureaucratic structure remains neglected. As this thesis explains, the internal apparatus of the Carter administration had a significant impact on the development of policy and response to numerous crises that arose during this period.

In *Essence of Decision*, Allison argued that because foreign policy is a broad field, it became necessary for decision-making to be decentralised from the White House. With increasingly assertive bureaucracies attempting to manage and influence decision-making, successive presidents needed to engage with the rival interests of individuals and organisations and bargain with them to enact a desired agenda. Allison's analysis reflects the conclusions of Neustadt, who argued, 'yet nobody and nothing helps a president to see, save as he helps himself.'²⁴ The president's power is reliant on the officer holder's ability to utilise key officials and departments to enforce and execute their agenda or decisions. When foreign policy issues arise, the president of the day co-ordinates responses with the various actors, which involves a degree of bargaining and negotiation between key players. 'In status and formal power the president is chief' Allison wrote, 'but his authority guarantees only an extensive clerkship. If the president is to rule, he must squeeze from these formal powers a full array of bargaining advantages.'²⁵ As a result, the president introduces officials and institutions into the decision-making process more regularly to successfully implement a policy or a decision and achieve a consensus within the administration.

The role of the president within the bureaucratic model continues to provoke considerable debate amongst scholars, specifically the lack of presidential control over government policy. Jerel A. Rosati for example concurred with Allison's original assessment of the role of the president who is 'merely one participant although his influence may be the most powerful.'²⁶ Halperin along with former diplomat Priscilla A. Clapp and former Under Secretary of State Arnold Kanter argued that it is a necessity of the modern presidency to negotiate with various officials and bureaucracies to consolidate a fixed approach, agenda or decision to reaffirm the president's authority. 'Presidential power' they wrote, 'must be carefully husbanded and used shrewdly if the president is to go beyond his role as clerk in

²⁴ Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 127.

²⁵ Allison, *Essence of Decision*, 144-149.

²⁶ Jerel A. Rosati, "Developing a Systematic Decision-Making Framework: Bureaucratic Politics in Perspective," *World Politics* 33, no. 2 (January 1981): 237.

terms of his ability to influence events.²⁷ The growth of bureaucratic institutions led some to conclude that the influence of other players had weakened the president's power to initiate their desired agendas. Douglas Yates and Eva Etzioni-Halevy's work in the 1980s contended that decisions reflect their intervention in policy making.²⁸

Others took issue with the perceived role of the president within the bureaucratic politics framework. Robert J. Art for example disputed the influence of bureaucracies on decision-making. 'Do they mean that bureaucracies largely determine our foreign policy through their ability to select the information presented to top political leaders and through the control they exert over the details of implementing policy?' he wrote. For Art, the bureaucratic politics model fails to adequately address this issue.²⁹ Dan Caldwell meanwhile remarked on Allison's failure to address the role of the commander-in-chief and noted that although bureaucratic political struggles to influence policy exist, ultimately the president remains the sole authority within the U.S. government:

The president determines whether his advisors are allowed to continue serving him. Cabinet members and presidential advisors serve at the pleasure of the president. Furthermore, the president is the only American official with a national constituency; as such, he stands above the members of the Cabinet and governmental bureaucracy all of whom are his *de jure* and *de facto* subordinates.³⁰

David A. Welch contends that the president remains the key source of power and influence in government. He argued that Allison and others de-emphasised the role of the president within the bureaucratic politics structure. In his critique of Allison's theory with respect to the Cuban Missile Crisis he noted, 'the "pulling and hauling" that went on took the form of normal debate in which players argued for and against various options; the name of the game was persuasion, and the only player who had to be persuaded was the

²⁷ Morton H. Halperin, Priscilla A. Clapp, and Arnold Kanter, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2006), 73.

²⁸ Douglas Yates, *Bureaucratic Democracy: The Search for Democracy and Efficiency in American Government* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982); Eva Etzioni-Halevy, *Bureaucracy and Democracy: A Political Dilemma* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983).

²⁹ Robert J. Art, "Bureaucratic Politics and American Foreign Policy: A Critique," *Policy Sciences* 4, no. 4 (December 1973): 467-490.

³⁰ Dan Caldwell, "Bureaucratic Foreign Policy-Making," *American Behavioural Scientist* 21, no. 1 (October 1977): 97.

president.³¹ Jonathon Bendor and Thomas H. Hammond rhetorically pose the question, ‘why would a president bargain with their executive branch officials?’ particularly when he appointed them in the first instance.³² Revisionists, such as Eben J. Christensen and Steven B. Redd concur with the notion that despite the potential debates and wrangling that develop, the president is the ultimate decision maker. As they noted, ‘the famous case of Abraham Lincoln's statement to his cabinet – “Gentlemen, the vote is 11 to 1 and the 1 has it”³³’ As a result, a lack of consensus amongst scholars on the role of the president within the structure of the bureaucratic politics model is highly significant. This thesis seeks to address the role of the president within the framework by analysing Jimmy Carter’s role as ‘the decider’ within his administration and draws two conclusions.

Carter embraced a decision-making system that relied heavily on the divergent views of Vance, Brzezinski and their respective departments. As Thomas Preston and Paul t’Hart noted in their study, presidents who lack experience opt for a system that provides them with a wide-range of advice and information to guide them towards a final decision. Policy development within the administration mirrored Carter’s conscious desire to receive a variety of ideas from his closest advisors, which indicates presidential control over the internal apparatus of the decision-making structure. However, as the bureaucratic struggles escalated Carter proved unable to create a clear and consistent approach. Preston and t’Hart argue that presidents who require extra information and deliberate with advisors, become indecisive. This, the authors contend, leads to conflict between advisors and ‘bureaucratic confrontation.’³⁴ Carter became increasingly torn between the ideas and views of his two key advisors, which contributed to the bureaucratic tensions, and ultimately led to an

³¹ Welch, “The Organizational Process and Bureaucratic Politics Paradigms,” 132-134.

³² Jonathan Bendor and Thomas H. Hammond, “Rethinking Allison’s Models,” *The American Political Science Review* 86, no. 2 (June 1992): 315.

³³ Eben J. Christensen and Steven B. Redd, “Bureaucrats versus the Ballot Box in Foreign Policy Decision Making: An Experimental Analysis of the Bureaucratic Politics Model and the Poliheuristic Theory,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48, no. 1 (February 2004): 71.

³⁴ Thomas Preston and Paul t’Hart, “Understanding and Evaluating Bureaucratic Politics: The Nexus Between Political Leaders and Advisory Systems,” *Political Psychology* 20, no. 1 (March 1999): 63-69.

increasingly inconsistent foreign policy message. While the role of the president within the bureaucratic politics framework divides academics, this dissertation demonstrates how Carter's attempts to construct a system with him as the 'decider' fuelled competition and unnecessary bureaucratic warfare.

Proponents of the model also highlight how the different character traits of the players at heart of government often fuels personal rivalry. As Clifford noted, 'in its emphasis on individual values and tugging and hauling by key players, bureaucratic politics makes personality and cognitive process crucial to understanding who wins and why.' When policy divisions emerge, personality differences become magnified as individuals compete to make their voices heard and their approaches accepted.³⁵ Differences become exacerbated by the individual's interests and interpretations of their role within government. Allison and Halperin observe that 'a player's stand depends on his personal interests and his conception of his role.' Therefore, if the issue is of significance to the individual and is within the realms of their sphere of influence, this leads to greater involvement in the policy process.³⁶ This is particularly prescient not only when analysing the ideologies and backgrounds of Vance and Brzezinski but also their interpretations of their positions within the administration.

Given the divergent personalities and philosophies of Vance and Brzezinski, conflict between them evolved early on. The national security advisor confirmed this in his memoirs, 'the deepest differences between Vance and me were philosophical. Our differing backgrounds had produced substantially different conceptions of how the world works and consequently a different estimate of the proper balance between power and principle in our age.'³⁷ As chapter two illustrates, the respective backgrounds of the two individuals had a significant impact on their worldviews, which shaped their philosophies upon entering the

³⁵ Clifford, "Bureaucratic Politics," 101-102

³⁶ Allison and Halperin, "Bureaucratic Politics," 48

³⁷ Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Advisor 1977-1981* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1983), 43.

administration. The national security advisor's upbringing, displaced firstly by the Nazi invasion of Poland and the Soviet occupation thereafter, coupled with his academic research convinced him of the need for the United States to be assertive in the international arena. Vance meanwhile rose through the ranks of the foreign policy establishment in the 1960s and early 1970s, to become a respected diplomat and authority on international affairs. Brzezinski however viewed the secretary of state as a member of the 'once dominant WASP elite' paralysed by the Vietnam war and unable to take decisive action when required.³⁸

Vance's views, shaped by his experiences in government after he underwent a re-evaluation of his worldview, contrasted with Brzezinski's. He believed the conduct of U.S. foreign policy should look beyond the Cold War, while Brzezinski put special emphasis on the superpower relationship at the centre of his ideological outlook. Brzezinski's advocacy of a more assertive approach to foreign policy issues, particularly in relation to the Soviet Union, and his willingness to utilise American military strength contrasted with Vance's cautious diplomatic style, which underscored patient negotiations and de-emphasised military alternatives.

Their ideological differences became exacerbated by their differing interpretations of their role. Brzezinski, an ambitious and driven individual, believed Carter wanted to be an 'activist' president and he desired a close role to help him initiate his policy objectives. The position of national security advisor gave him the opportunity to co-ordinate closely with Carter within the confines of the White House.³⁹ Brzezinski not only craved the title of 'thinker' role within the administration but also 'doer.' As time passed, he took on a more proactive role, utilising his close personal and professional relationship with the president to affect decisions. Furthermore, Brzezinski proved to be an aggressive bureaucratic operator to promote the policies and strategies he advocated. Cyrus Vance on the other hand, adopted a

³⁸ Ibid, 43.

³⁹ Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, "Jimmy Carter Presidential Oral History Project: Interview with Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, Madeline K. Albright, Leslie G. Denend, William Odom," interview by James Sterling Young et al., 18 February, 1982, The Miller Center, University of Virginia.

more reserved approach. As former Assistant Secretary of State Leslie H. Gelb described their styles: ‘While Mr. Vance played by Marquis of Queensbury rules, it might be said Mr. Brzezinski was more of a streetfighter.’⁴⁰

Vance did not object to Brzezinski’s role. Given the president personally selected him as his national security advisor, he did not have the right to protest his appointment.⁴¹ He believed however that the secretary of state should act as the nation’s chief diplomat, while he viewed his department as the traditional architects of U.S. foreign policy. Conscious of how Kissinger denigrated the department and Secretary of State Rogers, he entered office with the intention of reaffirming their authority. He felt that his position and his department’s status, gave him sufficient power with the president and acted as a shield against any attempts by Brzezinski to undermine his influence. However, as Brzezinski took on a more public role in the development of U.S. foreign policy, Vance protested and later recorded in his memoirs, ‘I felt very strongly that there could only be two spokesmen, the president and the secretary of state.’⁴²

Vance refused to directly engage in bureaucratic warfare with Brzezinski or the NSC and discouraged his staff from doing so. He believed the system within the administration could only succeed if he obtained a direct, unobstructed line to President Carter and a forum to relay his views to the other members of the administration.⁴³ While Vance’s position reflected, what Gelb described as the ‘Marquis of Queensberry’ rules of fair play, it led to charges of naivety from his own staff who argued his refusal to combat Brzezinski’s influence contributed to his declining authority within the administration. As State

⁴⁰ Leslie H. Gelb, “Vance--Torn by Ideals and by Loyalty to Carter,” *The New York Times*, 29 April, 1980, A23.

⁴¹ Cyrus R. Vance, “Carter’s Foreign Policy: The Source of the Problem,” in *The Carter Presidency: Fourteen Intimate Perspectives of Jimmy Carter*, ed. Kenneth W. Thompson (Lanham: The University Press of America, 1990), 142.

⁴² Cyrus R. Vance, *Hard Choices: Critical Years in America’s Foreign Policy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 114.

⁴³ Donald F. McHenry, Interview with the author, 31 August, 2015, Washington D.C.

Department spokesperson Hodding Carter III reflected, ‘he refused to play as tough as his enemies and that was to cost a lot. You really can’t play that game in Washington.’⁴⁴

President Carter appointed both Vance and Brzezinski in the hope that their divergent views would provide a range of options when it came to decision-making. The system needed to rely on collegiality between his two closest advisors however given their backgrounds, personalities and conceptions of their roles, a positive and cooperative environment within his administration proved to be unattainable. As the bureaucratic model emphasises, personality differences and contrary conceptions of roles enhance the level of interference within the executive branch. The example of the Carter administration therefore illustrates, the extent to which bureaucratic competition can escalate and influence decision-making. As Secretary of Defense Harold Brown observed, ‘what President Carter may have missed during his selection process is that if the policy views of people differ and their personalities don’t mesh, their policy differences become magnified. Add personal rivalry and things go over the edge.’⁴⁵

As Allison and Halperin note in their analysis of the bureaucratic politics model, ‘members of an organisation, particularly career officials, come to believe that the health of their organisation is vital to the national interest. The health of the organisation, in turn, is seen to depend on maintaining influence, fulfilling its mission, and securing the necessary capabilities.’ Furthermore, when the authority of an organisation is challenged, it often provokes concern about the status of the relevant department.⁴⁶ During the Carter administration, the State Department under Vance became increasingly agitated by the influence of Brzezinski and the NSC and interpreted it as a direct threat to their position. The NSC staff meanwhile used the mandate afforded to them to affect policy through Brzezinski more forcefully. As Preston and t’Hart expand, ‘in their pursuit of power and preferred

⁴⁴ Hodding Carter III, Interview with the author, 8 September, 2015, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

⁴⁵ Brown, *Star Spangled Security*, 43.

⁴⁶ Allison and Halperin, “Bureaucratic Politics,” 48

policies, officeholders treat their departments or bureau as instruments of their ambition.’⁴⁷

Subsequently, officials in both departments advanced their own agendas in contrast to the others and engaged in various struggles to influence decision-making and the administration’s overall approach.

Scholars however have neglected, to a certain extent, the NSC-State rivalry, and have not yet examined the inter-agency wars through the lens of the bureaucratic politics model. This dissertation attempts to demonstrate how the influence of the two departments affected policy making within the administration. The creation of a decision-making structure within the administration strengthened the role of the NSC at the expense of the State Department at an early stage, which fuelled the bureaucratic wars of the Carter administration. As Ralph S. Brower and Mitchel Y. Abolafia observe in their study on bureaucratic politics hierarchy, ‘the overwhelming constraint of position among bureaucratic lower participants is relative powerlessness due to the effects of hierarchy.’⁴⁸

With respect to bureaucratic politics, this study seeks to illustrate how the influence of officials and bureaus below the main arena of decision-making affect foreign policy in its development and implementation. It contends that the policy process become subjected to conflicting voices from below as well as those from above. Whereas Allison and others confined decision-making to top ranking officials, and did not fully address the role of various bureaucracies and lower-level diplomats, this thesis demonstrates the ability of individuals in both the State Department and the NSC to affect foreign policy. This study contends that potential policy disagreements at a lower-level causes serious ramifications at higher levels of the executive branch.

⁴⁷ Preston and t’Hart, “Understanding and Evaluating Bureaucratic Politics,” 237.

⁴⁸ Ralph S. Brower and Mitchel Y. Abolafia, “Bureaucratic Politics: The View from Below,” *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 7, no. 2 (April 1997): 314.

Historiography

With the exception of James Winfield Lumberg's PhD thesis 'Conflicts Between Cyrus Vance and Zbigniew Brzezinski: A Cause of Inconsistent American Foreign Policy During the Carter Administration', no other individual study of the Vance-Brzezinski rivalry has been produced. Lumberg's study focused more on the results of the conflicts between Vance and Brzezinski, and relied heavily on secondary literature as well as the memoirs the key players of the time.⁴⁹ Furthermore, he did not enjoy the benefit of utilising recently declassified primary materials or oral history testimony to aid his findings. Individual biographies and articles on Vance and Brzezinski have detailed key aspects of their lives, careers and ideologies but scholars have neglected the increasing volume of newly declassified materials that sheds considerable light on their relationship.

David S. McLellan profiled Vance in 1985 and like Lumberg, relied on memoirs and the secondary literature. He argued that Vance and Carter shared many of the same beliefs and agreed on a variety of policy initiatives but events contributed to Brzezinski's growing influence and forced Carter to accept to his way of thinking.⁵⁰ A somewhat basic argument, McLellan neglects several key aspects such as Brzezinski's internal bureaucratic manoeuvring, the history of NSC-State rivalry, and the president's declining relationship with Vance that contributed to the shift towards the national security advisor.

A significant amount of time passed before more scholars addressed the life of Vance and his role within the Carter administration. His death in 2002 prompted new research. Melchiorre J. Laucella's article, published in 2004 examines the evolution of his views, from a supporter of containment of the Soviet Union in the 1960s to an advocate of co-operation in the 1970s, which ultimately led him into conflict with the more hawkish

⁴⁹ James Winfield Lumberg, "Conflicts Between Cyrus Vance and Zbigniew Brzezinski: A Cause of Inconsistent American Foreign Policy During the Carter Administration" (Harvard, 1989).

⁵⁰ David S. McLellan, *Cyrus Vance* (Totowa: Rowman & Allanheld, 1985), 162-169.

Brzezinski.⁵¹ Mary DuBois Sexton expanded on Laucella's article with her own 2009 thesis. Sexton analyses Vance's time as secretary of state and concludes that his resignation was the result of his declining influence in the eyes of the president. Sexton states that the thesis, 'will identify and explore the Vance-Brzezinski clashes over key foreign policies, it will maintain that battles involving principle and power were fundamentally disputes between Vance and Carter.'⁵² While her focus on the Vance-Carter relationship is informative, the thesis underappreciates Vance's disputes with Brzezinski as a cause of the administration's inconsistent approach.

Brzezinski meanwhile generated more scholarly analysis than Vance over the years due to his continued public profile and influence on U.S. foreign policy until his death in 2017. Gerry Argyris Andrianopoulos first focused on Brzezinski's role as national security advisor as a comparative study with Henry Kissinger and contrasts the ways both men operated as national security advisors, assessing their world views and influence in government. His study is important for two reasons in that it not only focuses on his time in the Carter administration but it also studies how his political views developed and influenced his outlook.⁵³ Steven Jay Campbell addressed key elements of Brzezinski's belief system in his 2003 PhD thesis and observed how his views developed throughout his early life, up to and including his time as national security advisor. He concludes that privately he remained a 'hawk' but gradually escalated his demands for assertive action to counter Soviet aggression after the administration's first year in office.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Melchiorre J. Laucella, "A Cognitive-Psychodynamic Perspective to Understanding Secretary of State Cyrus Vance's Worldview," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (June 2004): 227–271.

⁵² Mary DuBois Sexton, "The Wages of Principle and Power: Cyrus R. Vance and the Making of Foreign Policy in the Carter Administration" (PhD Thesis, Georgetown University, 2009), 17.

⁵³ Gerry Argyris Andrianopoulos, *Kissinger and Brzezinski: The NSC and the Struggle for Control of US National Security Policy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991).

⁵⁴ Steven Jay Campbell, "Brzezinski's Image of the USSR: Inferring Foreign Policy Beliefs From Multiple Sources Over Time" (PhD Thesis, University of South Carolina, 2003); See also, Kevin Embick, "The Triumph of Containment: Zbigniew Brzezinski, Jimmy Carter and the Demise of Détente" (Masters Thesis, Florida Atlantic University, 2008).

Brzezinski's career received further attention through the works of Patrick Vaughan, Andrzej Lubowski and Charles Gati's edited collection of essays on the former national security advisor. Vaughan's studies provide an overview of his early life and career prior to entering the Carter administration before proceeding to discuss his views in relation to the Soviet Union.⁵⁵ Lubowski's biography is relatively short but paints Brzezinski as an astute strategic thinker. As the title suggests, it focuses heavily on Brzezinski's attitude towards the Soviet Union, describing how his views developed and influenced the policies he pursued in government. On the Vance-Brzezinski relationship, Lubowski does not provide readers with any new angles and de-emphasises the level of disagreement between the two.⁵⁶

Similarly, Gati's work is broadly positive towards Brzezinski with four out of the six contributions from former NSC colleagues. The book charts Brzezinski's beliefs and career both before and after his spell in government. References to his relationship with Vance come from David J. Rothkopf who records Brzezinski's activities in the NSC. He draws upon several examples to illustrate his ascendancy within the administration to become Carter's key advisor but falls short of providing an extensive analysis of the bureaucratic wars of the Carter administration.⁵⁷ While the work on both Vance and Brzezinski provides an analysis of both their careers and beliefs, so far scholars have not addressed their relationship directly. A key aspect of this study, is the role their respective ideologies played in their disagreements and the secondary literature on Vance and Brzezinski is useful in identifying elements of his world views. This study utilises a wealth of primary material as well as secondary literature to provide a fresh and original perspective on the careers of both men during the Carter administration.

⁵⁵ Patrick Vaughan, "Zbigniew Brzezinski and Afghanistan," in *The Policy Makers: Shaping American Foreign Policy from 1947 to the Present*, ed. Anna Kasten Nelson (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2009); Patrick Vaughan, "Zbigniew Brzezinski and the Helsinki Final Act," in *The Crisis of Détente in Europe: From Helsinki to Gorbachev 1975-1985*, ed. Leopoldo Nuti (London: Routledge, 2010); Patrick Vaughan, *Brzezinski: A Life on the Grand Chessboard of Power* (Warsaw: Polish Scientific Publishers, 2010); Published in Polish only, yet to be released in English.

⁵⁶ Andrzej Lubowski, *Zbig: The Man Who Cracked the Kremlin* (New York: OpenRoad, 2011).

⁵⁷ Charles Gati, ed., *Zbig: The Strategy and Statecraft of Zbigniew Brzezinski* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2013); David J. Rothkopf, "Setting the Stage for the Current Era," in *Ibid.*

With a gap in the literature covering Vance and Brzezinski, the growing historiography on the Carter administration has helped illuminate key aspects of their relationship. Because of their standing, Vance and Brzezinski have received ample analysis in the secondary literature within the wider context of the Carter presidency. An analysis of the historiography reveals considerable debate and disagreement amongst scholars over their influence on U.S. foreign policy during their time in government.

Critics of the Carter administration, such as Scott Kaufman, suggest the president's inability to manage the Vance-Brzezinski relationship adversely affected U.S. foreign policy during their term in office.⁵⁸ However, within the critical school of thought, some scholars downplay the influence of their disputes. Betty Glad for example, concurs with Kaufman on Carter's deficiencies and inability to successfully co-ordinate foreign policy objectives. Although she acknowledges the feuds between the president's advisors, crucially, she suggests its impact was negligible as Carter was 'the man who made the final call on all policy matters.'⁵⁹

Historians sympathetic to the Carter presidency, find favour with Glad's assessment of the Vance-Brzezinski relationship. While the friction between them was present, events in the second half of Carter's term in office had more of an impact on his thinking. For Jerel A. Rosati, Carter underwent a transformation from 'liberal idealism to realpolitik' because of the global events taking place at the time, rather than the contrasting views between his advisors.⁶⁰ Robert A. Strong argues that commentators, 'exaggerated the differences between the national security advisor and the secretary of state, often finding conflict in instances

⁵⁸ Scott Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled: The Foreign Policy of the Carter Administration* (De Kalb: Northern Illinois Press, 2008), 128-129.

⁵⁹ Betty Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 16.

⁶⁰ Jerel A. Rosati, "Continuity and Change in the Foreign Policy Beliefs of Political Leaders: Addressing the Controversy over the Carter Administration," *Political Psychology* 9, no. 3 (September 1988): 471–505; Jerel A. Rosati, "Jimmy Carter, a Man before His Time? The Emergence and Collapse of the First Post-Cold War Presidency," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 23, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 459–76; See also, Richard C. Thornton, *The Carter Years: Towards A New Global Order* (New York: Paragon House, 1991).

where it simply did not exist.’ He also suggests that to focus on Vance and Brzezinski, ‘glosses over important continuities in Carter’s world view and approach to American foreign policy.’⁶¹

Nevertheless, the relationship is important. Vance and Brzezinski served as the two senior advisors to Carter, and led the two largest government bodies responsible for foreign policy. This thesis presents the disputes between the president’s advisors as present and having a clear imprint on the policies and actions of the Carter administration. An in-depth review of the literature reveals, a clear divergence within both schools of thought on the influence of the Vance-Brzezinski relationship but also highlights the position of this study in the historiography and offers an alternate perspective that addresses key issues surrounding the scholarly debates.

In doing so, it acknowledges and highlights Carter’s deficiencies, as outlined by critics, as well as the significant impact of world events on the president’s actions forwarded by sympathetic scholars. Crucially, at the heart of both arguments, this thesis proposes, lies the Vance-Brzezinski relationship. The combination of Carter’s weaknesses and world events heightened tensions between Vance and Brzezinski but also triggered the bureaucratic wars of the Carter administration. Moreover, by examining Brzezinski, Vance, and Carter as the thinker, doer, and decider, we can observe the dynamics of administrative decision-making in foreign policy, thereby underlining the original contribution to the historiography provided by this study.

In his memoirs, President Carter claimed that press reports of their differences at the time were either ‘inaccurate or exaggerated’ and ‘precipitated by an honest difference of opinion.’⁶² For those sympathetic to his presidency, this analysis became the accepted narrative. Released shortly before Carter left the White House in 1980, Betty Glad made no

⁶¹ Robert A Strong, *Working in the World: Jimmy Carter and the Making of American Foreign Policy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 266-269.

⁶² Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1982), 56.

reference to their relationship in her work and only referred to Brzezinski only eight times. Despite the extensive research into the president's early life and his beliefs, the lack of attention to his feuding advisors is a glaring omission. Glad does conclude, however, that Carter, more adept at campaigning, lacked the necessary leadership skills required to govern.⁶³ Her portrayal of Carter as a president unable to marry his moral principles with the ability to lead is a common theme within the historiography of the president and his administration.

Scholars have argued sympathetically that Carter's agenda, which emphasised human rights and peaceful diplomatic negotiation was side-lined because of world events taking place at the time, most notably revolutions in Iran and Nicaragua, coupled with Soviet activities in the Middle East, Africa and the Caribbean, as well as the hostage crisis. Vance and Brzezinski, divided over how to tackle these issues, both argued in favour of their respective approaches but scholars denigrated the effect of their contrasting advice on the president. Jerel A. Rosati argues that while they agreed that for the most of the administration's first year, events in Africa and the Persian Gulf swayed their approach.⁶⁴ Moreover, Carter's authority within the administration remained consistent. Erwin Hargrove stated that although divisions existed between his advisors, Carter continued to be the chief architect of the administration's strategy.⁶⁵

Kenneth Morris observed that Carter lacked a central thesis with respect to foreign policy and while he agonised over individual decisions, tensions within his administration never affected his broader outlook. 'It is difficult to understand' he wrote 'how disagreements between Vance and Brzezinski would have created serious conflicts within

⁶³ Betty Glad, *Jimmy Carter: In Search of the Great White House* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1980).

⁶⁴ Jerel A. Rosati, *The Carter Administration's Quest for Global Community: Beliefs and Their Impact on Behavior* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1987), 142; See also, Rosati, "Continuity and Change in the Foreign Policy Beliefs of Political Leaders," 471–505; Rosati, "Jimmy Carter, a Man before His Time?" 459–76; See also, Thornton, *The Carter Years*.

⁶⁵ Erwin C. Hargrove, *Jimmy Carter as President: Leadership and the Politics of the Public Good* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1988), 183-184.

Carter's broader foreign policy perspective.⁶⁶ Morris' point is supported by David Skidmore who argues that the shift in Carter's approach did not result from pressure Brzezinski. Instead, Skidmore states that 'while Brzezinski undoubtedly worked to hasten this shift, he should be seen as less the source of policy change than its fortunate beneficiary. Those who exaggerate the significance of the Vance/Brzezinski conflict confuse cause with effect.'⁶⁷

Other historians acknowledge that the difficulties between Vance and Brzezinski were present within the administration and that Carter failed to effectively manage the views of his two senior advisors. Both Gaddis Smith and John Dumbrell argue in their respective works that the divergent views of the pair contributed to the administration's inability to fashion a clear agenda. Smith argues that Carter 'thought he could pick ideas now from one, now from the other, taking the best of each' but lacked the capacity, will and experience to do so.⁶⁸ Dumbrell meanwhile addresses aspects of the bureaucratic and ideological roots of their rivalry and concludes, 'at the highest level, effective presidential adjudication of the Vance-Brzezinski conflict was lacking.' But Dumbrell and Smith follow the narrative of others and suggest that Carter's priorities shifted because of events after 1978, which benefited Brzezinski. Like Skidmore, they view Brzezinski as a beneficiary of the shift rather than architect.⁶⁹

While scholars sympathetic to Carter differ over the extent and impact of the Vance-Brzezinski relationship, the likes of Dumbrell, Strong and Smith are united in their conclusion that world events, more than the relationship between Carter's advisors, effected the administration's foreign policy agenda. This view is sharply countered by critics of Carter who highlight his inability to fashion a clear strategy and indecisiveness when faced

⁶⁶ Kenneth Morris, *Jimmy Carter: American Moralist* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 367.

⁶⁷ David Skidmore, *Reversing Course: Carter's Foreign Policy, Domestic Politics, and the Failure of Reform* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1996), 29.

⁶⁸ Gaddis Smith, *Morality, Reason, and Power: American Diplomacy in the Carter Years* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986), 245.

⁶⁹ John Dumbrell, *The Carter Presidency: A Re-Evaluation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 194-198.

with international crises, contributed to the administration's failings. Many argue that the president became torn between the ideas and policies offered by Vance and Brzezinski, unable to authoritatively follow the advice of either. But while critics have identified some of the foundations of the Vance-Brzezinski dispute, aspects of their findings require further investigation.

Donald S. Spencer and Burton I. Kaufman were succinct in their assessment of Carter, labelling his performance as amateurish and mediocre, unable to deal with the crises he faced during his presidency and harness the differences between his two key advisors. However, a wider analysis of how their disputes affected policy is lacking in both works.⁷⁰ Yael S. Aronoff argued in her article that Carter underwent a transformation during his time in office from a liberal to a hardened assertive foreign policy by 1980 and identifies the influences of both Vance and Brzezinski as integral to his shift in policy and approach. Aronoff's work however focuses more on the impact of world events on Carter's world view and does not discuss how Vance and Brzezinski used their positions to affect policy.⁷¹ Andrew Katz meanwhile in his article made no reference to the Vance-Brzezinski split in contributing to the 'contradictions' of Carter's agenda.⁷²

Burton I. Kaufman produced a revised edition of his 1993 work, with Scott Kaufman, who also released his own study in 2008. Both authors argue that historians downplayed the existence and influence of the relationship. They argue that Carter engaged in a balancing act between his departments and his advisors, which led Scott Kaufman to advance his theory of 'paper clipping.'⁷³ He asserts that Carter, unable to decide between the policies of Vance and Brzezinski, attempted to merge their respective into policies and

⁷⁰ Donald S. Spencer, *The Carter Implosion: Jimmy Carter and the Amateur Style of Diplomacy* (New York: Praeger, 1988); Burton I. Kaufman, *The Presidency of James Earl Carter, Jr.* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 1993).

⁷¹ Yael S. Aronoff, "In Like a Lamb, Out Like a Lion: The Political Conversion of Jimmy Carter," *Political Science Quarterly* 121, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 426.

⁷² Strong, *Working in the World*; Andrew Z. Katz, "Public Opinion and the Contradictions of Jimmy Carter's Foreign Policy," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (December 2000): 662–687.

⁷³ Burton I. Kaufman and Scott Kaufman, *The Presidency of James Earl Carter Jr.*, Second Edition (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2006), 44.

speeches. This fuelled confusion and heightened the feeling of competition between his advisors.⁷⁴ Beyond ‘paper clipping’ Kaufman’s study is more descriptive of the roles of Vance and Brzezinski and does not analyse their manoeuvrings with respect to certain foreign policy events.

According to Kaufman, Spencer and Aranoff, the disputes between Vance and Brzezinski were precipitated by a difference of opinion however their studies focus more on Carter than his warring advisors. Despite his attempts to balance the views and policies of his advisors, the president was unable to decisively choose between them, which contributed to the administration’s failure to forge a clear and consistent foreign policy agenda. However, this assessment neglects Vance and Brzezinski’s activity within the administration. Certainly, Carter’s failings are a key aspect of this study however analysing the roles of his advisors is crucial to understanding the foreign policy process and how their disputes had a visible impact on policy.

Vance and Brzezinski differed on a variety of issues but, significantly, they both desired to control policy development and implementation. Brzezinski aggressively advanced his own ideas at the expense of the policies and approaches of Vance, which became an important factor in the internal wrangling within the administration. To critics like Itai Nartzizenfield Sneh, the national security advisor pursued an agenda that did not resemble the principles that Carter stood for and Vance promoted. The chapter in which he makes his claim is subtitled ‘Brzezinski and the NSC undermine Carter’s ideals.’⁷⁵ Timothy Maga meanwhile described the secretary of state as a ‘kindly bureaucrat’ inferior to Brzezinski’s ideas and approaches. Maga however provides very little explanation as to why this happened to be the case.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 128-129.

⁷⁵ Itai Nartzizenfield Sneh, *The Future Almost Arrived: How Jimmy Carter Failed to Change U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008).

⁷⁶ Timothy P. Maga, *The World of Jimmy Carter: US Foreign Policy: 1977-1981* (West Haven: University of New Haven Press, 1994), 13.

Although only a brief summation, Sneh and Maga's assessment reflects the view of several historians that the relationship between Vance and Brzezinski was more than a difference of opinion but also a struggle to control the foreign policy process. Two former State Department officials during the Carter administration, Leslie H. Gelb and Anthony Lake with I.M. Destler, suggested that Carter shifted away from the policies and approaches of Vance toward Brzezinski, due to the national security advisor's growing assertiveness, which attracted the president to his ideas and policies.⁷⁷ John Prados and former NSC staffer Christopher Shoemaker argue that Carter came to trust Brzezinski to manage foreign policy more than Vance and the State Department as the NSC proved to be more adept at dealing with issues as they arose and allowed him to gain control of foreign policy.⁷⁸

However, these works neglect the president's relationship with his advisors. A key aspect of this thesis, is the extent to which Carter's bond with Brzezinski influenced the national security advisor's standing within the administration, which is often overlooked in the historiography. As this thesis demonstrates, it was a crucial element in understanding how relations between the president, the national security advisor and the secretary of state developed. Douglas Brinkley and Peter Bourne suggest that, although Carter and Vance shared similar ideologies, the president and Brzezinski's close personal rapport created a strong working relationship. Coupled with his and Vance's differing backgrounds, the president was naturally more aligned to Brzezinski than the secretary of state.⁷⁹ Bourne, the president's physician, writes that Carter's background led him to rely heavily on the advice of close confidants that included Brzezinski as opposed to Vance, who he considered a Washington insider.⁸⁰ Although Brinkley and Bourne's broader evaluation of the administration endorses sympathetic historians like Dumbrell, Smith and Skidmore, they

⁷⁷ Destler, Gelb, and Lake, *Our Own Worst Enemy*.

⁷⁸ John Prados, *Keepers of the Keys: A History of the National Security Council from Truman to Bush* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1991); Christopher C. Shoemaker, *The NSC Staff: Counseling the Council* (Boulder: Westview Press, Inc., 1991).

⁷⁹ Douglas Brinkley, "The Rising Stock of Jimmy Carter: The 'Hands On' Legacy of Our Thirty-ninth President," *Diplomatic History* 20, no. 4 (Fall 1996): 517-518.

⁸⁰ Peter J. Bourne, *Jimmy Carter: A Comprehensive Biography from Plains to Post-Presidency* (New York: Scribner, 1997).

nevertheless briefly expose an underreported aspect of the relationship between Carter, Vance and Brzezinski, which this thesis seeks to analyse further.

The bureaucratic arrangements within the Carter administration have also been cited as factor in the disputes between Vance and Brzezinski. Raymond A. Moore suggests that the ‘seeds of later difficulties between Vance and Brzezinski were planted early on’ through the creation of a bureaucratic system that favoured the national security advisor.⁸¹ Barry Rubin similarly intimates that in addition to world events ‘Brzezinski’s bureaucratic skill also helped him come out on top, leading one state official to charge the national security advisor “never won on substance.”’⁸² Kevin Mulchay concurred on the bureaucratic advantages afforded to Brzezinski but also stressed the authority of the secretary of state had weakened upon entering the administration due to Henry Kissinger’s dominance of foreign policy during the Nixon and Ford administration. While Vance attempted to re-assert his and his department’s authority, he proved unable to do so due to Brzezinski’s predominance over foreign affairs.⁸³

John Prados and Jean A. Garrison also noted that Brzezinski influenced policy as he controlled certain bureaucratic procedures through various committees and building up his staff to challenge the State Department.⁸⁴ I.M Destler meanwhile re-visited the Vance-Brzezinski relationship in his work with Ivo Daalder and echoed the views of others that centralisation in the Carter White House served only to exaggerate tensions between Vance and Brzezinski, with the latter coming out on top in the policy wars as a result.⁸⁵ In the same

⁸¹ Raymond A. Moore, “The Carter Presidency and Foreign Policy,” in *The Carter Years: The President and Policy Making*, ed. M. Glenn Abernathy, Dilys M. Hill, and Phil Williams (London: Frances Pinter, 1984), 63.

⁸² Barry M. Rubin, *Secrets of State: The State Department and the Struggle over U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 175.

⁸³ Kevin V. Mulcahy, “Foreign Policy Making in the Carter and Reagan Administrations,” in *Decisions of the Highest Order*, ed. Inderfuth and Johnson.

⁸⁴ Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*; Jean A. Garrison, *Games Advisors Play: Foreign Policy in the Nixon and Carter Administrations* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999); See also, Paul D. Hoyt and Jean A. Garrison, “Political Manipulation within the Small Group: Foreign Policy Advisers in the Carter Administration,” in *Beyond Groupthink: Political Group Dynamics and Foreign Policy-Making*, ed. Paul ‘t Hart, Eric Stern, Bengt Sundelius (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

⁸⁵ Daadler and Destler, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*.

year, John P. Burke provided his own study on the NSC. Although Burke did not devote a full chapter to Brzezinski, he did briefly address his role and argued that he manipulated the internal dynamics of the administration to promote his own policies and approaches.⁸⁶

The current historiography identifies aspects of the bureaucratic apparatus within the administration and how Brzezinski utilised his position to undermine Vance and promote his own ideas to court Carter's favour. While the works of Moore, Rubin, Prados and others identify the bureaucratic sources of the conflict between Vance and Brzezinski, they overlook the president's relationship with Brzezinski as a factor in explaining his elevated status within the administration and how he eventually side-lined Vance. By engaging with the secondary literature, this thesis argues that due to their close relationship, Brzezinski was granted bureaucratic advantages and autonomy within the administration by Carter to develop policies and approaches. Consequently, his disputes with Vance escalated early on and while Carter attempted to balance the views of his advisors, he ultimately became unable to manage their differences.

Numerous studies, which focus on individual policies or events that occurred during the Carter presidency, highlight the conflict between Vance and Brzezinski. An analysis of the literature on individual case studies reveals the areas of conflict as well as co-operation between the two adversaries. The current historiography not only informs this study, it also represents an opportunity to add a new perspective to the literature. Although the breakdown in relations between Vance and Brzezinski is cited as a factor in the administration's formation of policies and responses to world events, some scholars have ignored or underreported the impact of their disputes on specific issues. A detailed assessment of their attitudes and approaches to various topics adds greater understanding of the development of policy under the Carter administration as well as their position on specific policies and events in the international arena.

⁸⁶ Burke, *Honest Broker?*

The issue that divided them above all proved to be U.S.-Soviet relations and the administration's approach to the Cold War. The literature on the Cold War adversaries is extensive and with respect to the Carter administration, many accounts reveal the disparities in policies and approaches between Vance and Brzezinski vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. These differences featured prominently in respect to individual issues, for example arms control and human rights, or within particular regions such as the Persian Gulf and Africa.⁸⁷

The Carter-Brezhnev project in the early to mid-1990s ignited scholarly interest in the administration's Soviet policy. The collection benefited from newly released documentation as well as the oral history projects conducted at the time and led Odd Arne Westad to produce an analysis of US-Soviet relations during the Carter administration. Westad's work contains a selection of essays from scholars and academics that analyse the fall of détente. However, an extensive analysis of Vance and Brzezinski's roles is lacking.⁸⁸ Former NSC special assistant Robert M. Gates meanwhile published his own account of the period, a year before Westad's work, and argued that that the differences between Vance and Brzezinski were sharpest with respect to the Soviet Union.⁸⁹

In the 2000s, Jussi M. Hanhimäki gave close attention to the tensions between Vance and Brzezinski and argues that the struggles between the two contributed to a sense of confusion around the administration's cold war policy however he does not elaborate further and the chapters become somewhat of a chronological account thereafter.⁹⁰ Melvyn P. Leffler and Barbara Zanchetta reached similar conclusions in their respective studies. Both suggest the 'switch' in Carter's approach vis-à-vis the Soviet Union mirrored the differing

⁸⁷ For a comprehensive overview of U.S.-Soviet relations see, Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1985); Trevor J. McCormick, *America's Half Century: United States Foreign Policy in the Cold War* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995); Ronald E. Powaski, *The Cold War: The United States and the Soviet Union, 1917-1991* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁸⁸ Odd Arne Westad, *The Fall of Détente: Soviet-American Relations During the Carter Years* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1997).

⁸⁹ Robert M. Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

⁹⁰ Jussi M. Hanhimäki, *The Rise and Fall of Détente: American Foreign Policy and the Transformation of the Cold War* (Washington D.C.: Potomac Books, 2013).

perspectives and approaches of Vance and Brzezinski.⁹¹ Brian J. Auten argues otherwise. He suggests that more complex strategic defence reasons motivated Carter's shift in approach towards the Soviet Union by the end of his presidency. While the influence of Brzezinski in the administration cannot be ignored, it did not occur because of the Vance-Brzezinski split.⁹² Daniel J. Sargent also acknowledges tensions within the administration but notes the administration struggled with domestic and international difficulties that also account for the change in focus of their approach.⁹³

In respect to individual cases associated with the administration's policies to the Soviet Union, SALT II negotiations proved to be significant. Viewed as a means of promoting cordial relations between the two superpowers, the arms control agreements became subjected to the differing perspectives of Vance and Brzezinski. Strobe Talbott produced his account of the SALT negotiations on the eve of the administration's departure from office but his analysis of the divisions between the president's advisors and their departments do not benefit from the declassification of primary documents.⁹⁴ Similarly, William G. Hyland published a brief account of the early SALT II negotiations. Hyland, a former NSC staffer, provides an inside assessment of the early approach to the Soviets in March 1977 and of the various issues that existed. However, the study lacks significant insight after the author's departure from the administration in October 1977.⁹⁵ William W. Newman meanwhile uses the example of SALT negotiations to note the bureaucratic tensions that existed within the administration between Vance and Brzezinski on arms control. In particular, he outlined how Brzezinski utilised the Special Co-Ordination Committee (SCC) to influence the administration's position as well as his recruitment of

⁹¹ Melvyn P. Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007); Barbara Zanchetta, *The Transformation of American International Power in the 1970s* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

⁹² Brian J. Auten, *Carter's Conversion: The Hardening of American Defense Policy* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2009).

⁹³ Daniel J. Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed: The Remaking American Foreign Relations in the 1970s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

⁹⁴ Strobe Talbott, *Endgame: The Inside Story of SALT II* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980).

⁹⁵ William G. Hyland, *Mortal Rivals: Superpower Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987).

allies within the cabinet to advise Carter to accept his ‘deep cuts’ approach as opposed to Vance’s proposal of more modest reductions.⁹⁶

Other issues, such as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, received notable attention from scholars in recent years but often placed within the wider context of U.S.-Soviet relations with a lack of analysis on the approaches of Vance and Brzezinski.⁹⁷ While Africa policy in the administration’s first year saw relative unity between Vance and Brzezinski, the following year saw tensions ignited between the president’s key advisors over how the United States should respond to the Ogaden War in the Horn of Africa and the conflict in the Shaba region of Angola. While Brzezinski does provide an account of the crisis in the Horn of Africa, Carter and Vance omitted this period from their memoirs and all three failed to mention events in the Shaba.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, the administration’s approach to the Cold War in Africa received attention through the general works of David A. Korn, Morris H. Morley, Jeffrey A. Lefebvre, Robert G. Patman and George Wright.⁹⁸ R. Benneson DeJanes meanwhile devoted a chapter to the administration’s approach to Africa in Rosenbaum and

⁹⁶ William W. Newman, *Managing National Security Policy: The President and the Process* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003).

⁹⁷ For key texts on the administration’s response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, see Melvyn P. Leffler, “From the Truman Doctrine to the Carter Doctrine: Lessons and Dilemmas of the Cold War,” *Diplomatic History* 7, no. 4 (October 1983): 245–266; Thomas T. Hammond, *Red Flag Over Afghanistan: The Communist Coup, the Soviet Invasion, and the Consequences* (Boulder: Westview Press, Inc., 1984); Diego Cordovez and Selig G. Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan: The Inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); John K. Cooley, *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America and International Terrorism*. Third Edition (London: Pluto Press, 2002); Vaughan, “Zbigniew Brzezinski and Afghanistan”; Seth G. Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires: America’s War in Afghanistan* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010); Nicholas Evan Sarantakes, *Dropping the Torch: Jimmy Carter, the Olympic Boycott, and the Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Panagiotis Dimitrakis, *The Secret War in Afghanistan: The Soviet Union, China and Anglo-American Intelligence in the Afghan War* (2012: I.B. Tarius & Co. Ltd., 2012); Bruce Riedel, *What We Won: America’s Secret War in Afghanistan, 1979-89* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2014).

⁹⁸ David A. Korn, *Ethiopia, the United States, and the Soviet Union* (London: Croom Helm, 1986); Morris H. Morley, *Imperial State and Revolution: The United States and Cuba, 1952-1986* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Jeffrey A. Lefebvre, *Arms for the Horn: U.S. Security Policy in Ethiopia and Somalia 1953-1991* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991); Robert G. Patman, *The Soviet Union in the Horn of Africa: The Diplomacy of Intervention and Disengagement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); George Wright, *The Destruction of a Nation: United States’ Policy Towards Angola Since 1945* (London: Pluto Press, 1997); See also, Radoslav A. Yordanov, *The Soviet Union and the Horn of Africa during the Cold War: Between Ideology and Pragmatism* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2016).

Ugrinsky's collection in which she contrasts the regionalist view of Africa as represented by Vance and the State Department against Brzezinski and the NSC's globalist approach and uses the case of the crisis in the Horn of Africa to detail some of the tensions that existed.⁹⁹

More extensive studies of their approach to the Cold War in Africa did not arrive until after 2000.¹⁰⁰ Donna R. Jackson wrote extensively on the Carter administration's approach towards the crisis in the Horn of Africa between 2007 and 2010 through her book and articles. Utilising newly released primary documents as well as oral histories, Jackson's studies illuminate the discord between Vance and Brzezinski over their interpretations of the crisis as well as their proposed responses.¹⁰¹ Louise Woodroffe expanded on Jackson's work and demonstrates effectively how their rival positions produced a contradictory response from the United States. Coupled together, Jackson and Woodroffe's contributions illustrate the degree of conflict between the advisors on the issue of the Horn of Africa as well as their wider perceptions of U.S. foreign policy.¹⁰²

The administration's response to the Shaba II invasion, still has not received an individual examination but did feature in two studies by Piero Gleijeses, as well as William M. LeoGrande and Peter Kornbluh who examined Cuban intervention in Africa and Angola.¹⁰³ Nancy Mitchell did address both the Shaba II invasion and the Ogaden War, in

⁹⁹ R. Benneson DeJanes, "Managing Foreign Policy: Carter and the Regionalist Experiment Toward Africa, January 1977-May 1978," in *Jimmy Carter: Foreign Policy and Post-Presidential Years*, ed. Herbert D. Rosenbaum and Alexej Ugrinsky (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994).

¹⁰⁰ Paul B. Henze, *The Horn of Africa: From War to Peace* (London: MacMillan Press Ltd, 1991); Henze, a former NSC staffer, published a general text on the Horn but did not provide an in-depth analysis of the administration's approach to the war in the Ogaden.

¹⁰¹ Donna R Jackson, *Jimmy Carter and the Horn of Africa: Cold War Policy in Ethiopia and Somalia* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 2007); Donna R Jackson, "The Carter Administration and Somalia," *Diplomatic History* 31, no. 4 (September 2007): 703–21; Donna R Jackson, "The Ogaden War and the Demise of Détente," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 632, no. 1 (November 2010): 26–40.

¹⁰² Louise Woodroffe, *Buried in the Sands of the Ogaden: The United States, the Horn of Africa and the Demise of Détente* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2013).

¹⁰³ Piero Gleijeses, "Moscow's Proxy? Cuba and Africa 1976-1988," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 8, no. 4 (Fall 2006): 98-146; Piero Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom: Havana, Washington, Pretoria, and the Struggle for Southern Africa 1976-1991* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013); William M. LeoGrande and Peter Kornbluh, *Back Channel to Cuba: The Hidden History of Negotiations between Washington and Havana* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

her exhaustive 2016 account with the author asserting that Vance and Brzezinski's contrasting views of détente and approaches to the Soviet heavily influenced the administration's response to these crises.¹⁰⁴ Given the lack of attention given to the proxy wars in Africa in the memoirs of principal players, the contributions are invaluable in identifying elements of the Vance-Brzezinski rivalry within the administration's approach to Africa. They help recognise aspects of their ideologies in relation to key events as well as policies such as democratic advancement and human rights.

The administration's Cold War policy became influenced by Carter's emphasis on human rights. In respect to other issues, it did not create intense divisions between Vance and Brzezinski but the implementation of the policy caused friction within the bureaucracy. Joshua Muravchik highlights resistance from elements of the State Department bureaucracy, as a factor in the issues Carter's human rights agenda faced.¹⁰⁵ While Vance nor Brzezinski were directly involved in the formation of the policy however, the president's advisor did disagree on the implementation of human rights in certain cases. For example, Vance opposed a violent crackdown in Iran and a military takeover in Nicaragua while Brzezinski argued in favour of both. The secretary of state, keen to avoid complications in SALT negotiations, asked for the administration to resist criticising Soviet human rights abuses but Brzezinski and Carter chastised them. David F. Schmitz and Vanessa Walker outline several disagreements in respect to human rights in their article.¹⁰⁶ Ultimately their differences were

¹⁰⁴ Nancy Mitchell, *Jimmy Carter in Africa: Race and the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016).

¹⁰⁵ Joshua Muravchik, *The Uncertain Crusade: Jimmy Carter and the Dilemmas of Human Rights Policy* (Lanham, MD: Hamilton Press, 1986); See also, David D. Newsom, ed., *The Diplomacy of Human Rights* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1987).

¹⁰⁶ David A. Schmitz and Vanessa Walker, "Jimmy Carter and the Foreign Policy of Human Rights: The Development of a Post-Cold War Foreign Policy," *Diplomatic History* 28, no. 1 (2004): 113–44.

less about whether the policy should be adopted but more about in what instances it should be applied too.¹⁰⁷

Arab-Israeli peace became one of the few areas of collaboration and cordial relations between Vance-Brzezinski and their respective departments in their pursuit of an accord between Israel and Egypt. It is an important case study in analysing why co-operation rather than conflict existed within the administration as opposed to other areas of foreign policy. There are several reasons for this. As the historiography observes, Carter took a clear interest in Arab-Israeli affairs and resolved to negotiate an agreement to secure peace in the region. Vance and Brzezinski both subscribed to the president's wishes and worked closely with one another in that endeavour. Also, the bureaucracy below the principals functioned effectively. The key players, NSC staffer William B. Quandt and Assistant Secretary of State Alfred L. Atherton and Harold H. Saunders co-operated with another to lay the foundations for what became the Camp David accords.

Most scholars agree that the roots of their co-operation on Arab-Israeli issues lay in an agreement on the principles of a peace accord as well as bureaucratic harmony between the principals and their departments. Quandt, the NSC staffer responsible for Arab-Israeli affairs, detailed this in his memoir.¹⁰⁸ More recently, Jørgen Jensehaugen analysed the ideological roots of the administration's position, which stemmed from a report composed by the Brookings Institute. The report, which featured contributions from Brzezinski, Quandt as well as future State Department officials, became broadly accepted by the

¹⁰⁷ For further analysis of the Carter administration's human rights policy see; Lincon P. Bloomfield, "From Ideology to Program to Policy: Tracking the Carter Human Rights Policy," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 2, no. 1 (Autumn 1982): 1–12; Glenn Mower Jr., *Human Rights and American Foreign Policy: The Carter and Reagan Experiences* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1987); Clair Apodaca, *Understanding U.S. Human Rights Policy: A Paradoxical Legacy* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Mary E. Stuckey, *Jimmy Carter, Human Rights, and the National Agenda* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2008); Christian Philip Peterson, "The Carter Administration and the Promotion of Human Rights in the Soviet Union, 1977-1981," *Diplomatic History* 38, no. 3 (2014): 628–56; Joe Renouard, *Human Rights in American Foreign Policy: From the 1960s to the Soviet Collapse* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); See also, Rosati, *The Carter Administration's Quest for Global Community*; Hargrove, *Jimmy Carter as President*; Sneh, *The Future Almost Arrived*.

¹⁰⁸ William B. Quandt, *Camp David: Peacemaking and Politics* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1986); See also, William B. Quandt, "Dealing with the Middle East," in *Zbig*, ed. Gati.

administration and, as Jensehaugen argues, the outline for how to proceed with negotiations.¹⁰⁹ Darren J. McDonald and Daniel Strieff in their articles analyse the personal backgrounds and beliefs of both men in relation to Arab-Israeli issues.¹¹⁰

The administration's attempts to normalise relations with the People's Republic of China also became a victim of the bureaucratic wars of the Carter administration. Differing interpretations between the principals and their departments over the exact timing and nature of establishing diplomatic relations created bureaucratic friction. The episode featured in the works of Robert S. Ross and Jim Mann who both contributed to the historiography with their general accounts of U.S.-Sino relations, which encompasses the period of normalisation.¹¹¹ The most explosive account of the period came from Patrick Tyler, firstly in an article that became a chapter in his general history on U.S.-Sino relations since World War Two. Tyler details the bureaucratic disharmony that emanated in reaction to Brzezinski's attempts to normalise relations, particularly from State Department officials.¹¹² Tyler's article concurs with other authors who covered the period, such as Jean A. Garrison who asserts that normalisation occurred because of the bureaucratic manoeuvrings of Brzezinski at the expense of Vance and the State Department and his increasingly assertive role within the administration.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Jørgen Jensehaugen, "Blueprint for Arab-Israeli Peace? President Carter and the Brookings Report," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 25, no. 3 (August 2014): 492–508; See also, Kenneth W. Stein, *Heroic Diplomacy: Sadat, Kissinger, Carter, Begin and the Quest for Arab-Israeli Peace* (London: Routledge, 1999).

¹¹⁰ Darren J. McDonald, "Blessed Are the Policy Makers: Jimmy Carter's Faith-Based Approach to the Arab-Israeli Conflict," *Diplomatic History* 39, no. 3 (June 2015): 452–76; Daniel Strieff, *Jimmy Carter and the Middle East: The Politics of Presidential Diplomacy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); For an account of the negotiations at Camp David, see Quandt, *Camp David*; Lawrence Wright, *Thirteen Days in September: Carter, Begin, and Sadat at Camp David* (London: Oneworld, 2014).

¹¹¹ Robert S. Ross, *Negotiating Cooperation: The United States and China, 1969-1989* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995); Jim Mann, *About Face: A History of America's Curious Relationship with China from Nixon to Clinton* (New York: Knopf, 1998).

¹¹² Patrick Tyler, "The (Ab)normalization of U.S.-Chinese Relations," *Foreign Affairs* 38, no. 5 (October 1999): 93–122; Patrick Tyler, *A Great Wall: Six Presidents and China: An Investigative History* (New York: Public Affairs, 1999).

¹¹³ Jean A. Garrison, "Explaining Change in the Carter Administration's China Policy: Foreign Policy Adviser Manipulation of the Policy Agenda," *Asian Affairs: An American Review* 29, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 83–98.

The individual roles of Vance and Brzezinski in relation to normalisation received attention from Breck Walker, Warren I. Cohen and Nancy Bernkopf Tucker in their respective works. Walker addresses Vance in his article, which analyses his role in the normalisation talks and argues that scholars degraded Vance's input in negotiations after Brzezinski's visit to China in 1978 and portrayed him as an ineffective operator. Walker instead contends that Vance played a crucial role and contributed positively thereafter. In doing so, he somewhat downplays the level of bureaucratic disharmony that emanated from normalisation, particularly involving lower-level State Department officials.¹¹⁴ Cohen and Tucker meanwhile documented the national security advisor's desire to establish diplomatic relations in their chapter in Charles Gati's collection. Despite a brief summation of his role in the talks, it nevertheless identifies his rationale for forcefully arguing in favour of establishing relations and its wider impact on policy.¹¹⁵ The historiography on normalisation is important in not only identifying a major shift in policy but also within the internal dynamics of the administration as Brzezinski sought to take on the role of the 'doer' by negotiating directly with the Chinese in addition to his position as 'the thinker.'

The 1979 revolution in Iran and hostage crisis became a major flashpoint in the disputes between Vance and Brzezinski and came to have a significant impact on the administration. The potential loss of a Cold War ally divided the president's advisors, as did attempts to rescue the American diplomatic staff. The revolution and hostage crisis, dissected regularly by scholars over the years, offers a range of perspectives on how the tensions between Vance and Brzezinski developed. In the years following the revolution and hostage crisis, a number of works attempted to tackle the administration's response to both

¹¹⁴ Breck Walker, "'Friends, But Not Allies'—Cyrus Vance and the Normalization of Relations with China," *Diplomatic History* 33, no. 4 (September 2009): 579–594.

¹¹⁵ Warren I. Cohen and Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, "Beijing's Friend, Moscow's Foe," in Zbig, ed. Gati; See also, Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, *Strait Talk: United States-Taiwan Relations and the Crisis with China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

events. Gary Sick, a former NSC staffer, outlined some of the disputes that emerged during both events in the form of an insider account.¹¹⁶

Former State Department officials Warren Christopher and Paul H. Kreisberg produced an edited collection of essays on the administration's approach however the Vance-Brzezinski dynamic did not receive significant attention.¹¹⁷ Barry M. Rubin, Pierre Salinger, Michael Leeden, William H Lewis and James Bill produced studies on the administration's attempts to save the Shah of Iran and negotiate the safe return of the hostages. Rubin and Salinger however failed to address the internal division within the administration while Leeden and Lewis as well as James Bill criticised the administration's handling of the crisis. Bill condemns Brzezinski but sympathises with the efforts of Vance and others in the State Department to overcome the interference of the national security advisor in influencing policy.¹¹⁸

Alexander Moens addressed the roles of Vance, Brzezinski and others in his article and argues that their conflicting approaches towards the revolution gave the president a dilemma but he also argues that the latter's interference in the crisis complicated the issue. Moreover, it left Carter unable to come to a clear decision on how best to save the Shah and protect American interests in Iran.¹¹⁹ David Patrick Houghton published a valuable text that contains one of the few interviews conducted with Vance on hostage crisis. While not

¹¹⁶ Gary Sick, *All Fall Down: America's Fateful Encounter with Iran* (London: I.B. Taurus & Co. Ltd., 1985).

¹¹⁷ Warren Christopher and Paul H. Kreisberg, eds., *American Hostages in Iran: The Conduct of a Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

¹¹⁸ Barry M. Rubin, *Paved with Good Intentions: The American Experience and Iran* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); Pierre Salinger, *America Held Hostage: The Secret Negotiations* (London: André Deutsch Limited, 1981); Michael Leeden and William H. Lewis, *Debacle: The American Failure in Iran* (New York: Vintage Books, 1982); James A. Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion: The Tragedy of American-Iranian Relations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); For further analysis of the domestic causes of the revolution, see Charles Kurzman, *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004).

¹¹⁹ Alexander Moens, "President Carter's Advisers and the Fall of the Shah," *Political Science Quarterly* 106, no. 2 (Summer 1991): 211–37; For more recent analysis of the administration's approach to Iran see, Christian Emery, *US Foreign Policy and the Iranian Revolution: The Cold War Dynamics of Engagement and Strategic Alliance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Christian Emery, "United States Iran Policy 1979–1980: The Anatomy and Legacy of American Diplomacy," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 24, no. 4 (2013): 619–39.

addressing the dispute directly, within his work, Houghton investigates how the pair attempted to forge their own approaches to both the revolution and hostage crisis.¹²⁰ David Harris meanwhile produced an exhaustive account of the period but lacked critical analysis of decisions taken while Jean-Charles Brotons addressed the role of U.S. officials during both crises. However, his account lacks sufficient analysis of the arguments and internal manoeuvrings at the time while some players failed to get sufficient attention.¹²¹ David Farber and Mark Bowden meanwhile concentrated on the administration's reaction to the hostage crisis as well as the role of the president's advisors in affecting decision-making.¹²²

While the Iranian revolution receives frequent attention from scholars, similar, almost identical events in Nicaragua have not produced a wealth of studies. The fall of the dictator Anastasio Somoza in 1979 led to the rise of the leftist insurgent group the Sandinistas and divided the former president's advisors in much the same way as the Shah's fall had done. Curiously however, neither Carter, Brzezinski or Vance provide an account of Somoza's downfall in their memoirs. Two former administration officials, Robert A. Pastor from the NSC and Anthony Lake from the State Department produced their own accounts of the revolution. Both studies analyse the internal debates within the administration and detail the level of disagreement that emanated between Vance, Brzezinski and their departments over the administration's approach to Somoza's crumbling regime.¹²³ General overviews of U.S. policy towards Nicaragua came from Morris H. Morley, Robert Kagan and William M.

¹²⁰ David Patrick Houghton, *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Iran Hostage Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

¹²¹ David Harris, *The Crisis: The President, The Prophet, and The Shah - 1979 and the Coming of Militant Islam* (New York: Little, Brown and Co., 2004); Jean-Charles Brotons, *U.S. Officials and the Fall of the Shah: Some Safe Contraction Interpretations* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010).

¹²² David Farber, *Taken Hostage: The Iran Hostage Crisis and America's First Encounter with Radical Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Mark Bowden, *Guests of the Ayatollah: The Iran Hostage Crisis: The First Battle in America's War with Militant Islam* (New York: Grove Press, 2006); Donette Murray, *US Foreign Policy and Iran: American-Iranian Relations Since the Islamic Revolution* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Luca Trenta, *Risk and Presidential Decision-Making: The Emergence of Foreign Policy Crises* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

¹²³ Robert A. Pastor, *Condemned to Repetition: The United States and Nicaragua* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987); Anthony Lake, *Somoza Falling: A Case Study of Washington at Work* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989).

LeoGrande.¹²⁴ Mauricio Solaún and William Michael Schmidli addressed the U.S. intervention in Nicaragua directly in their works. However, an extensive analysis, utilising the primary documents available, on Vance and Brzezinski's roles in the fall of Somoza is still lacking.¹²⁵

Methodology

Building upon the secondary literature, this study utilises a wealth of archival material on the Carter presidency to help construct some of the key arguments in this thesis. Memorandums, policy papers, speech drafts shed considerable light on the attitudes and approaches within the administration. The main source of archival material, the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library in Atlanta, Georgia, provided a huge array of documents. Many of the materials, meticulously arranged and catalogued from Brzezinski and his department provide a clear account of how the NSC functioned under the national security advisor. The National Archives at College Park and the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) account for documents connected to the State Department.

The personal files of Cyrus Vance, held at the Sterling Memorial Library at Yale University, provided a valuable glimpse into his private thoughts when he entered the administration. The policy papers forwarded to Carter, compared to documents composed by Brzezinski and the NSC held at the Carter library, reveal the divergences between the president's advisors on what approach the administration needed to take upon entering office. They illustrate how Vance wanted the State Department to play an important role in policy development and implementation. Conversely, the communications between Brzezinski and the president held at the Carter library reveal how his and the NSC's

¹²⁴ Morris H. Morley, *Washington, Somoza and the Sandinistas: Stage and Regime in US Policy Toward Nicaragua, 1969-1981* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Robert Kagan, *A Twilight Struggle: American Power and Nicaragua, 1977-1990* (New York: Free Press, 1996); William M. LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard: The United States in Central America, 1977-1992* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

¹²⁵ Mauricio Solaún, *U.S. Intervention and Regime Change in Nicaragua* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005); William Michael Schmidli, "The Most Sophisticated Intervention We Have Seen": The Carter Administration and the Nicaraguan Crisis, 1978-1979," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 23, no. 1 (March 2012): 66-86.

priorities differed. This demonstrates how foundations of the rivalry existed before they entered office. Moreover, the documents contain both individual's private thoughts and feelings towards one another as well as their grievances and Carter's reaction to them.

The primary documents at these archives have limitations, however. Official papers do not always present a clear picture of decisions reached or record the disputes between individuals and organisations. For example, many of the memorandums of conversations (MEMCONS) recorded during the Carter administration's time in office surmise points made by various individuals or detail the formal minutes of meetings but few documents provide word-for-word transcripts. There is also an issue around the declassification status of documents that record deliberations in detail. While a considerable number of materials from the Carter years have been declassified and made public, many related to key events, remain unreleased preventing further analysis of the debates and discussions within the administration. Throughout the course of the research, I submitted Freedom of Information requests, but not all of these requests were handled in a timely enough fashion, and while this might, in theory, leave a gap in the research, the full body of the 'known' record is contained within this project.

While the documents provide useful evidence, at times they leave an unclear picture of events. Even former National Security Advisor and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger conceded, 'what is written in diplomatic documents never bears much relation to reality.'¹²⁶ This led some scholars of the bureaucratic politics model to dispute their value and instead endorse witness testimony as an effective avenue of research. In his analysis of bureaucratic politics model, J. Garry Clifford briefly discussed the drawbacks of collecting evidence to support the application of the theory and noted 'given the pitfalls of getting access to recent

¹²⁶ Henry Kissinger quoted in Jonathan Soffer, "Oral History and the History of American Foreign Relations," *Journal of American History* 82, no. 2 (September 1995): 609.

government documents, analysts of bureaucratic politics relied heavily on personal interviews.’¹²⁷

To flesh out and uncover any undocumented narrative, anecdotes, and evidence of the bureaucratic rivalry, I conducted interviews with Carter administration officials and utilised oral histories conducted by researchers before me. As Russell L. Riley notes, in his analysis of the practice of oral history in relation to the Clinton presidential history project, ‘there are silences in any written record - oral history interviews can fill those silences.’¹²⁸ This study utilises oral histories and interviews to understand the feelings, motivations and impressions of those who served in the Carter administration and witnessed the disputes between Vance, Brzezinski and their departments first hand. Oral histories conducted with cabinet members of the Carter administration, including the president and Brzezinski, at the Miller Center for Public Affairs at the University of Virginia and the Carter library, provide a significant insight into the administration’s foreign policy agenda at a high level. Similarly, the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library interviewed Vance and Brzezinski in the late 1960s, and both offered an insight into their backgrounds and experiences during their first ventures into government. The oral history collection by the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training yields a considerable archive of interviews with former diplomats, which includes lower-level members of the Carter administration while the recollections collated by the Carter-Brezhnev project conference and the Foundation of Iranian Studies provide accounts on specific foreign policy issues.

Many of the oral histories conducted by the aforementioned institutions, although informative to this study, provide a somewhat general overview as in many cases the questions do not specifically address the Vance-Brzezinski relationship. To bridge this gap, seven oral histories interviews were conducted for this thesis with former members of the NSC staff and former officials from the State Department. While oral histories are restricted

¹²⁷ Clifford, “Bureaucratic Politics,” 93

¹²⁸ Russell L. Riley, “Presidential Oral History: The Clinton Presidential History Project,” *The Oral History Review* 34, no. 2 (Summer - Autumn 2007): 86.

to specific topics not relevant to this study, the interviewees were specifically questioned on the effect of the Vance-Brzezinski relationship on the foreign policy of the administration.

The individuals interviewed were selected specifically to present a fair and balanced presentation of the time with four individuals (Assistant Secretary of State for Political and Military Affairs Leslie H. Gelb, UN Ambassador Donald F. McHenry, Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs W. Hodding Carter III and Iran Desk Officer Henry Precht) from the State Department under Vance and three (NSC staffers Gary Sick and William B. Quandt who were responsible for Iran and Middle East affairs and Special Assistant Robert M. Gates) from Brzezinski's staff. Each individual dealt with a different issue or region where conflict existed between the two men, and their recollections help illustrate the point made by one interviewee that 'they would disagree on almost everything.'¹²⁹

The interviews were conducted in the homes of five of the seven individuals, with one conducted in his office and another via telephone. The setting provided a relaxed environment to freely discuss their recollections of the bureaucratic wars of the Carter administration. To aid the interviews, research was conducted beforehand on the individuals to gain a better understanding of their own role in the administration with books published by the interviewees and prior oral histories consulted to avoid a repetition of previous stories and summaries of events. Moreover, the memoirs of the key players were also analysed to assess the extent of the relationship between the interviewee and either Vance or Brzezinski while the secondary literature was consulted to evaluate their roles within the administration. This all fed into the final list of question posed during the interviews.

The initial questions focussed on the circumstances, which led to the individual's appointment in their respective roles and allowed them to address their initial impressions of Vance or Brzezinski before they entered office and if they forged a personal relationship before or after their appointments. Crucially, all interviewed worked closely with their

¹²⁹ Leslie H. Gelb, Interview with the author, 1 June, 2015, New York City, New York.

superior on a variety of issues and developed a strong professional and, in some cases, personal relationship and discussed key events, policies and approaches with them, which gave them particularly significant knowledge of the feelings and motivations of their bosses throughout their time in the administration.

The interviews then proceeded to address the bureaucratic apparatus of the administration with questions focused on the internal organisations of both the NSC and the State Department. Interviewees were asked about their thoughts on the efficiency of both departments and how that influenced their positions within the administration and approach to foreign policy. For example, the three interviewees from the NSC all spoke of the bureaucratic advantages afforded to them by Brzezinski and how he utilised the arrangements within the administration to advance his policies and approaches, which elevated their status within the administration. The former State Department officials meanwhile shared their frustrations with Brzezinski and his behaviour towards Vance during the administration's time in office and what they considered to be his underhand tactics. All interviewees offered examples and their own perspectives on the difficulties encountered by each department in the bureaucratic wars and detailed the effect on policy.

The questions then focused on the main subjects the interviewee dealt with during their time in office. As each specialised in a policy area or region of the world, it allowed for a discussion on a range of foreign policy subjects that faced the administration. The interviewees provided a summary of their area of expertise, before discussing the perspectives of Vance and Brzezinski on that issue and how their views came to form their approaches. This proceeded to a discussion on the conflicts that arose between the principals as well as addressing how and why the tensions between them festered on the issue in question. At the end of each interview, each interviewee summarised their thoughts and recollections on their experiences of the Vance-Brzezinski relationship.

The interviews typically lasted between an hour and an hour and half, with all confirming the existence of the conflict between Vance and Brzezinski, which challenges the

view of Carter and Strong that tensions between them were ‘exaggerated’ but they also offered interpretations as to why the conflict between them escalated and manifested itself within the administration. One interviewee was later consulted on an issue that arose from the archival material collected and happily answered several follow up questions.

The oral histories proved to be important in informing this study and a valuable source of research. As noted, in some instances, transcripts of meetings remain classified or no notes taken at all. Here the testimonies of individuals present provide a summary of the mood and tone of specific deliberations, in addition to the details and the items discussed. For example, interviews with three individuals from the State Department, all relayed the same story of a meeting of department officials at the White House with President Carter that took place during the final days of the Iranian revolution. The president accused someone from the department of leaking information to the press, which prompted a furious response from those present. It became an infamous encounter for the attendees but with no transcript or notes of the meeting to call upon, the recollections of those present help piece together the discussions as well as gauging the mind-sets of witnesses. Other examples were drawn from the oral histories conducted and the value of their recollections in helping to provide details of meetings such as the one noted featured frequently throughout this study.

Oftentimes, the personal insights of individuals do not make into memoirs and are seldom recorded in written documents. In the case of Vance, oral histories help account for a lack of material from him. The former secretary of state was not known for making his personal feelings known in memos or other documents while his memoir is fairly neutral and at times underplays his interactions with Brzezinski. Some events meanwhile remain unrecorded and his perspectives on those issues are unknown. However, when analysing testimony of former colleagues, on occasion, he expressed his views on specific issues and his frustration with the internal politics of the administration caused by his tempestuous relationship with the national security advisor. The same is also true for many members of the administration, who did not record their personal judgements in written documents but

relayed their thoughts in private conversations. The recollections of those present at key events and witnessed exchanges between individuals is crucial to help unravel the thoughts and motivations of the key players.

Issues with oral history interviews do exist however and questions over the interviewee's biases as well as the accuracy of the stories relayed need to be taken in consideration. However, this study does not rely solely on the recollections of officials but rather utilises witness testimony in conjunction with archival documents, memoirs and secondary literature to detail the causes of the struggles between Vance and Brzezinski and help assess its impact on decision-making and policy formation. The recollections of officials, in addition to other sources, provides further evidence to draw upon and assist in piecing together the story of the bureaucratic wars of the Carter administration.

Chapter Outline

Chapter One provides a biographical outline of the three key individuals featured in the thesis: Cyrus Vance, Zbigniew Brzezinski and Jimmy Carter. The chapter analyses their respective backgrounds, which shaped their worldviews and influenced their priorities. As the chapter notes, the experiences of both Vance and Brzezinski, in and out of government, had a lasting impact on their approaches to U.S. foreign policy and shaped their positions upon entering the administration. Lastly, the chapter considers why Carter approached the pair to serve on his team despite warnings the pair would clash with one another.

Chapter Two analyses the bureaucratic structure of the Carter administration. The centralisation of foreign policy during the Nixon/Ford years increased the influence of the NSC staff at the expense of the secretary of state and the State Department. When Vance and Brzezinski entered their respective posts, the two departments were already engaged in an institutional rivalry to influence the foreign policy process and agenda. This chapter considers how the bureaucratic arrangements in the administration contributed to the distrust that existed from day one between Vance, Brzezinski and their departments.

Chapter Three examines the first year of the Carter presidency when relations between Vance and Brzezinski were relatively collegial with the exception of arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union. As the chapter outlines, Vance gained the upper hand in the struggles after the Soviets vehement rejection of 'deep cuts' in March 1977. This setback forced the president to moderate his stance toward the Soviet Union, in relation to arms control as well as human rights, which benefited the secretary of state and the State Department. Thereafter, Vance and Brzezinski and their departments collaborated successfully with one another on Africa policy, the Panama Canal Treaties and on the Middle East. The latter case study highlighted how cordial relations existed between the departments and their principals. However as noted, it was a rare exception. The chapter analyses why the Camp David Accords, proved to be a successful case of collaboration between the two departments and their principals as opposed to future events.

Chapter Four then focuses on the administration's second year in office, which became a crucial one for the Carter presidency and the Vance-Brzezinski feud. 1978 marked the turning point in relations between Vance and Brzezinski with the national security advisor gradually gaining the upper hand. The chapter considers how Brzezinski used bureaucratic advantages to underline what he perceived as Soviet adventurism in the Horn of Africa and how he attempted to persuade Carter to implement the policy of linkage. The chapter examines the national security advisor's attempts to use Soviet and Cuban intervention in the Horn of Africa and Shaba Province to encourage a more assertive foreign policy. It also analyses the administration's attempts to normalise diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China, a historic but also pivotal moment in the Carter presidency that exacerbated tensions between his advisors and their departments.

Chapter Five explores how the revolutions in Iran and Nicaragua divided the two principals and their departments. Their differing approaches to resolving the crises and preserving U.S. interests in both nations caused consternation between the two men and affected the administration's response to both crises. This chapter also examines Vance's

position within the administration and how his influence gradually declined throughout 1979, particularly after he confirmed his intention to leave his post after the 1980 presidential election. Concurrently, Brzezinski's position steadily increased as the president's advisory circle narrowed. Lastly, the chapter discusses the impact of the Soviet brigade in Cuba fiasco. This led to a re-evaluation of U.S. policy towards the Soviet Union. Whereas previously, Carter sided with Vance in his belief that they ought to maintain cordial relations with the Soviets and negotiate in areas of co-operation, such as arms control, Brzezinski encouraged a more assertive foreign policy vis-à-vis the Soviets.

The penultimate chapter analyses the Iranian hostage crisis and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Both events contributed to Vance's resignation in April 1980. The chapter argues that Vance's position became untenable as Brzezinski emerged as the architect of the administration's foreign policy. The bureaucratic wars over their response to the hostage crisis persisted but it placed Vance and his department on the defensive as they sought to prevent a military response or a rescue operation. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan meanwhile saw, what Vance described as, the collapse of the 'tenuous balance between visceral anti-Sovietism and an attempt to regulate dangerous competition.' He saw his more accommodating approach abandoned in favour of Brzezinski's.¹³⁰

The thesis concludes by surmising the previous chapters and addresses the key themes of the study. It assesses how the bureaucratic organisation of the administration contributed to the competition between Vance, Brzezinski and their departments with respect to relevant case studies as well as analysing how the rivalry between them came to impact on the administration's goals and objectives.

Conclusion

As the review of the current historiography of the administration reveals, the relationship features consistently in various works but there is much debate amongst scholars as to the

¹³⁰ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 394.

level of disagreement between Vance, Brzezinski and their respective departments during the Carter presidency. Moreover, there is a considerable lack of unity over how much influence they had on foreign policy, which has led some to neglect the relationship as a key aspect of the administration's failings. By addressing the Vance-Brzezinski relationship directly, this thesis intends to argue that the administration's problems with respect to foreign policy were a result of the disputes between Vance and Brzezinski. This study seeks to expand on the work of others but also provide fresh input into certain areas previously unexplored by other scholars, by addressing the ideological and bureaucratic roots of the conflict. In sum, it demonstrates how the relationship came to dramatically alter the administration's priorities, policies and approaches from day one and eventually contributed to an inconsistent and at times incoherent foreign policy agenda.

Using the bureaucratic politics model framework, this thesis will illustrate how competition between key individuals and institutions affect the policy process as well as its outcomes. While it had been Carter's intention to implement a system based on collegiality, it ultimately gave way to bureaucratic warfare. The Vance-Brzezinski divide demonstrates how competing ideologies and bureaucratic tensions significantly impact on an administration's approach. As the thesis highlights, the institutional rivalry between the State Department and the NSC steadily increased as their principals grappled for control of the foreign policy agenda. Coupled with the president's inability to manage the divergent views of his advisors, as well as their personalities, the administration's foreign policy fell victim to the ideological and bureaucratic disputes between Vance and Brzezinski.

Chapter One

The Peanut Farmer, the Columbia Professor and the Wall Street Lawyer

On election night 1976, Cyrus R. Vance and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski watched events unfold at the home of a mutual acquaintance as it became clear that Jimmy Carter had won the race for the White House. As they celebrated together, they also contemplated what the future would hold for them. Immediately following on from his victory, there was speculation that the president-elect would ask Vance to serve as secretary of state while Brzezinski would be appointed national security advisor. However, their proposed appointments were met with widespread scepticism within some quarters regarding their ability to serve collegially with one another.¹ Even Carter's chief political strategist Hamilton Jordan remarked, 'if after the election, you find a Cy Vance as Secretary of State, and Zbigniew Brzezinski as head of national security, then I would say we failed. And I'd quit.'² Nevertheless, both were appointed to serve in Carter's administration and while Jordan did not quit, his comments foreshadowed the disagreements that would later arise between the president's principal foreign policy advisors.

The conflicts between Vance and Brzezinski developed from their divergent perspectives regarding U.S. foreign policy. Shaped by events in their early lives and careers, they spent time formulating their worldviews and approaches to international affairs, which ultimately contrasted with one another and affected their positions during the administration's time in office. This chapter analyses the backgrounds and personalities of Vance and Brzezinski to understand how their experiences impacted on their outlooks and priorities with respect to U.S. foreign policy upon entering the administration. Moreover, this chapter examines Vance and Brzezinski's relationship with Carter. While both supported him, it was the Polish academic who cultivated a close personal and professional rapport with the future president. While Vance supplemented his campaign, he never

¹ Daadler and Destler, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 96-97.

² Patrick Buchanan, "Out with the Old, in With...?," *The Chicago Tribune*, 30 December, 1976, B4.

enjoyed the same level of intimacy as Brzezinski, who became Carter's chief foreign policy advisor on his ascent to the White House.

Jimmy Carter

When James Earl Carter Jr. announced his intention to seek the Democratic Party nomination for president in 1974, his public recognition stood at just 2%. When he told his mother that he was running for president she remarked, 'president of what?'³ Whilst it seemed inexplicable that a little known one term governor from Georgia could propel himself to the White House, a stagnant economy, rising unemployment, the Watergate Scandal and the subsequent resignation of President Richard Nixon as well as the Vietnam War left the American public weary and craving change. Carter's idealistic campaign sought to repair the wounds of the past decade and restore pride in the American spirit once again. As running mate Walter Mondale put it, 'Carter offered an antidote to a long, poisonous period in American politics.'⁴

Carter grew up in the humble surroundings of Plains, Georgia where his father, Earl, ran a grocery store and operated a peanut farm while his mother, Lillian, became a trained nurse.⁵ As a young man, he aspired to serve his country by joining the navy and he earned a place at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland in 1942. Carter excelled at the academy and specialised in naval engineering under the guidance of Admiral Hyman Rickover. His education at the academy and the influence of Rickover taught Carter to view problems through a systematic method of investigation. He came to believe that greater education and detailed analysis of any given situation could lead to a solution, a trait he carried throughout his political career.⁶

³ Bourne, *Jimmy Carter*, 250-251; Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 12-13.

⁴ Walter F. Mondale, *The Good Fight: A Life in Liberal Politics* (New York: Scribner, 2010), 159.

⁵ Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 12.

⁶ William Steding, *Presidential Faith and Foreign Policy: Jimmy Carter the Disciple and Ronald Reagan Alchemist* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 33.

When his father died in 1953, Carter quit the academy and returned to Plains to take over the family peanut farm. Along with wife Rosalyn, they turned the fortunes of the farm around after it came under pressure following Earl Carter's passing. During this time, he ingratiated himself within Plains society, actively participating in various community causes with the long-term goal of running for political office. In 1962, on his thirty-eighth birthday, he decided to stand for the Georgia State Senate.⁷ Coming from a family of democrats, Carter succeed in his race after he put up a rigorous legal challenge against perceived electoral fraud by his opponent. During his two terms in the state legislature, he devoted considerable time and effort to reading bills as he sought to pass education reforms, promote racial equality and gradually end segregation in Georgia.⁸

In 1966, Carter sought the Democratic Party nomination for governor of Georgia but suffered defeat at the hands of segregationist Lester Maddox.⁹ Dejected by his defeat, he became disenchanted with politics and slid into a depression. He turned to his sister Ruth, a successful Christen evangelical and Baptist councillor, for guidance.¹⁰ Religion played a key role in Carter's life. The family belonged to the Plains Baptist Church where his father had been a Sunday school teacher while his mother volunteered as a nurse at local missionaries. Carter acknowledged in the wake of his defeat, and through his conversations with Ruth, that his commitment to God and his faith had been somewhat superficial. He underwent a deeply profound religious experience that saw him re-devote himself to God and his faith but it also reinvigorated his political ambitions.¹¹

Inspired by his rebirth and undeterred by his failure to win the nomination in 1966, Carter embarked on a second campaign to stand for Governor in 1970, only this time he

⁷ Morris, *Jimmy Carter*, 122-123.

⁸ E. Stanly Godbold Jr., "From Plains to Atlanta," in *A Companion to Gerald R. Ford and Jimmy Carter*, ed. Scott Kaufman (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2016), 66.

⁹ Sneh, *The Future Almost Arrived*, 38-39.

¹⁰ Jimmy Carter, *A Full Life: Reflections at Ninety* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015), 92; E. Stanly Godbold. Jr., *Jimmy and Rosalyn Carter: The Georgia Years, 1924-1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 129.

¹¹ Randall Balmer, *Redeemer: The Life of Jimmy Carter* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), 25-27.

succeeded. After his victory, he immediately drew national attention when he declared the era of racial segregation to be over in his inaugural address in January 1971. He increased the representation of African Americans within the Georgia state government over the course of his term, which brought him national publicity and he featured on the cover of *Time* magazine. This gave him much needed national exposure as he gave serious consideration to the possibility of seeking the Democratic Party nomination for president in 1976.¹²

By 1974, the Watergate scandal, economic woes, the Vietnam War and the conduct of U.S. foreign policy abroad, contributed to a growing cynicism amongst the American public with confidence in the presidency at a record low.¹³ Friends and supporters encouraged Carter to stand, pointing out his position as an ‘outsider’ coupled with a positive campaign would entice voters and strengthen his chance of success.¹⁴ Carter agreed and decided to run. He believed the events of the previous decade had generated a desire for change and he promised to restore confidence and faith in the political system once again. He vowed not to lie to the American people and pledged to form an open, honest, representative government, ‘as good as the people.’¹⁵

Carter’s positive campaign to re-establish trust in the United States with fresh ideas appealed to democrats from the left and right.¹⁶ On the campaign trail, he projected himself as an ordinary American as he engaged with voters on a face-to-face basis, as opposed to bland public rallies. He travelled fifty-thousand miles, through thirty-seven states, meeting party members and delegates ahead of the first Democratic primary in Iowa in January

¹² Fred I. Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference: Leadership Style from FDR to Clinton* (Oxford: University of Princeton Press, 2001), 132.

¹³ Richard A. Melanson, *American Foreign Policy Since the Vietnam War: The Search for Consensus from Richard Nixon to George W. Bush* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2005), 87-88.

¹⁴ Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 13.

¹⁵ Sneh, *The Future Almost Arrived*, 52.

¹⁶ Kaufman and Kaufman, *The Presidency of James Earl Carter Jr.*, 16.

1976.¹⁷ His folksy style endeared him to voters and the media as he cultivated an image of a ‘Washington outsider’ untainted from the fateful decisions and political scandals of the previous decade. ‘I have been accused of being an outsider’ he declared in a campaign advert, ‘and I plead guilty.’¹⁸ He attacked decision makers in the capital but at the same time vowed to revive the American spirit and promised a compassionate government that responded to the everyday needs of ordinary citizens.¹⁹

On international affairs, he spoke of restoring values and morality into the conduct of U.S. foreign policy. Since World War Two, U.S. foreign policy was tailored to establish the United States as the vanguard of a ‘just and stable international order’ to counter what policymakers viewed as the overriding threat to world peace and American national security, Soviet and communist expansionism. Containing that threat through economic, political and military means became central to the post-war consensus and U.S. strategy in international affairs.²⁰

However, U.S. involvement in the conflict in Southeast Asia in the 1960s had a dramatic effect on the psyche on the American public and its politicians. The war led to a fundamental review of how the United States conducted itself in the international arena, with some questioning aspects of the post-war consensus. The U.S. had been drawn into Vietnam because of their commitment to prevent the worldwide spread of communism but the conduct of U.S. activity had been deemed reckless and disproportionate while the scale and cost of the war shocked Americans back home. In total, the war claimed fifty-eight thousand American soldiers, with a further seventy-four thousand seriously wounded.²¹ While the commitment to containing the spread of communism and Soviet expansionism remained key

¹⁷ Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference*, 123; Marvin L. Kalb and Deborah Kalb, *Haunting Legacy: Vietnam and the American Presidency from Ford to Obama* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2011), 46.

¹⁸ Thomas Borstelmann, *The 1970s: A New Global History from Civil Rights to Economic Inequality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 280.

¹⁹ Kaufman and Kaufman, *The Presidency of James Earl Carter Jr.*, 16.

²⁰ Melanson, *American Foreign Policy since the Vietnam War*, 6-8.

²¹ Andrew Wiest, *The Vietnam War, 1956-1975* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2002), 87.

amongst policymakers, a feeling that U.S. actions in the international arena needed to change pervaded.

When President Ford entered the White House following the resignation of Richard Nixon, he acknowledged the changing mood of the nation, when declared that the experiences of Vietnam and Watergate had made the United States ‘stronger and wiser as a nation.’²² Within months of becoming president however, the new realities of conducting foreign policy in the post-Vietnam era became evident. In 1975, American covert funding for Front for the National Liberation of Angola (F.N.L.A.) in their struggles against the Soviet and Cuban backed National Liberation of Angola (M.P.L.A.) was unearthed and exposed. Ford and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger attempted to justify U.S. involvement as an attempt to offset Soviet-Cuban aggression and communist expansion in Africa and requested additional funding.²³ But an assertive Congress and sceptical public, less inclined to subscribe to the rationale of the post-war consensus, reacted negatively. Many feared the U.S. being drawn into another conflict far from home under the caveat of containing communism. When the issue of funding for the FNLA went before the Senate in December 1975 and the House in January 1976, the package was unanimously rejected.²⁴

The feeling amongst many politicians and the public in the 1970s was that America could no longer get involved in a long, costly and bloody conflict with the objective of containing communism.²⁵ Carter agreed with this sentiment. Although he had supported the Vietnam War, his son Jack served during the conflict, the management of foreign policy during these years appalled him, as it had not exhibited the ideals the United States stood for.²⁶ The commitment to the post-war consensus to prevent the spread of communism, had

²² Gerald R. Ford, “Address at the Continental Congress of the Daughters of the American Revolution,” 15 April, 1975, The American Presidency Project.

²³ H.W. Brands, *Since Vietnam: The United States In World Affairs 1973-1995* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1996), 17-18.

²⁴ Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 331-332.

²⁵ Brands, *Since Vietnam*, 5.

²⁶ Morris, *Jimmy Carter*, 219-220.

led the United States to embark on a series of misguided foreign policy objectives. Previous administrations had prioritised containment through power politics over morality and paying special consideration to issues and concerns in the developing world.²⁷

Carter encapsulated his feelings, in a pre-election memoir, *Why Not The Best?* and noted that American actions, particularly in Vietnam and Cambodia but also through CIA covert activities, had ‘not exemplified any commitment to moral principles.’ Restoring a sense of morality in foreign policy, meant embracing the values, which defined the United States. As he wrote, ‘a nation’s domestic and foreign policy actions should be derived from the same standards of ethics, honesty and morality which are the characteristics of the individual citizens of the nation.’²⁸ For Carter, the protection and advancement of human rights and ethical diplomacy exemplified the moral characteristics of the United States. He later said, ‘America did not invent human rights...human rights invented America.’²⁹ It was a personal commitment, born out of his religious beliefs and experiences of segregation in the South but also a recognition of the increasing public concern for human suffrage and the growing sense of interdependence in the developing world.³⁰ He believed the U.S. had a duty to offer moral leadership and human rights presented the opportunity to restore prestige, respect and trust in American foreign policy at home and abroad.³¹

Carter’s campaign received an extra boost when early favourite, Senator Edward ‘Ted’ Kennedy, still tainted by the Chappaquiddick incident, declined to run while others delayed announcing their candidacy.³² Thus, he pulled off a surprising triumph in the Iowa caucus to establish himself as the front runner in the race. He followed up his success with victory in the New Hampshire primary before crucial wins in Florida and Illinois. As other

²⁷ Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 13.

²⁸ Jimmy Carter, *Why Not The Best? The First Fifty Years* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1975), 123-128.

²⁹ Jimmy Carter, “Farewell Address to the Nation,” *The American Presidency Project*, 14 January, 1981.

³⁰ Jeff Walz, “Jimmy Carter and the Politics of Faith,” in *Religion and the American Presidency*, ed. Mark J. Rozell and Gleaves Whitney (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 166.

³¹ Stuckey, *Jimmy Carter, Human Rights, and the National Agenda*, 42-46.

³² Bourne, *Jimmy Carter*, 252-253.

candidates dropped out of the race, Carter went on to secure the support of states in the South as well as the North. Despite strong challenges toward the end of the race from Senator Frank Church, Representative Mo Udall and California Governor Jerry Brown, by the time delegates met at the Democratic Convention in July 1976, Carter had secured the nomination.³³

Meanwhile, President Gerald Ford had overcome a difficult challenge from former Governor of California Ronald Reagan in his quest to win the Republican presidential nomination but trailed Carter in the polls. Economic issues, the fallout from the Vietnam War, the spectre of Watergate and his decision to exonerate former President Richard Nixon from prosecution tarnished Ford's campaign. During a speech in Michigan, protestors interrupted his speech and unfurled a banner that read, 'don't pardon Ford for letting Nixon off.' On the campaign trail, he struggled to connect to ordinary voters. As one strategist told Ford, 'Mr President, as a campaigner, you're no fucking good!' Coupled with the incident in Michigan, his advisors changed strategy and decided to utilise his position as an incumbent, working president. Instead of campaigning amongst the public like Carter, Ford operated from within the confines of the White House.³⁴ As television networks devoted equal time to both candidates on the campaign trail, Ford's team exploited loopholes that allowed him to claim extra coverage by signing bills and meeting foreign leaders in the Rose Garden. The strategy made him look presidential and avoided any other unfortunate encounters as it ate into Carter's lead in the polls.³⁵

At the same time, Carter did himself considerable damage when he agreed to be interviewed for *Playboy* magazine with questions related to his faith and family. During the

³³ Gregory Paul Domin, *Jimmy Carter, Public Opinion, and the Search for Values, 1977-1981* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2003), 20-25.

³⁴ Andrew Priest, "Dealing with Defeat: Gerald R. Ford, Foreign Policy, and the 1976 Election," in *US Presidential Elections and Foreign Policy: Candidates, Campaigns, and Global Politics from FDR to Bill Clinton*, ed. Andrew Johnstone and Andrew Priest (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2017), 241-243; Jules Witcover, *Marathon: The Pursuit of the Presidency 1972-1976* (New York: The Viking Press, 1977), 554.

³⁵ Andrew Downer Crain, *The Ford Presidency: A History* (Jefferson: McFarland & Co., 2009), 271-272.

interview, he made a monumental error when he professed, 'I have committed adultery in my heart many times.' He also used risqué language such as 'screw' and 'shack up' which offended conservative voters drawn to his religious convictions.³⁶ Critics mocked him and questioned his judgement while Ford and his campaign team seized upon the blunder to court evangelical voters. Supporters declared, 'Jimmy Carter wears religion on his sleeve but Jerry Ford wears it in his heart.'³⁷ The interview, published on the eve of the first televised debate, and the first between two presidential candidates since 1960, attracted unnecessary controversy to Carter's campaign. 'The honeymoon was over' declared speechwriter Patrick Anderson as Carter floundered during the debate to hand Ford a small victory as he levelled in the polls.³⁸

The turning point in Carter's campaign as well as the 1976 election came when he faced Ford in the second debate in San Francisco, which focused on foreign policy. A confident and assured display by Carter arrested his slide in the polls and halted Ford's fight back.³⁹ In the final debate, which took the form of an open forum, neither candidate gained a significant advantage but polls gave Carter the edge. Over the final weeks of the campaign, the pendulum swung between them but when Americans went to the polls on 2 November, 1976, they elected Jimmy Carter as President of the United States. He won the popular vote and defeated Ford by securing 297 Electoral College votes to his rival's 240.⁴⁰

Even though domestic issues took precedence in opinion polls for the first time since 1948, in preparation for his bid for the White House, Carter decided to advance his own knowledge of international affairs as, by his own admission, he had limited exposure to

³⁶ Balmer, *Redeemer*, 68-69.

³⁷ J. Brooks Flippen, *Jimmy Carter: The Politics of the Family and the Rise of the Religious Right* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 98-101.

³⁸ Patrick Anderson, *Electing Jimmy Carter: The Campaign of 1976* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1994), 113; "'Instant' Survey: Ford Wins Debate In TV Poll, 39-31'," *The Washington Post*, 24 September, 1976, A1.

³⁹ George Gallup, "Carter Gains on President On 4 Foreign Policy Issues: The Gallup Poll," *The Washington Post*, 17 October, 1976, 8.

⁴⁰ Kaufman and Kaufman, *The Presidency of James Earl Carter Jr.*, 19.

foreign policy issues.⁴¹ His advisor Peter Bourne later said, Carter ‘had clear views about very little else than human rights.’⁴² This led him to join the newly founded think tank, the Trilateral Commission in 1973. The group brought together figures from the world of politics, business and academia and gave Carter the opportunity to engage with the major foreign policy issues of the day. It also brought him into contact with the Polish academic Zbigniew Brzezinski.⁴³ The pair quickly impressed one other, leading the presidential hopeful to ask the Columbia professor to serve as a foreign policy advisor on his campaign. Although he initially viewed Carter’s campaign with scepticism, Brzezinski duly accepted his invitation and as they sought to navigate their way to the presidency, their relationship flourished. Carter later remarked, ‘next to members of my family, Zbig would be my favourite sea mate on a long-distance trip; we might argue but I would never be bored.’⁴⁴

Zbigniew Brzezinski

Born in Warsaw, Poland in 1928, Brzezinski’s worldview was shaped by events during his childhood as he witnessed the demise of his homeland, firstly to the Nazi invasion of 1939 and then the Soviet occupation following the cessation of hostilities at the end of World War Two. The son of a Polish diplomat, Tadeusz, who held posts in France, Germany, Ukraine and finally Canada, the Brzezinski family settled in Montréal.⁴⁵ The war aroused Brzezinski’s interest in world affairs as his homeland battled against the German offensive. ‘I followed the war with passion, intense interest...I was especially fascinated by what was happening in Poland’ he recalled. When the war in Europe came to an end, the young Brzezinski joined in with the festivities but with trepidation over Poland’s future. He later

⁴¹ Melanson, *American Foreign Policy Since the Vietnam War*, 88; Carter, *A Full Life*, 105.

⁴² Peter Bourne quoted in Morris, *Jimmy Carter*, 55.

⁴³ Glad, *An Outsider in the White House*, 25.

⁴⁴ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 54

⁴⁵ Lubowski, *Zbig*, 11-12.

said, ‘curiously in that paroxysm of joy I felt essentially sadness. I felt that Poland was again occupied, and while I anticipated a celebration...I did not have feelings of joy.’⁴⁶

It also ignited his academic interest in Soviet studies. After he graduated from McGill University, Brzezinski headed to the U.S. and obtained his PhD in Soviet studies from Harvard in 1953 where he became a research fellow and then a research associate at the Russian Research Center. Unlike his colleague and occasional rival, Henry Kissinger, he did not receive a permanent position and instead took up a post at Columbia University.⁴⁷

Brzezinski made the transition from academia to politics when met John F. Kennedy in 1957. When the Massachusetts senator entered the race for the White House in 1960, Brzezinski volunteered to help his campaign and was drafted onto his foreign policy advisory team. After Kennedy’s assassination in 1963, Brzezinski became an unofficial advisor to his successor Lyndon B. Johnson who appointed him to the State Department policy planning committee in 1966, as he developed a reputation as a ‘rising star’ within the Democratic Party establishment.⁴⁸

His time in the State Department was a frustrating experience for Brzezinski. He observed that neither the president nor Secretary of State Dean Rusk utilised the committee effectively. Brzezinski and his colleagues did not have access to sensitive materials, found themselves out of the loop on various issues and powerless to affect policy. He also found himself unable to get past Rusk or Under Secretary W. Averell Harriman.⁴⁹ He later wrote, ‘the policy process during Secretary Rusk’s tenure of office was probably more divorced from vital decisions than at any point since the establishment of the policy planning council.’

⁴⁶ Aleksandra Ziółkowska-Boehm, “A Conversation with Zbigniew Brzezinski,” in *The Roots Are Polish* (Toronto: Canadian-Polish Research Institute, 2004) Accessed 13 June, 2016. <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~atpc/heritage/articles/aleksandra/roots-brzezinski.html>.

⁴⁷ Howard J. Wiarda, *Harvard and the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs (WCFIA): Foreign Policy Research Center and Incubator of Presidential Advisors* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010), 75.

⁴⁸ Lubowski, *Zbig*, 23-30.

⁴⁹ Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, “Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection: Interview with Zbigniew K. Brzezinski,” interview by Paige E. Mullhollan, 12 November 1971, The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Oral History Project (ADST), Arlington, Virginia.

Moreover, ‘the secretary showed a marked disinclination to engage in any searching discussions concerning the larger issues of foreign policy.’⁵⁰ On occasions, Brzezinski bypassed the bureaucracy via personal contacts close to the president. He recalled, ‘I had no hesitation in phoning up people in the White House and bootlegging memos to the White House.’ Infuriated with the bureaucratic process and inability to influence policy and with no sign of a promotion, Brzezinski decided to leave government in 1967 and returned to academia.⁵¹

Throughout his career in academia and spells in government, Brzezinski gained a reputation as a hawk and ardent anti-Soviet. His Polish heritage facilitated an intense dislike of Soviet actions. His father had helped fight off Lenin’s forces during the Poland-Soviet War of 1920 and during the 1930s when posted as diplomat in the Ukraine, he experienced the brutality of the Soviet regime at close quarters, as they executed millions of ‘enemies of the people.’ Tadeusz later relayed stories of mass arrests and murders to his son, who acknowledged that they made a considerable impression on his view of the Soviets at a young age. Moreover, following talks between the allies at Tehran and Yalta in 1945, Poland duly became a Soviet satellite state. Brzezinski later called the allies’ accession to Stalin’s demands as, ‘a major historical blot on the record of Anglo-American leadership’ as he became increasingly concerned for the welfare of his fellow Poles.⁵²

Thereafter, Brzezinski’s views became heavily shaped by his anti-communist sentiment but he passionately believed that the United States had the moral authority to challenge that threat. When he received U.S. citizenship in 1957, he later reflected, ‘I felt that America had the greater capacity for influencing world affairs for the good, and thus helping to fashion a more just international system that would therefore also help Poland.’⁵³

⁵⁰ Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, “Purpose and Planning in Foreign Policy,” *The Public Interest*, no. 14 (Winter 1969): 63.

⁵¹ Brzezinski, “Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection.”

⁵² Vaughan, “Zbigniew Brzezinski and Afghanistan,” 111-114.

⁵³ Ziolkowska-Boehm, “A Conversation with Zbigniew Brzezinski.”

Brzezinski's views on how the United States should counter communist expansion became encapsulated in his academic writing as he became a prolific author on the Soviet Union. In 1956, Brzezinski's published his first books, *The Permanent Purge: Politics in Soviet Totalitarianism* and *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, co-authored with Carl J. Friedrich. Both works coincided with Soviet crackdowns in Poland and Hungary in 1956, which drew international condemnation.⁵⁴ Brzezinski argued that purges and crackdowns, used to preserve political and economic interests, were commonplace in a totalitarian state such as the Soviet Union and thus, he did not expect the Soviets to mellow in the face of worldwide criticism.⁵⁵

His work evolved to discuss U.S. foreign policy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. He had a long-held belief that the USSR was at the root of international conflict, threatening global stability. He argued that the U.S. needed to act as a force for good to counter the Soviets.⁵⁶ This led him to advance the strategy of 'peaceful engagement' towards Eastern Europe. Previous approaches had failed, he suggested, but underlying nationalistic tensions in the Eastern bloc, handed the United States the opportunity to exploit the situation and weaken Soviet influence. He contended that the U.S. should improve relations with Soviet satellite states to initiate a gradual shift from communist domination toward political self-determination.⁵⁷ The idea gained favour with President Kennedy, who declared in 1962 that the U.S. needed to be prepared to 'seize the initiative' when opportunities to improve relations with countries in the East arose.⁵⁸

Like many at the time Brzezinski subscribed to the post-war consensus and throughout his time in government, he adopted a hard-line approach on the foreign policy

⁵⁴ David C. Engerman, "The Fall of Totalitarianism and the Rise of Zbigniew Brzezinski," in *Zbig*, ed. Gati, 29.

⁵⁵ David C. Engerman, *Know Your Enemy: The Rise and Fall of America's Soviet Experts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 209.

⁵⁶ Andrinaopoulos, *Kissinger and Brzezinski*, 39-42.

⁵⁷ Zbigniew K. Brzezinski and William E. Griffith, "Peaceful Engagement in Eastern Europe," *Foreign Affairs* 39, no. 4 (July 1961): 642-644.

⁵⁸ Bennett Kovrig, *Of Walls and Bridges: The United States and Eastern Europe* (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 107.

issues of the day. During the Cuban missile crisis for example, he advocated targeted air strikes of missile sites on the island.⁵⁹ He supported the American effort in Vietnam and argued that unless the U.S. countered communist forces in Southeast Asia, the loss would have profound consequences for the region with China becoming an increasingly formidable threat.⁶⁰

Whereas his future foe, Cyrus Vance, re-evaluated his views in response to the Vietnam War, Brzezinski's central thesis that the key principle of U.S. foreign policy was to counter the threat of communism and Soviet adventurism remained unmoved. In the 1970s, he was critical of attempts by Nixon and Kissinger to harbour cordial relations with the Soviet Union. *Détente*, Brzezinski declared, was not a check on Soviet behaviour and instead legitimised their activity in some parts of the world. Because the Soviets still had grand designs on world domination, Nixon and Kissinger, Brzezinski argued, had been too accommodating to Moscow.⁶¹

In 1970, he wrote *Between Two Ages* to underscore the importance of technological changes in the world and re-enforce his strategy of peaceful engagement, particularly in developing nations. Shortly thereafter, he travelled to Japan and upon his return he wrote *The Fragile Blossom: Crisis and Change in Japan*, which focused on the trilateral relationship between the United States, Europe and Japan.⁶² Brzezinski became inspired to set up the Trilateral Commission, a foreign policy think tank, in 1973 with the aid of Chase Manhattan chief executive David Rockefeller. Membership of the committee included individuals from North America, Europe and Asia with figures from the world of business, politics and academia all represented.⁶³ Both Brzezinski and Rockefeller agreed, in the post-Vietnam era, the U.S. needed to tailor its foreign policy to respond to the needs of the

⁵⁹ Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 20.

⁶⁰ Campbell, "Brzezinski's Image of the USSR," 41-42.

⁶¹ Andrinaopoulos, *Kissinger and Brzezinski*, 54.

⁶² Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, 170.

⁶³ Stephen Gill, *American Hegemony and the Trilateral Commission* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 233.

developing world to counter Soviet expansionism. By highlighting economic and political co-operation amongst nations, Brzezinski and Rockefeller sought to encourage a new approach to international affairs that gave the U.S. an opportunity to assert its influence across the globe.⁶⁴

In the wake of the Vietnam War and the growing sense of interdependence across the globe, Brzezinski argued that, to harness technocratic change, foreign policy needed to be conducted through the mutual co-operation of nation states. He viewed such a move as intrinsic in challenging the Soviet position in world affairs. He underlined the importance of human rights and democratic advancement, to differentiate the U.S. from the Soviets. Because of their totalitarian nature, the human rights agenda ‘put the Soviet Union ideologically on the defensive.’ In other areas however, he never relented in his desire to see the U.S. challenge the Soviets and their military strength when necessary.⁶⁵ It was this outlook that Brzezinski developed in the 1970s when he first encountered Jimmy Carter.

In 1971, Rockefeller became aware of the Georgia governor through his national exposure and during lunch Carter made a favourable impression. Several years later, Rockefeller recommended him for membership of the commission. Brzezinski had no qualms about inviting Carter to join, given they shared the same values and objectives about improved relations with the Far East.⁶⁶ Carter quickly ingratiated himself into the commission, became a regular contributor at meetings and took part in discussions. He also began to nurture a close working relationship with Brzezinski as the pair communicated frequently on trilateral matters. The Georgia Governor made a positive impression on his future national security advisor while Carter defined himself as ‘an eager student’ of Brzezinski’s.⁶⁷ Not long after Brzezinski invited him to join the commission, he learned of

⁶⁴ Dumbrell, *The Carter Presidency*, 111-112.

⁶⁵ Zbigniew Brzezinski quoted in Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 37; Dāwid Țal, *US Strategic Arms Policy in the Cold War: Negotiation and Confrontation Over SALT, 1967-1979* (London: Routledge, 2017), 219.

⁶⁶ Donald E. Abelson, *A Capitol Idea: Think Tanks and US Foreign Policy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2006), 25-26.

⁶⁷ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 51.

Carter's presidential ambitions despite only being recognised by 2% of the population.

Brzezinski, lukewarm to Carter's fledgling campaign, did not see him as a credible candidate but his opinion shifted during a Trilateral Commission meeting in Japan in the summer of 1975 when he confidently engaged with reporters on foreign policy issues. Encouraged by Carter not only as a candidate but also as a person, he relayed his thoughts to his wife Emilie who replied, 'if you like him and believe in him, don't wait for developments, come out and support him.'⁶⁸

Brzezinski believed Carter had the ability to be a tough president but he also judged him to be an honest and sincere individual. 'I saw in him decency and humanness, and I also felt that there was a great deal of steel underneath...the feeling that I was dealing with a man of genuine conviction was important in shaping my own personal commitment to Jimmy Carter' he later recalled. Coupled with their shared views about the need for the U.S. to be a more co-operative power in the world, he accepted Carter's invitation to join his campaign and Brzezinski became his chief foreign policy advisor.⁶⁹

According to speechwriter Patrick Anderson, Brzezinski closely aligned himself with Carter. 'He always knew where Jimmy was sitting and always elbowed his way very close to the throne' Anderson recalled. His demeanour, as well as his views, made him an unpopular member of Carter's foreign policy advisory team but they developed a personal rapport with one another that no other member of the foreign policy team could replicate.⁷⁰ Crucially, Carter trusted Brzezinski to provide him with the strategies, policies and advice he needed to prove he was a credible candidate and win the race for the White House. While others offered support, ultimately it was Brzezinski who Carter frequently turned to on foreign policy matters. As Hamilton Jordan later reflected, 'it was only natural for Jimmy Carter to tell his staff, "check this with Zbig."⁷¹

⁶⁸ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 5-6.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 6-9.

⁷⁰ Anderson, *Electing Jimmy Carter*, 41-42.

⁷¹ Jordan, *Crisis*, 46.

After he joined Carter's campaign, Brzezinski provided him with regular briefings on the foreign policy issues of the day, forwarded policy papers and drafted speeches. In December 1975, Carter asked him to produce a 'basic speech/statement on foreign affairs.' The resultant framework encompassed many of the philosophies of the Trilateral Commission, with a special emphasis on mutual co-operation between advanced nations and the third world but Brzezinski also linked these pledges with elements of his anti-Soviet rhetoric. 'Détente, of course, is desirable but it ought to be reciprocal' he told Carter. With fellow commission member Richard N. Gardner, Brzezinski elaborated further and stressed the need to counter Soviet activity in the developing world by underscoring the importance of human rights. He also encouraged a more comprehensive strategic arms limitation deal (SALT) with the Soviet Union and urged him to court the People's Republic of China if elected president.⁷²

The policies and approaches became incorporated into a major foreign policy speech Carter delivered in June 1976. The speech, combined many of the early key themes of the campaign, such as the need to embrace a foreign policy based on morality, through co-operation, human rights, democratic advancement and economic assistance, but also contained elements of Brzezinski's own hard-line views on U.S.-Soviet relations.⁷³ He also encouraged Carter to criticise 'the lone ranger' style of diplomacy practised by Henry Kissinger. The hostile remarks made by Carter, infuriated the secretary of state, particularly as they came from his old Harvard nemesis, Brzezinski. This prompted Kissinger biographer Walter Isaacson to remark, 'hearing Brzezinski's snide words slung at him each day, not with a slightly embittered Polish accent but a smiling Georgia accent, drove Kissinger to near distraction.'⁷⁴ Brzezinski noted during this time, that he and Carter became much closer

⁷² Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 7.

⁷³ James T. Wooten, "Carter Pledges an Open Foreign Policy," *The New York Times*, 24 June, 1976, 1.

⁷⁴ Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger: A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2013), 696-702.

as they worked on the speech. He wrote in his journal, 'have a good working relationship – he is calm, pleasant and to the point.'⁷⁵

Brzezinski's major contribution to the campaign came on the eve of the second presidential debate in San Francisco, which focused on foreign policy. After Ford wore away Carter's lead in the polls, the pair were in a dead heat as they prepared to face each other. The debate offered Carter an opportunity to prove his credentials and score a significant victory over Ford. A frequent criticism levelled at the Ford administration centred on détente and their management of the superpower relationship, in particular, their decision to sign the Helsinki Accords in 1975. The Conference on Security and Co-Operation in Europe, intended to ratify post-World War Two borders in Europe and improve co-operation between the Soviet bloc and the West. Attended by thirty-five world leaders, the subsequent discussions led to a series of agreements that formed the basis of the accords. The first basket committed all signatories to respect the post-World War two borders in Europe, the second focused on increased co-operation on economic, social and political matters while the third called for an adherence to humanitarian issues and human rights. Critics from both sides of the political divide in the U.S. attacked the agreements, labelling Helsinki as another Yalta and accusing the administration of handing Eastern Europe to the Soviets. Eastern Europeans decedents living in the United States also registered their uneasiness with the agreement.⁷⁶

The inclusion of the third basket of the accord became a toxic issue for Ford during the presidential campaign. Kissinger supported its inclusion, if only to appease West European allies and critics at home who accused him and the administration of being heartless. Ultimately, he viewed it to be a minor aspect of the accord.⁷⁷ However the administration's commitment to the third basket came into question in March 1976 when a

⁷⁵ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 8.

⁷⁶ Yanek Mieczkowski, *Gerald Ford and the Challenges of the 1970s* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2005), 296-298.

⁷⁷ Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, 217-219.

press report quoted Kissinger aide Helmut Sonnenfeldt as suggesting the U.S. accepted Soviet control over Eastern European states as official policy. He told State Department officials, 'it must be our policy to strive for an evolution that makes the relationship between the Eastern Europeans and the Soviet Union an organic one.' To critics of détente, Sonnenfeldt's words indicated that the administration ignored human rights in Eastern Europe to enable further co-operation and avoid conflict with the Soviet Union. The report produced a barrage of criticism towards Ford and Kissinger throughout 1976 and became a key subject in the build up to the second presidential debate.⁷⁸

Brzezinski sensed an opportunity to combine his anti-Soviet rhetoric and concern for his Polish homeland, with Carter's emphasis on morality and human rights to score a victory against Ford.⁷⁹ Brzezinski supported the accords, specifically the third basket. He argued that it allowed the West to recognise human rights considerations within the Soviet Union and across Eastern Europe and encourage adherence to them.⁸⁰ He believed the furore that surrounded the so-called 'Sonnenfeldt doctrine' gave Carter the chance to attack the Ford administration's lack of concern for human rights and acquiescence to the Soviets. He wrote to Carter, 'you could then follow by stressing that you would seek to deal more directly with the East European states, rejecting the notion that Eastern Europe is a Soviet sphere of influence and that all arrangements for Eastern Europe have to be cleared or channelled through Moscow.' He advised Carter to address the Helsinki agreement in the debate to underline Ford's deficiencies in handling the Soviets and other foreign policy issues around the globe. 'In general,' he told Carter, 'I should think that a major purpose of the debate on foreign policy would be to leave the public with a clear impression that Ford has provided no leadership.'⁸¹

⁷⁸ Mieczkowski, *Gerald Ford and the Challenges of the 1970s*, 332; Crain, *The Ford Presidency*, 176.

⁷⁹ Daadler and Destler, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 100.

⁸⁰ Vaughan, "Zbigniew Brzezinski and the Helsinki Final Act," 13.

⁸¹ "Memo, Brzezinski to Carter: 'The Forthcoming Foreign Policy Debate and My Recent Trip to Europe,'" 27 September, 1976, Volume I, Foundations of Foreign Policy, Document 10, Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1977–1980.

When the debate began, Carter immediately went on the offensive in his opening remarks and returned to key themes of his campaign. He declared, ‘our country is not strong anymore; we’re not respected anymore...we’ve lost, in our foreign policy, the character of the American people.’ He proceeded to highlight Ford’s lack of success in the international arena and criticised his and Nixon’s support for brutal dictatorships across the world and lack of adherence to human rights concerns.⁸² Shortly thereafter, as Brzezinski predicted, the debate proceeded to address the Helsinki Accords and the ‘Sonnenfeldt doctrine’ when moderator Max Frankel questioned Ford on the United States’ relationship with the Soviet Union. The president then committed, what *Time* magazine later described as, ‘the blooper heard round the world.’⁸³

When Frankel quizzed Ford on the issue, the president boldly declared, ‘there is no Soviet domination of Eastern Europe...Each of these countries (Poland, Yugoslavia, and Romania) is independent, autonomous; it has its own territorial integrity. And the United States does not concede that those countries are under domination of the Soviet Union.’ After Frankel gave Ford the opportunity to reiterate his answer, the president responded, ‘I don’t believe...the Yugoslavians consider themselves dominated by the Soviet Union. I don’t believe that the Romanians consider themselves dominated by the Soviet Union. I don’t believe that the Poles consider themselves dominated by the Soviet Union.’ Carter immediately pounced on Ford’s error, ‘I would like to see Mr. Ford convince the Polish Americans and the Czech Americans and the Hungarian Americans in this country that those countries don’t live under the domination and supervision of the Soviet Union behind the Iron Curtain.’⁸⁴ Brzezinski’s contribution proved to be significant as Ford’s error cost him significant votes in states where Americans with ties to Eastern Europe resided.⁸⁵

⁸² “Second Presidential Campaign Debate,” 6 October, 1976, The American Presidency Project.

⁸³ Mark J. Rozell, *The Press and the Ford Presidency* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 147.

⁸⁴ “Second Presidential Campaign Debate.”

⁸⁵ Bourne, *Jimmy Carter*, 352.

Brzezinski's standing with the president, led Carter to appoint him as national security advisor. He provided valuable advice and expertise during the race to the White House and demonstrated confidence and personal loyalty to Carter. He believed Carter could successfully marry his commitment to a moral foreign policy with his own tough anti-Soviet rhetoric. Moreover, as the president-elect began the process of forming his government, Carter realised he needed Brzezinski alongside him to help him develop and implement ideas from the White House. An understanding between the two that the Polish academic would occupy a role seemingly developed and whilst he did not make any direct overtures, he coveted the position of national security advisor. When Carter formally approached Brzezinski, he told him 'I knew some months ago, that you were my choice.'⁸⁶ Crucially, like Kissinger, Brzezinski was appointed before Carter selected his secretary of state or other senior foreign policy officials, a clear indication that the president-elect viewed the national security designate as a key, if not the principal, foreign policy advisor in his administration.

Cyrus Vance

During his time as a member of the trilateral commission, Carter encountered a number of individuals who later served in his administration such as Vice-President Walter Mondale, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, UN Ambassador Andrew Young, Secretary of the Treasury Michael Blumenthal and Wall Street lawyer and former deputy secretary of defense, Cyrus Roberts Vance.⁸⁷ The pair only met twice, according to Vance, and when Carter approached him to serve on his campaign team, he initially declined and supported his friend Sargent Shriver in the Democratic primaries. When Shriver dropped out of the race, Carter personally contacted him and asked for his help on his campaign. Vance carefully analysed Carter's positions and spoke with friends about his suitability as a

⁸⁶ Jimmy Carter quoted in Brzezinski, *Power and Principle* 4-12.

⁸⁷ Holly Sklar and Ros Everdell, "Whose Who on the Trilateral Commission," in *Trilateralism: The Trilateral Commission and Elite Planning for World Management*, ed. Holly Sklar (Boston: South End Press, 1980), 90-99; Future administration colleagues Lucy Benson, Fred Bergsten, Robert Bowie, Warren Christopher, Richard Cooper, Lloyd Cutler, Hedley Donavon, Richard Gardner, Richard Holbrooke, Samuel Huntington, Sol Linowitz, Henry Owen, Elliot Richardson, Leonard Woodcock and Paul Warnke were also members of the commission.

presidential candidate. Unlike Carter, Vance, very much a Washington insider, who gravitated amongst establishment circles but his experiences in government had a profound effect on his worldview as he questioned key features of U.S. foreign policy and sought to encourage a new approach to international affairs. This corresponded with Carter's emphasis on restoring morality to U.S. foreign policy and Vance concluded that he stood a good chance of winning and he duly supported his campaign.⁸⁸

Vance was born in Clarksburg, West Virginia on 27 March, 1917, but his family relocated to New York when he was just five. After his father passed away, Vance and his elder brother John turned to their uncle, Wall Street lawyer and 1924 Democratic presidential candidate, John W. Davis for guidance. Davis proved to be a significant influence on Vance during his youth and his Sunday morning interrogations of his nephew on the major cases of the day inspired the young Cyrus to pursue a career in the legal profession and latterly into politics.⁸⁹ After he attended Kent School in Connecticut, Vance went to study at Yale in 1935 where he graduated from law school in 1942. After graduation, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy and saw action in the Pacific during World War Two.⁹⁰

Upon his return to civilian life, Vance passed the New York bar and joined the Wall Street law firm, Simpson, Thacher and Bartlett in 1947 and eventually made partner. His training as a young attorney in civil litigation cases as well as the education he received from his uncle prepared Vance for a career in politics. His law firm also encouraged his involvement in political affairs and supported his application to join the Council on Foreign Relations in 1957.⁹¹ In the same year, Senate Majority Leader Lyndon B. Johnson recruited Vance and his law partner Edward Weisl as special counsel on the Preparedness

⁸⁸ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 29.

⁸⁹ William H. Harbaugh, *Lawyers Lawyer: The Life of John W. Davis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 389-390.

⁹⁰ McLellan, *Cyrus Vance*, 2; Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 17.

⁹¹ Laucella, "A Cognitive-Psychodynamic Perspective to Understanding Secretary of State Cyrus Vance's Worldview," 251-253.

Investigation Committee, set up after the launch of the Soviet Satellite Sputnik to analyse its impact on U.S. national security. This began a close professional and personal relationship between himself and Johnson.⁹²

When John F. Kennedy was elected president in 1960, Vance had already built a close network of connections associated with the president-elect. He first met Kennedy in 1942 at the wedding of mutual acquaintance, Stanley Resor, and after he received the Democratic nomination for president, Vance joined his campaign as an advisor on defence policy as well as helping with fundraising events.⁹³ After Kennedy's election, the newly selected Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara appointed Vance, on the recommendation of Vice-President Lyndon Johnson, to the post of general counsel for the department.⁹⁴

During his eighteen months in that position, in addition to helping McNamara initiate internal reforms of the department, he received the unenviable task of negotiating the release of Cuban exiles, captured during the Bay of Pigs fiasco in 1961. Kennedy then selected Vance as secretary of the army, again on the recommendation of Johnson. After the president's assassination, the departure of Roswell Gilpatric in January 1964 created an opening for Vance as Deputy Secretary of Defense to McNamara. Vance served the administration loyally until the summer of 1967.⁹⁵ Despite his departure, Vance found his skills and expertise frequently called upon personally by Johnson, who later described him as a 'rare breed who puts service to his country above concern for himself.' An hour before he left office, Johnson awarded Vance the Presidential Medal of Freedom.⁹⁶

⁹² Cyrus R. Vance, "Lyndon Baines Johnson Library Oral History Collection: Cyrus R. Vance Oral History Interview I," interview by Paige E. Mullhollan, 3 November, 1969, Internet Copy, Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library (LJPL).

⁹³ Cyrus R. Vance, "John F. Kennedy Oral History Collection: Cyrus R. Vance," interview by Joseph Califano, 3 August, 1964, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

⁹⁴ Vance, "Lyndon Baines Johnson Library Oral History Collection, Interview I."

⁹⁵ McLellan, *Cyrus Vance*; Cyrus R. Vance, "Lyndon Baines Johnson Library Oral History Collection: Cyrus R. Vance Oral History Interview III," interview by Paige E. Mullhollan, 9 March, 1970, Internet Copy, LJPL.

⁹⁶ Lyndon B. Johnson, *The Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency, 1963-1969* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), 169; Vaughn Davis Bornet, *The Presidency of Lyndon B. Johnson* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1983), 326.

After leaving public service, Vance returned to New York to practice law and it was during this time that he re-evaluated his outlook on U.S. foreign policy. At the core of Vance's philosophy was a belief that the United States should not allow the East-West dynamic to govern their overall objectives. While he viewed relations with their Cold War rival as important, Vance believed U.S. intervention should be focused on harnessing changes in the developing world rather than rather than viewing events through the narrow prism of the Cold War. Moreover, the use of U.S. military power should be used only as a final resort, while he also underscored the importance of patient, diplomatic mediation to resolving international disputes.⁹⁷ To former colleagues who served with him during the Johnson years and was appointed as assistant secretary of state in the Carter administration, these views represented a significant shift in his outlook. 'He was very much of a middle of the road Cold War guy' Leslie Gelb recalled, 'after he had spent all those years in New York from the time he left the Johnson administration to the time when he came with Jimmy Carter his views had changed.'⁹⁸

When he entered the Pentagon in 1961, his views mirrored that of the foreign policy establishment, in the belief that the overriding threat to the United States and the global community was Soviet and communist expansionism.⁹⁹ Vance endorsed the policy of containment toward Soviet, Chinese and Cuban aggression by utilising American political, economic and, at times, military strength when necessary. However, his exposure to various world events and incidents during the 1960s shook the foundations of his worldview. By the time he came to serve in the Carter administration, his views had undergone a fundamental re-evaluation.

When a coup d'état plunged the Central American state of the Dominican Republic into a civil war, Vance supported President Johnson's decision, for fear of a 'another Cuba',

⁹⁷ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 27-29.

⁹⁸ Gelb, Interview with the author.

⁹⁹ Laucella, "A Cognitive-Psychodynamic Perspective to Understanding Secretary of State Cyrus Vance's Worldview," 256.

to deploy American forces to control the situation and subvert a hostile takeover. Vance, along with National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy, travelled to Puerto Rico for talks with former Dominican President Juan Bosch about forming a new anti-communist government once hostilities subsided. Vance's exposure to the conflict however ignited doubts within him about the perceived communist threat. 'In the early stages I think there was a general feeling in Washington that there was a substantial communist presence and that they were in fact taking over, and that this did have the seeds of another Cuba' he later reflected, 'but I think as time went on and more information became available, people realised that this perhaps was not the fact.'¹⁰⁰

At the same time as Vance's mission to the Dominican, the Johnson administration became further engaged in the conflict in Vietnam. Like many in the administration, he supported the escalation of their support for South Vietnam on the basis that it prevented the spread of communism and their involvement was a necessary means of achieving peace.¹⁰¹ He stated in May 1965, 'I think the action we are taking indicates our firmness to resist aggression where this is required.'¹⁰² North Vietnam, he believed, under duress from the Soviet Union and China, had imposed 'unwanted rule' on a 'sovereign nation' and the United States had a moral right to become more actively involved. He supported the bombing campaigns of North Vietnam after the Gulf of Tonkin incident and in 1967, when questioned on whether the United States should use force to achieve their aims, he replied, 'unequivocally yes.'¹⁰³

But after a series of long, unsuccessful aerial bombardments and ground offensives resulted in heavy casualties, public opinion turned against the war and so did Vance.

¹⁰⁰ Vance, "Lyndon Baines Johnson Library Oral History Collection, Interview I."

¹⁰¹ Laucella, "A Cognitive-Psychodynamic Perspective to Understanding Secretary of State Cyrus Vance's Worldview," 256.

¹⁰² Cyrus R. Vance, "Transcript, Cyrus R. Vance Interview on Issues and Answers," interview by Jules Bergman and Bill Downs, 9 May, 1965, Cyrus R. and Grace Sloane Vance Papers, Yale University, New Haven, CT. GN: 1664. Series No. 1. Box No. 5. Folder 49.

¹⁰³ Cyrus R. Vance, "Address by Deputy Secretary of Defense Cyrus R. Vance at the 90th Annual Convention of the Diocese of West Virginia Trinity Church.," May 6, 1967, Cyrus R. and Grace Sloane Vance Papers, Yale University, Series No. 1, Box No. 5, Folder 49.

Despite his public comments, his position gravitated toward favouring a gradual de-escalation of American involvement and a peaceful resolution. He later said that he did not believe their initial involvement was ‘based on evil motives’ but he accepted the U.S. had become engaged in a quagmire.¹⁰⁴ The war shook Vance on a personal level, and he confessed years later that he still had difficulty discussing Vietnam during interviews.¹⁰⁵

McNamara shared his deputy’s emotional distress at the conflict. Under a picture of himself and Vance in his book he wrote, ‘Cy Vance and I were both depressed as we began to contemplate the awesome decisions that lay ahead.’¹⁰⁶ His disenchantment with the war effort, coupled with a severe back injury and a desire to return to the private sector to finance his children’s college tuition fees, prompted him to resign from his position in 1967.¹⁰⁷ A month later, Johnson convened a group of former government officials, including Vance, known as ‘the wise men’, a group of foreign policy and military luminaries who convinced the president to begin the process of disentangling the United States from the conflict.¹⁰⁸

For Vance, the rationale for U.S. intervention in Vietnam had been based on a misguided interpretation of the conflict as an East-West proxy war. ‘We did not sufficiently understand the North Vietnamese, nor what motivated them; and I think that this is one of the great problems that faced us and the whole conduct of the war in Vietnam’ he reflected.¹⁰⁹ It also convinced Vance to break from the post-war consensus with U.S. foreign policy less focused on the East-West dynamic. ‘All through the 1960s and early 1970s, new forces and actors appeared in areas of the world that had been on the periphery’ he recalled, ‘it required a broader American conception of U.S. security interests and of the scope of our

¹⁰⁴ Bernard Gwertzman, “Vance Says U.S. Erred in Joining War in Vietnam,” *The New York Times*, 12 January, 1977, 1; Cyrus R Vance, interview by Charlie Rose, 5 May, 1993, Public Broadcasting Service (PBS).

¹⁰⁵ Houghton, *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Iran Hostage Crisis*, 160.

¹⁰⁶ Robert McNamara and Brian Van DeMark, *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* (New York: Random House, 1996); See photograph insert.

¹⁰⁷ Laucella, “A Cognitive-Psychodynamic Perspective to Understanding Secretary of State Cyrus Vance’s Worldview,” 260.

¹⁰⁸ Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, *The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), 698-705.

¹⁰⁹ Vance, “Lyndon Baines Johnson Library Oral History Collection, Interview III.”

foreign policy than merely the U.S.-Soviet or the East-West geopolitical competition.’¹¹⁰

Vietnam had been an example of how the fixation on U.S.-Soviet relations and the policy of containment, had led to the flawed and erroneous use of American military power. To avoid such trauma again, Vance believed the U.S. needed to refocus its priorities in the international arena and not allow relations with the Soviet Union to dominate their overall foreign policy objectives while appreciating the limits of American power.¹¹¹

The Vietnam War also led Vance to doubt the effectiveness of U.S. intervention in regional conflicts. As he observed, ‘I think we erred in not realising that we could not create Western-type institutions in other nations with different cultures.’¹¹² But Vietnam was not the only example during his time in government that convinced Vance of the potential negative impact of American interference. During the Panamanian flag riots of January 1964, Johnson dispatched Vance to ‘determine the facts.’ A wave of violence that emanated after Panamanian students attempted to raise their national flag over the canal had left four American soldiers and twenty-four Panamanians dead, while the government severed diplomatic ties with the U.S.¹¹³ Having seen the extreme level of anti-American sentiment amongst the Panamanians during his visit, Vance found sympathy with their cause and came to the view the continued occupation of the canal as modern-day colonialism. Upon his return, he advised Johnson to begin negotiations to transfer control of the canal back to the Panamanians.¹¹⁴ The cases of Vietnam and Panama as well as the Dominican led Vance to question the merits of Western intervention but ultimately, he concluded that the U.S. could not impose its values upon others through force or coercion.

Events abroad certainly influenced Vance’s views regarding the undesirability of the use of force in resolving conflicts but issues at home also informed his outlook. As secretary

¹¹⁰ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 23.

¹¹¹ Hanhimäki, *The Rise and Fall of Détente*, 105.

¹¹² Gwertzman, “Vance Says U.S. Erred in Joining War in Vietnam,” 1.

¹¹³ Michael J. Hogan, *The Panama Canal in American Politics: Domestic Advocacy and the Evolution of Policy* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986), 76; Vance, “Lyndon Baines Johnson Library Oral History Collection, Interview I.”

¹¹⁴ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 141.

of the army, he oversaw the Kennedy administration's approach to the Ole Miss riots of 1962, after tensions escalated following the admission of African American student James Meredith to study at the University of Mississippi.¹¹⁵ In 1967, he oversaw the federal response to the Detroit Riots and in the aftermath, Vance delivered a scathing assessment on the conduct of the national guard troops and called on authorities to show greater restraint to prevent needless loss of life. He later reflected, 'I personally feel that it's better to save a life than to shoot a fourteen-year-old kid who's taking a loaf of bread.'¹¹⁶ Whereas these cases convinced him of the limitations of military intervention and the use of force, other incidents during the Johnson administration persuaded him of the value of mediation in resolving crises as he fashioned a reputation as a diplomatic trouble shooter.

Vance acquired valuable experience during the Panama flag riots and the Dominican crisis as an emissary of the president and after he left government, Johnson recalled him to act as a mediator with Greece and Turkey over the issue of Cyprus in November 1967 and negotiate the release of the USS *Pueblo* after it had been captured by North Korea in January 1968.¹¹⁷ When President Johnson announced in March 1968 that the U.S. would begin ceasefire negotiations and peace talks with North Vietnam, he appointed Vance as deputy to chief negotiator of the American delegation at the Paris Peace Conference, W. Averill Harriman.¹¹⁸ Having witnessed the misguided use of force at both home and abroad, the experience of Paris and others convinced Vance of the merits of patient negotiation and meditation to resolve disputes.

In the years after he left government, he spent time re-defining his worldview. He came to believe that the United States had become too narrowly focused on the Cold War

¹¹⁵ William Gardner Bell, *Secretaries of War and Secretaries of the Army* (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, 1981), 144; Jason Duncan, *John F. Kennedy: The Spirit of Cold War Liberalism* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 150.

¹¹⁶ Vance, "Lyndon Baines Johnson Library Oral History Collection, Interview I."

¹¹⁷ McLellan, *Cyrus Vance*, 14-16.

¹¹⁸ Richard H. Immerman, "'A Time in the Tide of Men's Affairs': Lyndon Johnson and Vietnam," in *Lyndon Johnson Confronts the World: American Foreign Policy 1963-1968*, ed. Warren I. Cohen and Nancy Bernkopf Tucker (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 83.

conflict with the Soviet Union. U.S. foreign policy, he argued, needed to adapt to the changing world with a greater appreciation of the complexities in the developing world and focus on promoting democratic causes and human suffrage. As a result, he sought new avenues to promote his newfound philosophy. With its emphasis on increased co-operation and dialogue between the U.S., Europe and Japan, Vance decided to join the Trilateral Commission in 1975.¹¹⁹

During this time, he encountered Jimmy Carter, who he first met in 1971. Vance records in his memoir that he and Carter only met on several occasions and the pair were no more than ‘casual acquaintances.’ But like Carter, he wanted to restore a sense of morality in U.S. foreign policy. As he noted, ‘a nation that saw itself as a ‘beacon on the hill’ for the rest of mankind could not content itself with power politics alone.’ The U.S. needed to embrace a new approach to international affairs that emphasised values as well as the need for co-operation to resolve issues across the world.¹²⁰ He later said of Carter, ‘my first impression was that here is a man that I liked, a man I could do business with, and a man whom I would like to work for’ and he decided to support his campaign.¹²¹

Vance’s decision to join Carter’s advisory team, brought him into regular contact with Brzezinski. Although they had both been members of the Council on Foreign Relations as well as the Trilateral Commission, the pair did not know each other well.¹²² Carter’s advisory team consisted of a range of individuals from the foreign policy establishment, such as veterans W. Averell Harriman and Paul Nitze and future colleagues Harold Brown and Paul Warnke.¹²³ Despite the variety of individuals within the group, Vance acted only

¹¹⁹ Laucella, “A Cognitive-Psychodynamic Perspective to Understanding Secretary of State Cyrus Vance’s Worldview,” 261.

¹²⁰ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 28-29.

¹²¹ Vance, “Carter’s Foreign Policy,” 138.

¹²² *Ibid*, 138; Isaacson and Thomas, *The Wise Men*, 726.

¹²³ “Foreign and Defense Policy Task Force Members,” n.d., Cyrus R. and Grace Sloane Vance Papers, Yale University, Series No. II, Box 8 Folder 9.

‘as one of many advisors’ in donating policy papers, memos and articles to Carter but never enjoyed the same level of influence as Brzezinski.¹²⁴

When Brzezinski and Carter discussed potential appointments, the president-elect expressed a desire for a ‘secure and strong’ individual as secretary of state. For the position, they considered three candidates, Vance, former Under Secretary of State and UN Ambassador George Ball and former Assistant Secretary of Defense Paul Warnke. All three had contributed to the campaign but also had considerable experience as former members of the Johnson administration. When Carter and Brzezinski met to discuss the frontrunners, they quickly dismissed Warnke, deemed ‘too soft’ on the Soviet Union.¹²⁵ Carter indicated a preference for Ball because he had, ‘spoken up when nobody else in government did about what was wrong with the Vietnam War’ and ‘had the courage to question aspects of America’s attachment to Israel.’¹²⁶

Brzezinski however argued against Ball. His comments on Israel made him a controversial choice, as he had criticised their conduct in the Middle East and encouraged their withdrawal from territories occupied since the 1967 war. His position enraged supporters of Israel in the U.S., who petitioned against his appointment as secretary of state after he was linked to the post. Brzezinski also saw him as an active secretary of state whose participation in the policy process would ultimately lead to friction with himself. His abrasive style sharply contrasted with the more manageable Vance.¹²⁷ They both saw the potential to work effectively with Vance as part of a team as opposed to the other main contenders for the post. To Brzezinski and Carter, his patient, methodical approach coupled with his prior experience and skills as a diplomatic negotiator made Vance an attractive

¹²⁴ Vance, “Carter’s Foreign Policy,” 138; Leslie H. Gelb, “Brzezinski Viewed as Key Advisor to Carter,” *The New York Times*, 6 October, 1976, 24.

¹²⁵ Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, 385.

¹²⁶ Douglas Brinkley, “Out of the Loop: The Day the Secretary of State Called It Quits.,” *The New York Times*, 29 December, 2002, E43.

¹²⁷ James A. Bill, *George Ball: Behind the Scenes in U. S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 90.

alternative whose nomination, unlike Ball or Warnke's, would be well received at both home and abroad.¹²⁸

Carter invited Vance to Plains, Georgia, where the pair discussed a range of foreign policy issues. They shared many of the same views and priorities for U.S. foreign policy regarding relations with the Soviet Union, a new arms limitation deal, human rights, democratic advancement in the developing world, an Arab-Israeli peace accord, normalisation of relations with China and a peaceful transfer of the Panama Canal. Moreover, they held similar philosophies regarding the conduct of U.S. foreign policy. Vance's experiences of government had radically altered his worldview, as he de-emphasised the Cold War struggle with the Soviet Union and urged greater co-operation on other international issues. The Vietnam War as well as other conflicts, convinced him, as they did Carter, of the need to restore morality in the practice of U.S. foreign policy. Both agreed that the new administration's approach to international affairs ought to be based on compassion with a special emphasis on diplomatic, peaceful negotiation and a principled agenda. Later that evening Carter asked Vance to be his secretary of state and he duly accepted.¹²⁹

Conclusion

During their discussions in Plains, Carter told Vance that he intended to appoint Brzezinski to the post of national security advisor. Vance did not object. He later reflected, 'I felt I did not know Zbig sufficiently well to be able to say to him, "this obviously cannot work".'¹³⁰ But while they shared the same priorities, their divergent perspectives set them apart. In their early careers, both Vance and Brzezinski shared the view that the overriding priority of U.S. foreign policy was the containment of communism and Soviet, Cuban and Chinese expansionism. While Brzezinski never wavered from his strong anti-communist and Soviet

¹²⁸ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 11.

¹²⁹ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 30-33.

¹³⁰ Vance, "Carter's Foreign Policy," 142.

beliefs, Vance's views shifted as a result of foreign policy crises in the 1960s, particularly the Vietnam War. His interpretation of the conflict as an East-West battle to prevent the spread of communism in Southeast Asia, mirrored that of many Americans, but his exposure to events as deputy secretary of defense forced him to question that outlook. Witnessing the heavy American losses, the tactics of the North Vietnamese and the failure of the Western institutions in South Vietnam, he re-evaluated his perspectives. Vance believed the U.S. had misread North Vietnamese motivations, which contributed to their inability to combat the enemy. Moreover, the American attempts to install a western style system on a nation by force, was erroneous. Vance concluded that Western intervention needed to be limited and more nuanced. It required an appreciation of cultural and regional differences to facilitate peaceful solutions.

The conflict in Southeast Asia as well as American intervention in Africa and South America had led to considerable bloodshed and harm, which had created a negative image of the U.S. His experience of erroneous foreign policy objectives and the misguided use of force at home, convinced Vance of the need to use restraint to resolve crises, while his employment as a diplomatic envoy underscored the importance of mediation and diplomatic negotiation to achieve peace. Like Carter, he believed that by implementing a strategy that acknowledged the growing sense of interdependence in the developing world, the U.S. could rebuild its image as a 'beacon on the hill' for the rest of the world.¹³¹

Like Vance, Brzezinski did re-consider his worldview and priorities for U.S. foreign policy. He also appreciated changes in the developing world and believed the U.S. could work with its international partners to embrace socio-economic and geopolitical shifts across the globe. It was this underlying belief that led to the creation of the Trilateral Commission. However, Brzezinski never wavered from his deep-rooted belief that the central objective to U.S. foreign policy was to challenge Soviet expansionism and throughout his career he

¹³¹ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 28-29.

underlined the importance of American strength to counter that threat. His view of the Vietnam War as a just reaction to prevent the spread of communism never changed. He spoke out against détente and condemned attempts by Nixon, Ford and Kissinger to harbour good relations with the Soviet Union in the 1970s.

By the time Vance and Brzezinski were appointed to serve in the Carter administration, their divergent outlooks and approaches to American foreign policy were evident. Vance, the patient diplomat underscored the importance of limited U.S. intervention in regional crises and diplomatic mediation and the need for the United States to act as a force for good to rebuild their reputation in the developing world. While he still considered their Cold War adversary, the Soviet Union, to be a significant threat, he believed they should avoid allowing the conflict to be the primary focus of their foreign policy objectives. Brzezinski's deep, philosophical, revulsion of communism and the actions of the Soviet Union motivated his outlook on U.S. foreign policy. While he shared Vance and Carter's view that the United States should devote time to building relationships and harnessing changes in the developing world, he believed it a necessary tool in the East-West struggle. Furthermore, he did not rule out the use of American military power to achieve their goals in the international arena. Their divergent outlooks marked Vance and Brzezinski apart from one another and as time progressed, their philosophical differences became magnified as the administration attempted to develop policies and react to crises across the world.

Carter meanwhile appreciated the outlooks of both men. As he had no fixed ideology of his own, he found support through the Trilateral Commission, which he described as 'classes in foreign policy.' It provided him with the necessary knowledge and expertise to help formulate his positions during the campaign and beyond.¹³² After his victory, he appointed a number of members of the commission to his administration but unlike many of those who served, Brzezinski supported Carter's campaign from its infancy

¹³² Jordan, *Crisis*, 45.

and devoted considerable time, energy and expertise into his successful run to the White House. He played a critical role in formulating policy throughout while his advice to Carter on the eve of the critical foreign policy debate against Ford, swung the election in his favour. Furthermore, they developed a close personal rapport as Carter trusted the Polish academic to provide him with the knowledge that would aide decision-making.

Vance played only a minor role in Carter's ascent to the presidency and did not cultivate a close relationship with him. Even after his appointment as secretary of state, he recalled a sense of 'growing rapport' with the president-elect but also confessed, 'I cannot claim that any special bond of closeness sprang up between us.'¹³³ Carter valued his input but while they shared the same philosophy regarding the conduct of U.S. foreign policy, he brought Vance into the administration because he saw him as a safe pair of hands who would faithfully implement the policies and approaches of the administration's foreign policy.

Vance did not protest the appointment of Brzezinski to the administration. Although he held doubts about his ability to work with the national security advisor, he recognised that the president wished him to serve in that position. He later noted that, 'he would not have been and was not my first choice, but he was clearly the president's first choice.'¹³⁴ But their contrasting relationships and standing with Carter also influenced their position upon entering the government in January 1977. Unbeknown to Vance, Carter intended to use Brzezinski in an active and assertive role and he handed him a pre-eminent position in the administration, that reduced the secretary of state's ability to influence the foreign policy agenda.

This duly affected the balance of the administration, with Brzezinski as the chief architect of foreign policy. When the president-elect formalised the decision-making structure within the administration, it handed a considerable bureaucratic advantage to the

¹³³ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 33.

¹³⁴ Vance, "Carter's Foreign Policy," 142.

national security advisor and set in motion the struggles between Vance and Brzezinski that became a defining feature of the Carter presidency. Coupled with their divergent ideologies and differing status in the eyes of Carter, it precipitated the conflict between the president's advisors. As Secretary of Defense Harold Brown later remarked, 'they were at sword's point from day one.'¹³⁵

¹³⁵ Brown, *Star Spangled Security*, 43.

Chapter Two

The Decision-Making Structure: 'A Recipe for Struggles.'

When the Carter administration entered office on 20 January, 1977, speculation within newspaper reports suggested the president's two chief foreign policy advisors, Vance and Brzezinski were on course to clash with one another. A few days prior to Carter's inauguration, Bernard Gwertzman wrote, 'the common belief among those who watch foreign affairs closely in Washington is that because he is dynamic and wide ranging Mr Brzezinski will eventually begin to encroach on Cyrus R. Vance's preserve as Mr Carter's No. 1 foreign policy advisor.'¹ Victor Zorza speculated that Brzezinski would 'out Kissinger' in a repeat of the former national security advisor's conduct toward former Secretary of State William Rogers who he regularly undermined and outmanoeuvred. Zorza even suggested Brzezinski could succeed Vance and move to the State Department, like Kissinger, if Carter won a second term in office.² Brzezinski meanwhile sought to play down any potential conflict between the two, as Murray Marder noted, 'no other office in the Carter administration is being established with comparable declarations about what it will not do.'³ *The Boston Globe* meanwhile suggested that, 'a sense of competition could develop simply by their presence in the administration.'⁴

The potential for conflict between Carter's two principal advisors arose on inauguration day when Vance and Secretary of Defense Harold Brown viewed the new foreign policy apparatus. This chapter investigates how the bureaucratic arrangements within the administration aggravated the conflict between Vance and Brzezinski, looking specifically at the decision-making structure drawn up on the eve of Carter's inauguration. The system handed a considerable bureaucratic advantage to Brzezinski and the NSC, while

¹ Bernard Gwertzman, "Brzezinski Revamps Security Unit Staff," *The New York Times*, 16 January, 1976, 1.

² Victor Zorza, "A Man to Out-Kissinger Kissinger," *The Washington Post*, 19 January, 1977, A23.

³ Murrey Marder, "Carter and Brzezinski Stress What NSC Chief Will Not Do," *The Washington Post*, 24 January, 1977, A3.

⁴ "Brzezinski and Vance," *The Boston Globe*, 20 January, 1977, 26.

Vance and the State Department's ability to affect the foreign policy process was severely weakened.

Other factors hindered Vance and his department's efforts to counter the pre-eminent position of Brzezinski and the NSC. Constraints on the secretary's time prevented him from fully engaging in the policy process while his disinclination towards developing strategies and effectively communicate the administration's position and policies with the press did not endear him to Carter. All the while, Brzezinski proved himself adept at providing the president with the advice and assistance he craved, as he increased his influence over the foreign policy agenda. He continued to fashion a close personal and working relationship with Carter but he also utilised a range of bureaucratic tools to exert considerable power within the administration to solidify his position as the president's chief foreign policy advisor.

Moreover, the perceived ineffectiveness of the State Department bureaucracy to develop ideas and strategies contrasted with the NSC, whose streamlined hierarchical structure, provided the president with a range of options to aide policy development. This further enhanced Brzezinski and the NSC's reputation within the Carter administration. Coupled with their competing ideologies and differing interpretations of their roles, the organisation of the foreign policy process only served to exacerbate disagreements between Vance and Brzezinski and fuelled the sense of competition between them and their departments. As this chapter illustrates, the bureaucratic wars that engulfed the Carter administration developed from day one.

A Strong President Assisted by a Dominant White House?

During the Nixon years, presidential decision-making became highly centralised as the White House dominated both domestic and foreign policy. Three key players wielded considerable power and influence within the Nixon White House over the development and implementation of strategies, Chief of Staff H.R. Haldeman, Domestic Affairs advisor John

Ehrlichman and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger. The combination of the three was a direct result of Nixon's desire to 'build a wall against unsolicited advice' to formulate and dictate policy without interference.⁵

When he entered office, Nixon had intended on decentralising policy development in relation to domestic affairs. However, motivated by a quest for solitude as well as a distrust of his ineffective cabinet and the federal bureaucracy, after only a year in office Nixon re-concentrated power within the White House.⁶ Central to this was his all-powerful Chief of Staff H.R. Haldeman, who controlled various aspects of the president's agenda. Haldeman, a loyal ally of Nixon's, was assigned the task of managing the president's time and the flow of information to the Oval Office. Cabinet members and officials who wished to see the president, had to go through Haldeman, while memos and policy papers were screened by the chief of staff. Ultimately it was Haldeman's decision as to what information could be passed on as he imposed Nixon's will on the executive branch. The president frequently dictated his ideas to Haldeman, who in turn communicated his wishes to cabinet members and officials. As Nixon biographer Richard Reeves noted, 'Haldeman memos were the president's preferred medium of communication.' He also took on the tasks Nixon did not want to undertake such as disciplining and firing officials, which led Haldeman to quip, 'every president needs a son of a bitch, and I'm Nixon's.'⁷

In terms of domestic policy, John Ehrlichman was appointed chair of the Domestic Council, where he controlled and co-ordinated the policy process from the White House in co-ordination with Haldeman.⁸ Foreign policy meanwhile fell exclusively under the domain of Kissinger, who played a major role in the development and implementation of foreign

⁵ Jussi M. Hanhimäki, *The Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 25.

⁶ Shirley Anne Warshaw, *Powersharing: White House-Cabinet Relations in the Modern Presidency* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 53-59.

⁷ Richard Reeves, *President Nixon: Alone in the White House* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014), 29-31; Melvin Small, *The Presidency of Richard Nixon* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999), 43-44.

⁸ Richard Ellis, *The Development of the American Presidency*, Second Edition (New York: Routledge, 2015), 385.

policy at the expense of the State Department and Secretary of State William Rogers. When he came into office in 1969 Nixon saw himself as a foreign policy president and distrustful of interfering bureaucracies, wanted to control foreign policy from the White House. During the transition period, he summoned Kissinger, who had provided occasional advice and support to his campaign, to discuss how his administration would operate. Both Kissinger and Nixon agreed upon centralising policy and strengthening the power of the NSC to restrict the influence of the Departments of State and Defense. To this end, Nixon appointed Kissinger as his national security advisor and instructed him to devise a system that would guarantee control over the foreign policy process.⁹

With the aid of advisor Morton Halperin, Kissinger devised, and Nixon agreed to, the implementation of 'The Reorganisation of the National Security Council' document, which outlined the foreign policy process. The paper confirmed to cabinet members the centralisation of foreign policy within the White House and the pre-eminent status of the NSC to control and manage policy development.¹⁰ It gave Kissinger chairmanship of key NSC sub-committees to review medium to long term foreign policy objectives and handle crisis management, intelligence and defence issues.¹¹ As chairman of those committees, he had the ability to set the agenda of deliberations and control discussions while their findings were delivered to Nixon by Kissinger. Coupled with the fact that ideas from other advisors had to go through him, the system allowed Kissinger to review what information and ideas were presented to the president, and which were not.¹²

Working closely with the president from the oval office, the national security advisor exerted unparalleled authority over the design and execution of foreign policy and effectively stripped other departments of influence.¹³ Although they never cultivated a close personal friendship, and at times relations became fractious, Kissinger, like Haldeman and

⁹ Robert Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger: Partners in Power* (London: Allen Lane, 2007), 79-84.

¹⁰ Hanhimäki, *The Flawed Architect*, 24.

¹¹ Rothkopf, *Running The World*, 115-117.

¹² Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, 46.

¹³ Rubin, *Secrets of State*, 140.

Ehrlichman, shielded Nixon from unwanted advice and provided him with the support and ideas the president required to make decisions. Moreover, with a lack of access to Nixon and membership of key committees restricted to lower-level officials and deputy secretaries, officials had few avenues to affect policy. With Nixon and Kissinger formulating strategies in the White House, NSC meetings, the only forum for Rogers and Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird to present their views, became a formality. As one former official noted ‘it was a very clever way of keeping the secretaries from participating in the decision-making process until it reached the National Security Council, by which time the president had pretty well made up his mind.’ Moreover, as time progressed, Nixon ordered a reduction in the number of NSC meetings and told Haldeman that he would ‘make decisions privately with K (Kissinger).’¹⁴

In 1973, Kissinger’s dominance over the foreign policy process was confirmed when he replaced Rogers as secretary of state, combining the role with the position of national security advisor.¹⁵ This coincided with the downfall of the Nixon administration due to the Watergate scandal. Haldeman and Ehrlichman both resigned from the administration in 1973 and were later convicted for their actions while Nixon faced an futile fight to save his presidency.¹⁶ The Watergate scandal and Nixon’s resignation in 1974 brought to light the excessive concentration and abuse of power at the heart of the White House and led to a collapse in public trust of government and its institutions.¹⁷ It was in this atmosphere that Gerald Ford made a concerted effort to move away from the Nixon style and restore confidence in the U.S. government. To do this, Ford vowed to restore cabinet government as a means of differentiating himself from Nixon and creating a sense that his administration was open, honest and transparent. Moreover, Ford and his transition team believed Watergate had partly been the result of an overly assertive chief of staff and White House

¹⁴ Burke, *Honest Broker?*, 111.

¹⁵ Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger*, 505.

¹⁶ Borstelmann, *The 1970s*, 38.

¹⁷ Mieczkowski, *Gerald Ford and the Challenges of the 1970s*, 18-21.

aides who isolated the president and excluded cabinet members from the policy process.¹⁸ Ford opted for a system that encouraged cabinet members and advisors to come to him directly with their ideas rather than navigate through a chief of staff, which reflected a ‘spokes of the wheel’ concept he had utilised as House minority leader. It would allow officials to have unrestricted access Ford to formulate and present their ideas and strategies.¹⁹

However, the system quickly developed into a tug a tug of war for the president’s favour. At the heart of the infighting was, Robert T. Hartmann, a close friend and aide of Ford’s, who attempted to control the president’s affairs and direct the administration’s agenda. This brought him into conflict with Nixon holdover, Chief of Staff Alexander Haig.²⁰ Hartman considered himself an able ally of the president as opposed to the power-hungry chief of staff, leading the former to remark, ‘fuck Haig. I work for the president.’ When Ford replaced Haig shortly after becoming president, his replacement Donald Rumsfeld, similarly ambitious with presidential aspirations, was viewed with suspicion by cabinet members and officials. Hartman disliked Rumsfeld as much as Haig and frequently challenged his influence over the president as the infighting became public knowledge.²¹

Cabinet members, initially energised by Ford’s pledge to restore their authority became exasperated by the lack of direction from the White House emanating from the conflicts between the president’s advisors. Many began developing their own policies and initiatives with little or no consultation with the White House or the president.²² Secretary of State Kissinger meanwhile was asked by Ford to relinquish the role of national security advisor but his dominance over foreign policy continued. His replacement Brent Scowcroft,

¹⁸ Crain, *The Ford Presidency*, 40.

¹⁹ Roger B. Porter, “Gerald Ford: A Healing Presidency,” in *Leadership in the Modern Presidency*, ed. Fred I. Greenstein (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 210.

²⁰ Warshaw, *Powersharing*, 73-79.

²¹ Crain, *The Ford Presidency*, 65-69.

²² Warshaw, *Powersharing*, 92.

who had served as Kissinger's deputy, was a collegial and co-operative influence within the administration, which instilled an element of continuity in the foreign policy process.²³

Like many Americans, Jimmy Carter was shocked by the Watergate scandal and the conduct of the Nixon administration, which he dubbed 'the imperial presidency' with decisions made 'from an ivory tower.'²⁴ He recognised the difficulties caused by overassertive advisors and vowed to create a more open government with cabinet members and advisors having unrestricted channels to him. He wanted them to deal directly with him, evoking the 'spokes of the wheel' concept that Ford had adopted upon becoming president.²⁵ Carter believed, as Ford had, that the system would prevent individuals from wielding considerable influence within the White House and at the same time give cabinet members and officials an unobstructed avenue to advance their views. To this end, he decided against appointing a chief of staff. As close advisor Hamilton Jordan noted, he was signalling a clear break from the previous administrations and remarked, 'I don't think you'll have a Haldeman or Ehrlichman in the Carter administration.'²⁶

The system also satisfied Carter's intellectual desire to have advice and information provided to him whereby he could methodically study and analyse issues. His cabinet members and advisors were therefore encouraged to submit their opinions directly to him, while the president intended to use the cabinet as a forum to test his own ideas.²⁷ But others cautioned against his general approach, arguing that it created the potential for difficulties with advisors exploiting the system to advance their ideas and agenda. Ford's final Chief of Staff Richard 'Dick' Cheney called upon on his own experience and warned members of Carter's transition team, that the system the president-elect wished to adopt, was

²³ Daadler and Destler, 90-91.

²⁴ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 27; Carter, *Why Not The Best?*, 145 .

²⁵ Dumbrell, *The Carter Presidency*, 29-30.

²⁶ Hamilton Jordan quoted in Andrew Rudalevige, *The New Imperial Presidency: Renewing Presidential Power After Watergate* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 103.

²⁷ Hargrove, *Jimmy Carter as President*, 24; John P. Burke, "The Transition," in *A Companion to Gerald R. Ford and Jimmy Carter*, ed. Kaufman, 256.

unworkable.²⁸ The concept may have presented cabinet members and officials the opportunity to lobby directly to influence policy but without an effective structure it would allow bureaucratic politics and power battles to fester and divert the president's time and attention. When Cheney left his post, he gave Hamilton Jordan, Carter's close advisor, a note that read 'Dear Ham, beware the spokes of the wheel.'²⁹

The structure also applied to the practice of foreign affairs where it presented potential difficulties for the administration. Kissinger's unprecedented control drew considerable criticism, not least from Carter who, during the election campaign, criticised his 'lone ranger' style and undue influence within the White House. Carter wanted to avoid the situation that developed under Nixon and Ford and did not want an overly assertive advisor dominating foreign policy.³⁰ However, given his inexperience and lack of knowledge on foreign affairs, he needed to develop a system that gave him on the job tuition on the issues of the day and provide him with the necessary details to inform decisions, ultimately allowing him to 'be the one who pulled the pieces together.'³¹ When he and Brzezinski discussed the setup of the administration as well as the style of decision-making the president wished to adopt, they embraced the system adopted by President Kennedy, 'with a relatively secure and strong secretary of state (Rusk)' augmented by 'an equally confident and energetic White House (Bundy).'³²

Given that they had cultivated a close personal and working relationship, Brzezinski craved a position that gave him the ability to co-ordinate foreign policy with the president and he coveted the position of national security advisor. He later commented, 'it was the key job. It involved the integration of the top inputs from State, Defense, and CIA.' As Carter

²⁸ Ibid., 263.

²⁹ Charles E. Walcott, Shirley Anne Warshaw, and Stephen J. Wayne, "The Chief of Staff," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (September 2001): 466; Charles O. Jones, *The Presidency in a Separated System*. Second Edition (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2005), 99.

³⁰ Hargrove, *Jimmy Carter as President*, 113.

³¹ Stuart Eizenstat, "Jimmy Carter Presidential Oral History Project: Interview with Stuart Eizenstat," interview by Donald Kettl et al., 29-30 January, 1982, The Miller Center.

³² Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 10.

wanted to have full control over foreign affairs to design and implement decisions directly from the White House this placed extra emphasis on the role. ‘Above all’ he noted, ‘it meant that you were close to a president whom I knew would be an activist. And, therefore, being close to him and working with him was centrally important.’³³ Moreover, Carter’s preference for a ‘secure and strong’ secretary of state, led to Vance’s appointment. His experience and diplomatic expertise coupled with his co-operative nature made him a suitable alternative to other contenders for the post. While Brzezinski developed policies and strategies for the president in the White House to choose from, Vance would faithfully execute the administration’s foreign policy. As Carter’s advisor and future Chief of Staff Hamilton Jordan surmised, ‘Zbig would be the thinker, Cy would be the doer, and Jimmy Carter would be the decider.’³⁴

Brzezinski however suspected that the president-elect perhaps favoured a Nixon/Kissinger model with a, ‘strong president (Nixon) assisted by a dominant White House (Kissinger)’ aiding the development of policy and helping the president come to a decision. Given that Carter had criticised the way Kissinger operated during the Nixon/Ford years, Brzezinski believed, ‘he would find it awkward to admit it.’³⁵ Vance meanwhile, not privy to discussions on the makeup of the administration, told Carter ‘the policy leadership role should be assigned to the secretary of state.’ Whilst he did not object to Brzezinski’s appointment, he believed that he should be the president’s key foreign policy advisor but because Carter wished to be actively involved in the decision-making process, the centralisation of foreign policy was inevitable.³⁶ Even Brzezinski later recalled, if a president

³³ Brzezinski, “Jimmy Carter Presidential Oral History Project.”

³⁴ Jordan, *Crisis*, 47.

³⁵ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 10.

³⁶ “Memo, Vance to Carter: ‘Overview of Foreign Policy Issues and Positions,’” 24 October, 1976, Cyrus R. and Grace Sloane Vance Papers, Yale University, Series No. II. Box No. 9. Folder 12.

desires to be closely involved in the finite details of policy development, then the national security advisor is an obvious ‘bureaucratic beneficiary.’³⁷

The formalisation of the decision-making process confirmed Brzezinski’s analysis. While Carter expressed a desire to move away from the style of the Nixon years, the formalised system the president settled on reflected a structure that centralised foreign policy within the White House and placed considerable influence in the hands of his national security advisor. Tellingly, it was Brzezinski who, like Kissinger, had been appointed to the administration before the secretary of state and who the president tasked with designing the foreign policy decision-making structure.

Presidential Directive Two (PD/NSC-2)

As Carter prepared to enter office, he asked Brzezinski to design a new formal process for foreign policy decision-making. Brzezinski, in conjunction with his deputy David Aaron and assistant Karl Inderfurth, set about creating a simpler and more effective NSC system that reflected the president’s desire to receive a range of alternatives before he made an informed decision. The original system drawn up by Brzezinski and Aaron consisted of seven interagency committees with the national security advisor chairing at least three, relating to covert operations, arms control and crisis management with the other four committees chaired by the secretaries of state, defense, treasury and the CIA.³⁸ Carter criticised the system as too convoluted and retorted to Brzezinski in a memo, ‘Zbig, I prefer a more drastic change...please drive for maximum simplicity.’³⁹ At that point, Carter and Brzezinski worked together and devised a simpler policy making mechanism and presented a scaled down version of what had originally been proposed at a pre-inauguration meeting in

³⁷ Zbigniew Brzezinski quoted at “A Forum on the Role of the National Security Advisor,” 12 April, 2001, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington D.C., Accessed 7 December, 2015. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/nsa.pdf>.

³⁸ Destler, Gelb, and Lake, *Our Own Worst Enemy*, 217-218.

³⁹ “Memo, Brzezinski to Carter: ‘The National Security Council System,’” 23 December, 1976, Volume XXVIII, Organization and Management of Foreign Policy, Document 4, FRUS, 1977-1980.

Georgia. It would be a simpler system but it handed a significant bureaucratic advantage to Brzezinski over Vance.

The new NSC system, outlined in Presidential Directive Two (PD/NSC-2) created two foreign policy making committees, the Policy Review Committee (PRC) and the Special Coordination Committee (SCC). When the NSC identified a policy issue to evaluate, they issued a Presidential Review Memorandum (PRM) to investigate. Depending on the subject matter, the assignment fell under the domain of either the PRC or the SCC. Once both committees finalised their studies, they submitted their findings for discussion, which later formed the basis of a presidential directive. The PRC dealt with specific, long-term foreign policy and defence issues with the committee chaired by whoever was deemed responsible for the item of discussion. Usually, either Vance, Harold Brown or Stansfield Turner, the Director of the CIA (DCIA).⁴⁰ However, it was at Brzezinski and Carter's discretion as to which topic was assigned to the PRC or SCC, who chaired the review and who the attendees would be. They could also reassign a topic to the SCC if they so wished.⁴¹

The SCC handled more immediate foreign policy and defence issues, specifically the three core issues that Brzezinski wanted to control when he put forward his initial to design: handling sensitive intelligence, arms control and crisis management.⁴² While the PRC oversaw issues that fell under the domain of the departments of State, Defense, or the CIA, the SCC dealt with 'cross cutting' issues that required the input of various departments. While the subject matter determined who chaired PRC meetings, Brzezinski permanently presided over meetings of the SCC. The national security advisor viewed his role as a 'natural arbiter' between department heads to prevent competition between for control of

⁴⁰ Destler, Gelb, and Lake, *Our Own Worst Enemy*, 217-218.

⁴¹ Burke, *Honest Broker?*, 327.

⁴² "Presidential Directive/NSC-2: The National Security Council System," 20 January, 1977, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library (JCPL), Atlanta, Georgia.

certain issues but his appointment as chair of the SCC put him in an unprecedented position.⁴³

By overseeing crisis management Brzezinski placed himself at the heart of communications for dealing with crises. He reiterated that Carter's desire to be closely involved with foreign policy issues and his proximity to the president meant that having him co-ordinate responses to crises was vital. He pointed to the fact that 'essential communications' were based within the White House, which made him ideally placed to help direct the administration's strategy.⁴⁴ Furthermore, what constituted a crisis depended on the interpretation of those within the White House, specifically the president and Brzezinski.⁴⁵

As chair of the SCC, Brzezinski provided a record of their meetings to the president but he did not circulate his summaries to other members of the committee beforehand. The reports, based on the national security advisor's own notes, provided an analysis of the issue and the debates that took place. The debriefs thus reflected his own interpretation of discussions and if the committee failed to reach a satisfactory conclusion then Brzezinski sent a summary with his own recommendations. The PRC's studies also filtered through his office before they made their way to the president, with a covering memo that contained his own assessment of the group's work.⁴⁶

Moreover, while the PRC contained representatives from across the executive branch, PD/NSC-2 restricted membership of the SCC to the principal departmental heads or their deputies. Who participated below the principals was at the discretion of the SCC's chair, Brzezinski. As such, lower-level officials who disagreed with the national security

⁴³ Robert E. Hunter, *Presidential Control of Foreign Policy: Management or Mishap?* (New York: Praeger, 1982), 10; Karl F. Inderfurth and Loch K. Johnson, *Fateful Decisions: Inside the National Security Council* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 71.

⁴⁴ Glad, *An Outsider in the White House*, 30.

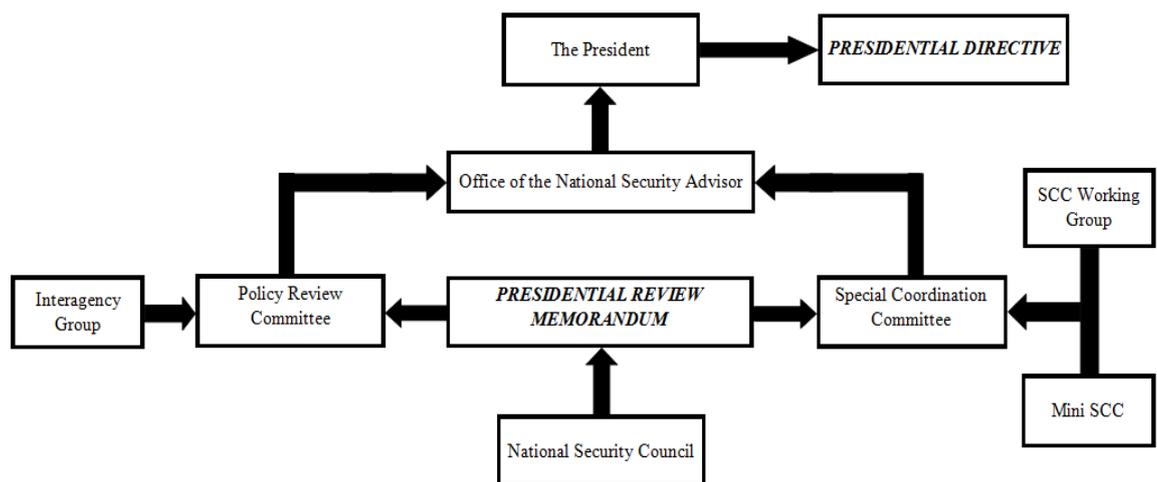
⁴⁵ Rothkopf, "Setting the Stage for the Current Era," 68

⁴⁶ John P. Burke, "The National Security Advisor and Staff: Transition Challenges," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (June 2009): 307-308.

advisor found themselves excluded from discussions.⁴⁷ Consequently, Brzezinski could control proceedings, determine who attended and deliver his findings to the president. It allowed him to shape the debate and advance his own ideas and approaches without overwhelming resistance.

Brzezinski also handed his own department and staff considerable influence within the process. His deputy David Aaron chaired a sub-committee of the SCC known as the ‘mini SCC’ composed of NSC staffers, undersecretaries and deputies who assisted the main group’s body of work.⁴⁸ The PRC similarly received support from lower-level officials across the executive branch but the NSC laid the foundations for the committee’s reviews. It was Brzezinski’s staff who undertook prior research and provided briefing books, papers and articles that formed the basis of discussions. Additionally, NSC staffers assumed the role of drafting agendas while a representative from Brzezinski’s department acted as note taker during deliberations, recorded the minutes of the meeting and provided a summary. Afterwards, they assumed responsibility for dissecting the committee’s conclusions and drafting a PRM to Brzezinski.⁴⁹

Figure 1: Carter Administration NSC Decision-Making Process



⁴⁷ Burke, *Honest Broker?*, 327.

⁴⁸ Rothkopf, *Running The World*, 167-169; Newman, *Managing National Security Policy*, 60-61.

⁴⁹ Burke, *Honest Broker?*, 326.

Brzezinski claimed that he acted merely as Carter's 'surrogate' and in accordance with the president's wish for a system that provided him with quick advice and policies.⁵⁰ However, the system he helped design handed him a significant bureaucratic advantage within the administration. As he said in his own words, the creation of the SCC gave him opportunity 'to shape the agenda' and 'influence the outcome of our deliberations.' Moreover, Brzezinski recognised the implications of the system on his role. He wrote in his journal, 'this will enable me on my return to Washington to draft or actually redraft my proposals on the NSC, to send them down for his (Carter's) approval, and thereby establish the basis for a system that I can use effectively.'⁵¹ However, the power assigned to him through PD/NSC-2 gave him significant control of the policy process and the ability to influence the president and affect the course and nature of the administration's agenda. It also proved to be highly significant in the bureaucratic wars between himself, Vance and the State Department.

Vance vs Brzezinski

The announcement of the system agitated Vance, disappointed by the lack of consultation before Carter signed off it but also concerned about the distribution of power within the structure. Because Brzezinski held the authority to interpret discussions at SCC meetings and feedback recommendations without prior consultation, Vance felt he exerted too much influence over the outcome of deliberations. He took issue with the national security advisor's chairmanship of two of the three responsibilities assigned to him, crisis management and arms control, two critical issues for the administration. In his memoirs, he bemoaned what he believed to be inaccurate and misleading summaries provided by Brzezinski and he expressed regret at not raising objections further with Carter. Vance believed however that given Carter's endorsement of the system, he did not have the authority to question his judgement and reluctantly accepted the structure.⁵² Nevertheless, he

⁵⁰ Hargrove, *Jimmy Carter as President*, 114.

⁵¹ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 61-63.

⁵² Vance, *Hard Choices*, 217-218.

interpreted the system as an elevation of Brzezinski and the NSC's power and influence within the administration while it also weakened his and his department's ability to affect the foreign policy agenda.

The system also created the potential for bureaucratic politics to develop within the administration. The appointments of Vance and Brzezinski as well as Secretary of Defense Harold Brown were a testament to Carter's desire to have experienced personalities in his administration providing him with expert guidance.⁵³ However the balance between being the decision maker but also receiving wide ranging and diverse advice from a team of advisors proved to be a precarious one for the president, particularly given the warnings in the press about the potential for conflict between Vance and Brzezinski. While conscious of the risk of clashes between the two men, Carter did not condemn their differences. He believed divergent opinions within his administration created an opportunity for honest and frank discussions between key officials, which enabled him to incorporate elements of their advice into his final decision.⁵⁴

For the system to be successful it needed to rely on collegiality between the key advisors. In the early days of the administration both Vance and Brzezinski resolved to work together with one another and were optimistic about the future. The national security advisor commented in his journal, 'my relationship with Vance so far is excellent. He is a gentleman and both of us have been leaning over backwards to be accommodating.'⁵⁵ Vance meanwhile maintained that if he were able to present his views to the president on a regular basis, he could overcome any difficulties he may encounter with Brzezinski. 'As long as I can debate my views, I have no problem at all' he said at the time.⁵⁶

⁵³ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 47-49.

⁵⁴ Jimmy Carter, "Contemporary National and International Issues, 1987," in *The Carter Presidency*, ed. Thompson, 6.

⁵⁵ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 61-63.

⁵⁶ Marilyn Berger, "Vance and Brzezinski: Peaceful Coexistence or Guerrilla War?," *The New York Times*, 13 February, 1977, SM5.

However, a further problem lay in the fact that neither was content with their respective roles. Although Brzezinski frequently rejected comparisons with Kissinger, he held a quiet admiration for the way he operated during both the Nixon and Ford administrations.⁵⁷ Vance, while protective of the State Department, considered the position of secretary of state to be the president's top foreign policy advisor. He wrote to Carter prior to the election in October 1976 and advised that that the 'policy leadership role should be assigned to the secretary of state.' Whilst he did not raise any objections to the role of the national security advisor and his staff, he stressed his belief that the secretary of state and his agency should be the key architects of the administration's foreign policy. He told Carter, 'I personally favour the option that would assign to the State Department a pre-eminent role.'⁵⁸ He regarded the role of national security advisor as merely a co-ordinator of foreign policy, not responsible for designing and implementing policies as this was under the domain of the president and the secretary of state.⁵⁹ Despite the disadvantage afforded to Vance by the design of the NSC system, *The Boston Globe* pointed out, unlike William Rogers, he was 'unlikely to defer to anyone but the president, and he is unlikely to be forced into a spear-carrying role by Carter.'⁶⁰

Vance gave Carter his word that he and Brzezinski could work together and after PD/NSC-2 had been signed off he met with both separately to iron out any issues and seek assurances regarding his role within the administration. He extracted several concessions from Carter, which initially placated him. Firstly, he received a guarantee that he acted as foreign policy spokesperson for the administration and the national security advisor was warned not to make any public statements unless instructed to do so. Secondly, while Vance had no objection to the president receiving advice from Brzezinski, he wanted to have the ability to present his own views to Carter on a regular basis without interference from

⁵⁷ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 10-11.

⁵⁸ "Memo, Vance to Carter: 'Overview of Foreign Policy Issues and Positions.'"

⁵⁹ "Q&A with Cyrus Vance after His Resignation," *The Boston Globe*, 4 May, 1980, 75.

⁶⁰ "Brzezinski and Vance," 26.

Brzezinski.⁶¹ That meant his paper trail would not flow through Brzezinski's office in the same way it had done when Kissinger occupied the position of national security advisor and edited or outright stopped papers from Secretary of State Rogers reaching Nixon's desk. Vance's direct communications would bypass Brzezinski and not have any form of cover memo attached. Thirdly, although Carter did not want the SCC and PRC summaries distributed prior to being released to prevent leaks, he granted Vance the ability to review the findings in draft and return his thoughts before the president signed them off.⁶²

Although grateful to receive the assurances he asked for, some of the compromises Vance extracted from Carter and Brzezinski became difficult to uphold. As secretary of state, Vance's schedule was significantly greater than the national security advisor's. His position as the president's chief diplomat required him to travel the globe and meet with foreign dignitaries on a regular basis, which meant that he spent a considerable amount of time away from Washington. By the end of 1977, Vance had made over forty foreign visits to various nations across the world.⁶³ Overall, during his time in the administration, he spent at least 18% of his time (223 days) on diplomatic trips.⁶⁴

While this boosted Vance's credentials within the administration and abroad, particularly over his handling of negotiations between Egypt and Israel, it did present problems at other times. Spending as much time abroad meant that it became difficult for Vance to provide feedback on the draft summaries of SCC meetings. While he had the ability to review and refute the reports of their deliberations, given the pressures on his time, this proved to be a difficult task to regularly undertake.⁶⁵ Furthermore, the secretary of state, unlike the national security advisor, was required to testify regularly before Congress. As Brzezinski himself acknowledged, by not having to appear before various congressional

⁶¹ Hargrove, *Jimmy Carter as President*, 114-116; Rothkopf, *Running The World*, 167-169.

⁶² Vance, *Hard Choices*, 36-39.

⁶³ "Travels of Secretary of State Cyrus Roberts Vance," FRUS. Accessed 1 December 2015 <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/travels/secretary/vance-cyrus-roberts>.

⁶⁴ Elmer Plischke, *U.S. Department of State: A Reference History* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1989), 418.

⁶⁵ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 37.

committees or even go through a confirmation hearing, he did not have significant constraints in the same way Vance did.⁶⁶

The heavy burden on his time ultimately prevented him from meeting with the president on a consistent basis to discuss foreign policy matters.⁶⁷ In the first year of the administration Vance met infrequently with Carter and rarely on an individual basis and while they spoke on the telephone from time to time, calls typically only lasted several minutes.⁶⁸ Brzezinski on the other hand met and spoke with Carter several times a day as his access to the president was much greater. The simple fact that his office was based in the White House afforded Brzezinski the opportunity to meet with Carter regularly. He later recalled that, in addition to his daily briefing, which became his first daily appointment, he would typically be in direct contact with the president around four or five times a day. Moreover, given the informality of their relationship, he was one of a few select individuals who visited the president in his office unannounced or even interrupted meetings if necessary.⁶⁹ Vance meanwhile did not have the luxury of being able to access the president when he wanted in the manner that Brzezinski as his office was based across town, not down the corridor like the national security advisor's.⁷⁰

An allegation made towards Brzezinski is that he utilised his close access to Carter, to advance or protect the strategies and advice he provided. For example, very few people met with the president without the national security advisor or someone from his staff present. During the Horn of Africa crisis, W. Averill Harriman complained that Brzezinski's presence in his meeting with Carter prevented him from giving an honest analysis of the situation.⁷¹ Donald McHenry, who replaced Andrew Young as UN Ambassador in September 1979, had a similar experience. Upon meeting the president for the first time, he

⁶⁶ Zbigniew Brzezinski quoted at "A Forum on the Role of the National Security Advisor."

⁶⁷ Mulcahy, "Foreign Policy Making in the Carter and Reagan Administrations," 122-125

⁶⁸ "Jimmy Carter Presidential Daily Diary: Year of 1977," JCPL. Accessed 4 December 2015 <http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/diary/1977/>.

⁶⁹ Brzezinski, "Jimmy Carter Presidential Oral History Project."

⁷⁰ Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 21-22.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 125.

discovered Brzezinski's deputy David Aaron waiting to attend the same meeting. 'I said "Sorry David, I am seeing the president" and I had to kill that' he recalled, 'it was a Brzezinski effort and one of a number them that went on at the time.'⁷²

Bert Lance, who served as Director of the Office of Management and Budget Management, alleged that Brzezinski deliberately scheduled NSC meetings when he knew he was unavailable. The national security advisor relented when Lance confronted him.⁷³ Others saw their authority within the administration gradually reduced by Brzezinski. Stansfield Turner, accused the national security advisor of denying him access to the president by incorporating the DCIA's daily 'intelligence briefing' into his own 'national security briefing.' According to Turner, 'Brzezinski was very domineering...He wanted to be in control of every minute of the president's time and all the flow of information to the president.'⁷⁴ Those close to Brzezinski argue that he simply adhered to the president's wishes. However, the fact that he held as much influence over who could or could not see Carter reflected the closeness in their relationship but also his authority within the administration.⁷⁵

In other areas, Vance struggled to assert himself, which ultimately benefited Brzezinski's position. Although he requested to be the foreign policy spokesperson, he was uncomfortable with various aspects of this post, specifically dealing with the press. By the 1970s, television played an increasingly important role in politics and the practise of foreign affairs, with the secretary of state required to face the cameras on a regular basis.⁷⁶ Carter criticised the previous administration for operating under a cloud of secrecy and deception and he pledged that if elected he would encourage an open and honest foreign policy. This

⁷² McHenry, Interview with the author.

⁷³ Burke, *Honest Broker?*, 327.

⁷⁴ David Priess, *The President's Book of Secrets: The Untold Story of Intelligence Briefings to America's Presidents from Kennedy to Obama* (New York: Public Affairs, 2016), 112.

⁷⁵ Gates, *From the Shadows*, 141-142; Gates asserts that Carter ordered Brzezinski to make the change because he found the briefings 'boring' while despite Brzezinski's please, it was Carter's decision not to invite Turner to the White House more frequently.

⁷⁶ Rothkopf, *Running The World*, 169.

meant greater public engagement via the media.⁷⁷ Vance however did not enjoy facing the press on a regular basis. He believed that diplomatic negotiations should be conducted in private and bemoaned having to break away from talks to provide on or off the record updates to the press while he questioned the value of publicly revealing aspects of discussions. He told his staff, ‘god help me, reality is I am a negotiator, I’m a man who believes you do your best work behind the door.’⁷⁸

Moreover, his cautious diplomatic style and demeanour did not endear him to the press corps and his reluctance to say anything regarding negotiations frustrated them. ‘There was nothing very sexy for the press about Vance’ recalled his spokesperson Hodding Carter III.⁷⁹ The president became frustrated with the secretary of state’s inability to communicate the administration’s policies. As Press Secretary Jody Powell recalled, ‘Vance was not inclined to be an aggressive salesman and advocate of foreign policy decisions... We had a lot of controversial foreign policy decisions over the course of the four years. He (Carter) felt the need for somebody to do that.’⁸⁰ Brzezinski however proved himself more adept than the secretary of state at interacting with the press who became more receptive to him. He later argued as result of Vance’s reluctance to deal with the media, he assumed the role and responsibilities of press spokesperson more regularly. This led to charges from officials in the State Department that he used the press and his relationship with journalists to advance his own position within the administration at the expense of Vance.⁸¹

Brzezinski also set up a press office within his own department, headed by former *Time* magazine journalist Jerrold Schecter who worked closely with the White House Press team. The move to create such an office was indicative of Brzezinski’s desire to formulate

⁷⁷ Jimmy Carter, “Jimmy Carter Presidential Oral History Project: Interview with Jimmy Carter,” interview by James Sterling Young et al., 29 November, 1982, The Miller Center.

⁷⁸ William Hodding Carter III, “Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection: Interview with William Hodding Carter III,” interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, 6 December, 1993, ADST.

⁷⁹ Carter III, Interview with the author.

⁸⁰ Jody Powell, “Jimmy Carter Presidential Oral History Project: Interview with Jody Powell,” interview by James Sterling Young et al., 17-18 December, 1981, The Miller Center.

⁸¹ Rubin, *Secrets of State*, 174.

the administration's policies and play a more assertive role with the press.⁸² Carter recalls that it was his decision to allow the national security advisor to speak with the press. 'I never, with one or two exceptions, knew Zbig to promulgate an issue that was contrary to my basic policy' he recalled. Nevertheless, the situation reflected the tension within the State Department and their concern about who articulated foreign policy on behalf of the administration. As Carter himself noted, 'whenever Zbig went anywhere or said anything, it created tremors in the State Department.'⁸³

A related problem for Vance was that he was not considered to be a policymaker, even by his own staff. 'He often denigrated policy as the language baloney' reflected Assistant Secretary Leslie Gelb, and as such he was not willing to define administration policy in public.⁸⁴ Brzezinski on the other hand, much more policy orientated, endeared himself to the president whose attraction to him rested on what he perceived to be his dynamic mind and strategic thinking. In his first press conference after his appointment, Brzezinski denied that he would act as a policy maker but merely a co-ordinator and answered questions on a range of issues. Vance meanwhile refused to answer any questions on policy when he was first introduced to the press.⁸⁵

Brzezinski's ability to respond to issues of the day with ideas and strategies set him apart from Vance who did not ingratiate him to the president or indeed others within his inner circle. As William Quandt, who worked closely with both noted, 'Brzezinski was an intellectual professor like Kissinger and he was quick and had ideas and could be all over the place. Vance was much more kind of an experienced bureaucrat lawyer' who dealt on a case-by-case basis rather than setting out a clear strategy.⁸⁶ Carter meanwhile reflected, 'I was an eager student of Zbig's and I enjoyed being around him...Zbig put together a

⁸² Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, 388.

⁸³ Carter, "Jimmy Carter Presidential Oral History Project."

⁸⁴ Gelb, Interview with the author.

⁸⁵ Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, 388.

⁸⁶ William Quandt, Interview with the author, 5 June, 2015, Charlottesville, Virginia.

constant barrage of new ideas and suggestions and plans.⁸⁷ For a president, who wanted on the spot schooling in foreign affairs, Brzezinski became an attractive alternative to Vance.

Despite the potential for conflict within the administration, the principals did make a concerted effort to create a harmonious environment through informal channels, like the weekly foreign policy breakfasts with Carter, Vance, Brzezinski and Vice-President Walter Mondale. Although initially held infrequently throughout 1977, by the following year they had become a regular occurrence with Carter aide Hamilton Jordan, who later became chief of staff, and Secretary of Defense Harold Brown attending the breakfasts, which typically lasted between an hour or an hour and a half.⁸⁸ The breakfasts allowed the participants to air their views, have open discussions and review short to long term objectives in an informal environment, unconstrained by their own bureaucracies. Vance himself preferred these gatherings as opposed to the SCC or PRC meetings, which he later described as often aimless or unproductive.⁸⁹ Brzezinski viewed the system as a good means of having practical discussions on the administration's goals and objectives where other avenues did not exist.⁹⁰

The restructuring of the NSC system elevated the position of national security advisor to cabinet level and gave Brzezinski the opportunity to sit in on meetings. But he later described them as 'just awful' and a 'waste of time' as they afforded no time to discuss foreign policy matters. However, the breakfasts provided a suitable forum to debate issues and strategize. Vance, Brzezinski and Brown also met the day before to confer on various topics and issues from the previous week. Although Carter discouraged an official agenda at the breakfasts, the Brown-Vance-Brzezinski meetings allowed the principals to meet and develop ideas prior to their meeting with the president.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Carter, "Jimmy Carter Presidential Oral History Project."

⁸⁸ "Jimmy Carter Presidential Daily Diary: Year of 1978," JCPL. Accessed 4 December 2015 <http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/diary/1978/>; In the latter years of the Carter Administration the number of foreign policy breakfast attendees was extended to include Vance's Deputy Warren Christopher, Press Secretary Jody Powell, Senior Advisor Hedley Donavon and Legal Counsel Lloyd Cutler.

⁸⁹ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 39; Newman, *Managing National Security Policy*, 72-73.

⁹⁰ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 68.

⁹¹ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 36-39.

However, despite attempts to harness cordial relations between Vance and Brzezinski, the decision-making structure created the potential for conflict between the two. It elevated Brzezinski's status in the administration and despite Vance's best efforts to reassert his influence, he was hindered by several factors. While he resolved to challenge the authority of the national security advisor, Brzezinski used his position to consolidate his role as Carter's chief foreign policy advisor. The close relationship they developed in the years prior to entering office allowed him to use a variety of bureaucratic tools to advance his own policies and approaches at the expense of Vance. This heightened the sense of competition between the national security advisor and the secretary of state, as both attempted to guide the administration's foreign policy agenda. Moreover, the decision-making structure not only set in motion the struggles between the president's advisor but it also extended the rivalry to their respective departments.

The State Department and the NSC: An 'Us' and 'Them' Tussle

During the Nixon administration, because of the president's desire to control foreign policy within the confines of the White House as well as his distrust of the State Department, he effectively excluded the agency from the foreign policy process.⁹² When Vance entered his post, he wanted to restore the department's preserve as the historical vehicle for foreign policy development and implementation and give the agency a 'crystallised sense of mandate.'⁹³ During his time serving in the agency in the 1960s, Brzezinski belittled the department's inability to develop policy. He chastised them for a lack of innovation and accused 'many higher State Department officials' of 'confusing policy making with the defence of orthodox policies.' The lack of consultation from Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Under Secretary of State W. Averill Harriman and others made policy development an ineffective process, which created a stagnant bureaucracy. 'The absence of a strong policy orientated leadership at the top' Brzezinski wrote, 'made it easier for assistant secretaries to

⁹² Dumbrell and Barrett, *The Making of US Foreign Policy*, 65.

⁹³ "Memo, Vance to Carter: 'Overview of Foreign Policy Issues and Positions.'"

defend established regional policies and to evade the challenges to prevailing orthodoxies.⁹⁴ He later said of the State Department, ‘large bureaucracies do not produce strategies - they produce shopping lists.’⁹⁵

As a result, he sought to enhance the role of his own department with respect to policy development. Not only was Brzezinski more adept at providing Carter the advice and expertise he wanted, his department also proved itself more compatible to the president’s wishes than the State Department. PD/NSC-2 handed significant power to his staff. The structure reflected Carter’s desire to have a range of options to choose from but also operate as a foreign policy think tank, developing dynamic ideas and strategies.⁹⁶ As Brzezinski himself noted, ‘the president wishes me and my staff to help him play an innovative role... to try to look beyond the problems of the immediate and help him define a larger and more distant sense of direction.’⁹⁷

When appointed to his position, Brzezinski quickly assembled a highly sophisticated team of individuals within his department. Those appointed consisted of young academics who were specialists in their respective fields but also had ties to the foreign policy establishment.⁹⁸ Their stature reflected the wishes of Brzezinski and Carter to have a wide range of expertise at their disposal. As Karl Inderfurth, who remained on the NSC staff as Brzezinski’s special assistant, commented, ‘there was no question that the National Security Council staff he put together were intended to be a high-powered NSC. You do not bring in people like Bill Quandt on the Mideast and (Michel) Oksenberg and (Michael) Armacost on Asia and experienced policy hands like (William) Hyland, (Reginald) Bartholomew and (David) Aaron without recognising that you have got a bunch thoroughbreds and they’re

⁹⁴ Brzezinski, “Purpose and Planning in Foreign Policy,” 61-65.

⁹⁵ Zbigniew Brzezinski quoted in Hanhimäki, *The Rise and Fall of Détente*, 105.

⁹⁶ Gwertzman, “Brzezinski Revamps Security Unit Staff,” 1.

⁹⁷ Zbigniew Brzezinski quoted in Dom Bonafede, “Zbigniew Brzezinski,” in Inderfurth and Johnson., ed. *Decisions of the Highest Order*, 169.

⁹⁸ Gwertzman, “Brzezinski Revamps Security Unit Staff,” 1.

going to want to run.’⁹⁹ Journalist Richard Burt defined the NSC as a ‘floating seminar’ while Brzezinski noted years later, ‘it’s to some extent part of my intellectual tradition...I wanted a staff in which I had people to the left of me, to the right of me, as well as people sort of in the middle.’¹⁰⁰

Not only did Brzezinski assemble a team of experienced and dynamic individuals, he fitted them into a system that proved to be fast and effective when it came to policy development. His staff, considerably smaller than Vance’s, had no vast hierarchal structure to negotiate and the process was streamlined to allow easier communication to generate policy ideas. Brzezinski’s NSC was made up of three clusters, which contained four offices with two or three specialists. In one cluster, four offices covered Europe, the USSR and East-West relations, the Middle East, North-South issues and the Far East while in the second cluster four other departments covered subjects such as global affairs, international economics, security analysis and security planning. In the third cluster, the offices covered intelligence, press and congressional relations, special projects and freedom of information.¹⁰¹

Because of the small number of staff and departments, the NSC structure operated in a much more fluid fashion unlike the process that existed within the State Department. Commenting on the system, NSC staffer Gary Sick, said, ‘the NSC was very flat. You had Brzezinski on top with Aaron under him as his deputy and then everyone else. So everybody was reporting directly to the boss. You weren’t going through two or three layers of bureaucracy.’¹⁰² The flexibility of the department benefitted the NSC staff and as Brzezinski

⁹⁹ Karl F. Inderfurth, “Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection: Interview with Ambassador Karl F. Inderfurth,” interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, 27 April, 2001, ADST.

¹⁰⁰ Richard Burt quoted in Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, 388; Brzezinski, “Jimmy Carter Presidential Oral History Project.”

¹⁰¹ “National Security Council Organization and Functions Chart,” Volume XXVIII, Organization and Management of Foreign Policy, Document 6, FRUS, 1977-1980; “The NSC Staff and Organization, 1977-1981,” JCPL. Accessed 4 December, 2015.

https://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/research/nsc_staff_and_organization_1977_81.

¹⁰² Gary Sick, Interview with the author, 2 June, 2015, New York City, New York.

gave them free reign to develop their ideas and suggestions, it created a harmonious working environment that encouraged ‘spontaneity and creativity.’¹⁰³

Those like William Quandt, who worked on the NSC under Kissinger, appreciated the refreshing change in approach. ‘Kissinger barely knew who I was’ he recalled, ‘but with Brzezinski virtually every day I would have some kind of interaction with him either written or telephone or going to see him...He wouldn’t always agree but he would at least listen.’¹⁰⁴ As Marshall Bremant, who worked within the USSR/Eastern Europe cluster, noted, this helped boost morale within the NSC staff, ‘the most frustrating thing that you can have as an employee in any bureaucracy is to keep dropping things with your boss and having the feeling they are going down a deep well, never getting read and never getting acted on.’¹⁰⁵

Moreover, their elevated status under Brzezinski, as well as his close relationship with Carter meant they had a direct and positive affect on foreign policy as a lot of the material forwarded often reached the president. ‘I was just one step away from having my words get in to the president’s inbox’ recalled Sick, ‘which is a very powerful position...from my point of view it was wonderful.’¹⁰⁶ Housed in the Old Executive Office, next door to the White House, the NSC staff could communicate regularly with their boss due to their proximity.¹⁰⁷ As Quandt observed, ‘back then either Gary (Sick) or I took an issue and we would walk across the street and drop it off...we had an immediacy of access to our principal who was Brzezinski and the next person up the line was the president.’¹⁰⁸ Having close access not just to Brzezinski but also to the president added a heightened sense of importance to the NSC staffers and their roles.

¹⁰³ David Aaron, “White House Staff Exit Interviews: David Aaron Interview,” interview by Marie Allen, 15 December, 1980, JCPL.

¹⁰⁴ Quandt, Interview with the author.

¹⁰⁵ Marshall Bremant, “Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection: Interview with Ambassador Marshall Bremant,” interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, April 11, 1990, The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, Arlington, Virginia.

¹⁰⁶ Sick, Interview with the author.

¹⁰⁷ Hunter, *Presidential Control of Foreign Policy*, 12-13.

¹⁰⁸ Quandt, Interview with the author.

Brzezinski also became very popular with his staff. As a prodigious worker, he devoted considerable time to going over documents and policy papers forwarded onto him and met with his staff regularly to discuss their ideas. ‘He is a speed reader, and got through his inbox every day, so that you could send him a note and get an answer back the next day’ recalled Brement.¹⁰⁹ In return, his staff appreciated the amount of time Brzezinski dedicated to consider their thoughts. As Robert Gates, his special assistant, remembered, ‘he (Brzezinski) treated people well and was approachable and friendly, had a good sense of humour.’¹¹⁰

That was part of a deliberate tactic by Brzezinski to harbour good relations within his department and create a harmonious working environment but he also valued their input. ‘He used the staff’ Gates noted, ‘he really depended on them and relied on them and I think the staff had real influence with him.’¹¹¹ ‘He never introduced us as ‘staff’; we were his colleagues’ reflected Congressional Relations Officer Madeline Albright.¹¹² As Brzezinski himself observed, ‘I wanted them to feel that they were the president’s elite...I wanted them to feel that they were partaking of the relationship. I would tell them anecdotes, accounts, my discussions with the president, the president’s mood, the president’s interests, the president’s policy preferences and in the four years I never had any indiscretion on the subject.’¹¹³ With an effective structure in place to develop ideas within a harmonious working environment, the NSC under Brzezinski grew in confidence while their stature increased. As Brement surmised, ‘you really had a feeling you were doing something when you were working on the staff.’¹¹⁴

As a result, the bureaucratic structure of the NSC proved to be more efficient and effective than the system at the State Department. While Brzezinski’s department was

¹⁰⁹ Brement, “Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection.”

¹¹⁰ Gates, Telephone Interview with the author.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Madeline K. Albright, *Madame Secretary* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2013), 84.

¹¹³ Brzezinski, “Jimmy Carter Presidential Oral History Project.”

¹¹⁴ Brement, “Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection.”

relatively small, Vance presided over a vast bureaucracy composed of thousands of employees in a convoluted hierarchy. Moreover, while NSC staffers passed on policy suggestions directly to their boss, State Department desk officers had to manoeuvre their ideas through the various offices of assistant secretaries and under secretaries of state before they arrived on Vance's desk.

The process in many respects mirrored Allison's organisational process model, whereby policies, navigating through a hierarchical bureaucratic structure, are refined and perfected through the contributions of government departments and officials. In the State Department, ideas and observations originating from desk officers, who retained specialist knowledge of a country or region, progressed through various offices who made their own modifications before the final output reached the desk of the secretary of state. However, as policies and ideas advanced through the bureaucracy, they were often reviewed, rewritten or outright rejected. Desk officers regularly discovered their impact on policy was minimal as their ideas were either diluted or failed to reach the secretary of state's office. The input of officials within the hierarchy, rather than perfecting or refining policy according to Allison's organisational process model, only served to hinder the development of ideas and strategies within the department.

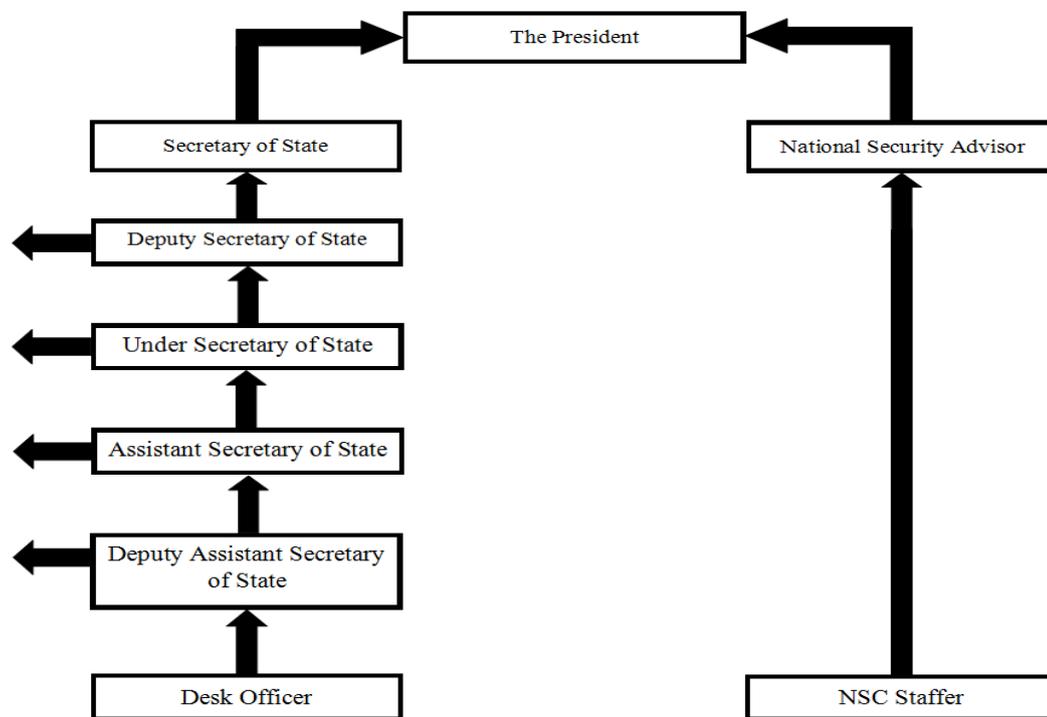
The process frustrated many within the department. As desk officer Henry Precht recalled, 'when you work in a place like the State Department, maybe there's no other place like it, you not only have to channel upward but you have people on the side of you who want to have a chomp at your actions...you constantly have to deal with these people who want to change what you're saying or perfect it in some fashion.'¹¹⁵ Moreover, given the constraints on Vance's time, there was no guarantee that a policy would even be discussed at a high level. This according to NSC staffer Gary Sick, made some within the State

¹¹⁵ Henry Precht, Interview with the author, 16 March, 2016, Bethesda, Maryland.

Department resentful of their predominant position and encouraged dissent as time wore on.¹¹⁶

The slow, long winded process only served to benefit Brzezinski and his staff who provided the president with a range of ideas and policies in an efficient manner (see figure 2). Reflecting on the period, Carter, when asked why he appeared to show preference to Brzezinski and his staff over Vance, commented, ‘Zbig sent me ten ideas a night, and I was lucky to get a single idea a month out of the State Department.’¹¹⁷

Figure 2: Policy Development - State vs NSC



He expanded in his memoirs, ‘Brzezinski and his small group of experts were not handicapped by the inertia of a tenured bureaucracy...They were particularly adept at incisive analyses of strategic concepts, and were prolific in the production of new ideas, which they were always eager to present to me.’¹¹⁸ For a president who wanted to immerse himself in the finer details of foreign policy, the NSC made a favourable impression on

¹¹⁶ Sick, Interview with the author.

¹¹⁷ Jimmy Carter quoted in Robert E. Hunter, “Working Hard, Having Fun at the NSC,” in Zbig, ed. Gati, 116.

¹¹⁸ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 53.

Carter. It provided him with policy options quickly and fed into his perception of the NSC operating as a think tank as opposed to the overly lethargic State Department. As Harold Brown noted, ‘people who are used to getting things done tend to have more influence’ and as a result Carter turned to Brzezinski and the NSC staff for advice, policies and strategies.¹¹⁹

Inhibited by the hierarchical structure of their department and resentful of the status afforded to the NSC, dissatisfaction within the State Department grew as a sense of competition between themselves and the NSC developed. Vance assured them that he and Brzezinski trusted one another and understood each other’s respective roles.¹²⁰ But, upon viewing the directive, his staff immediately voiced their concern and displeasure. PD/NSC-2 increased suspicion that Brzezinski would undermine and outmanoeuvre Vance as Kissinger had with Rogers years earlier. An unnamed State Department advisor told *The New York Times*, ‘it is inevitable that Zbig will become an originator of policy and not just a co-ordinator. And once he starts making foreign policy recommendations to the president, his ideas will cut across the bow of the secretary of state.’¹²¹

Those like Donald McHenry and Anthony Lake, who witnessed Kissinger’s treatment of Rogers first hand, warned Vance that Brzezinski and his staff would attempt to do the same but when they suggested he do something about it, Vance angrily cut them off and stated firmly that he would not tolerate unbridled conflict between the two departments.¹²² He believed infighting had damaged previous administrations and, conscious of a potentially difficult situation arising between himself and Brzezinski, warned his staff

¹¹⁹ Brown, *Star Spangled Security*, 46.

¹²⁰ “National Security Council Project: The Role of the National Security Advisor - Oral History Roundtable,” 25 October, 1999, The Brookings Institute, Washington D.C. Accessed 2 December 2015. <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/19991025.pdf>.

¹²¹ Berger, “Vance and Brzezinski: Peaceful Coexistence or Guerrilla War?,” SM5.

¹²² Anthony Lake, “Carter’s Foreign Policy: Success Abroad, Failure at Home,” in Thompson, ed. *The Carter Presidency*, 149.

not to engage the national security advisor or his staff in any bureaucratic warfare. Those who did, would be dismissed.¹²³

However, disciplining his staff proved to be a difficult task for Vance to achieve, in part because of his own popularity within the department. As *The Boston Globe* noted, he entered the administration with his own constituency of loyal advisors.¹²⁴ Those who served in the top echelons of the department such as, Leslie Gelb, Philip Habib, Richard Holbrooke, Anthony Lake, Richard Moose and David Newsom, forged close links through their prior spells in government and felt a deep sense of loyalty to Vance. He also retained the services of many foreign service officers who appreciated his calm and respectful demeanour, in sharp contrast to his brash and abrasive predecessor Kissinger.¹²⁵ Above all, his ability to give his staff the freedom and encouragement to put forward their views made him very popular. He listened and considered their ideas thoughtfully, even at times when he did not always agree but even those whom he regularly disagreed with, praised his open-mindedness.¹²⁶

Having seen their authority whittled away by Nixon and Kissinger, Vance resolved to re-establish the State Department's role as the traditional vehicle of foreign policy development. In his October 1976 memo to Carter, Vance proposed reforms to the agency that would allow them to 'effectively implement diplomatic policies' to give it a 'crystallised sense of mandate.'¹²⁷ But the creation of the new NSC system challenged his department's ability to affect policy. His loyalty to the department never wavered and he spoke up if he believed they were treated unfairly, particularly with respect to their dealings with Brzezinski and the NSC. As Carter recalled, 'Cy was very, very sensitive about any

¹²³ McHenry, Interview with the author.

¹²⁴ "Brzezinski and Vance," 26.

¹²⁵ Rubin, *Secrets of State*, 175-176.

¹²⁶ Gelb, Interview with the author.

¹²⁷ "Memo, Vance to Carter: 'Overview of Foreign Policy Issues and Positions,'"

reflection on the State Department or any usurpation of its authority or vestige of influence, to a fault.’¹²⁸

The frustration amongst those within the department about their inability to affect decision-making encouraged dissent. As Anne Wexler, Assistant to the President for Public Liaison, noted, ‘there got to be a real war between the State Department and the National Security Council, and one cannot minimize the bitterness and anger...I think people began to choose up sides and to really criticize the president when they felt that their sector of the establishment represented by Vance was being undercut.’¹²⁹

While Vance’s staff remained loyal, some became increasingly concerned about Brzezinski and his department’s overarching influence. This generated resentment with some prepared to fight back when they felt undermined, despite Vance’s warnings. As his spokesperson Hodding Carter III recalled, ‘Cy would call us in and say “look, we just can’t do this” “yes sir” but I don’t think there was a single person among them who wasn’t going to do it again.’¹³⁰ Tensions between the State Department and the NSC duly developed as the policy struggles of the Carter administration developed into widescale interagency warfare and bureaucratic politics.

Conclusion

The reorganised NSC system created a sense of competition between the president’s two closest advisors and their departments as soon as they entered office. While Vance and Brzezinski attempted to work collegially with one another, the bureaucratic structure, coupled with other mitigating factors, enhanced the national security advisor’s position to influence the administration’s foreign policy agenda. The system afforded Brzezinski and the NSC staff significant authority with respect to policy development and implementation.

¹²⁸ Carter, “Jimmy Carter Presidential Oral History Project,”

¹²⁹ Anne Wexler, “Jimmy Carter Presidential Oral History Project: Interview with Anne Wexler with Michael Chanin, Richard Neustadt, and John Ryor,” interview by James Sterling Young, Kenneth W. Thompson, and Charles O. Jones, 12-13 February, 1981, The Miller Center.

¹³⁰ Carter III, Interview with the author.

As Robert Hunter, who served on the NSC under Brzezinski, described it, PD/NSC-2 was, ‘as an innocuous but powerful mandate for the national security advisor’ as it placed him and his department at the heart of designing the administration’s agenda.¹³¹

Moreover, the sense of competition between the two departments allowed bureaucratic politics to develop within the administration. The NCS’s fluid structure gave staffers the opportunity to progress ideas without interference while ideas in the State Department had to negotiate ideas through a labyrinth of bureaus and officials inhibiting the policy process. While the system mirrored Allison’s organisational process model, the frustration at the hierarchical structure and the bureaucratic prerogatives handed to their rivals at the NSC, angered State Department officials. Questions over territory and the pre-eminent role of the NSC quickly arose as the bureaucratic rivalry between the two departments developed. PD/NSC-2 created the potential for bureaucratic politics to fester within the administration. It was, as Anthony Lake put it, ‘a recipe for struggles’ as an ‘us’ and ‘them’ tussle within the department quickly manifested itself within the administration.¹³²

While the system handed a bureaucratic advantage to Brzezinski, Vance and his department resolved to re-establish themselves as the main vehicle for policy development. The secretary of state reasoned that if he could work with Brzezinski and develop a direct line to the president without interference he could overcome any potential troubles. However, given the numerous factors working against his position, this proved to a difficult task to maintain. Ultimately Vance’s power within the administration depended on Carter’s willingness to utilise him and take his views on board. Successfully persuading the president to adopt his advice and policies as opposed to Brzezinski’s, meant doing so despite a system

¹³¹ Hunter, *Presidential Control of Foreign Policy*, 9.

¹³² Lake, “Carter’s Foreign Policy: Success Abroad, Failure at Home,” 149-150; Anthony Lake quoted at “The Role of the National Security Advisor: Oral History Roundtable.”

that disadvantaged himself and his department's ability to affect the administration's agenda.¹³³

When Carter entered the White House, he wanted to have a range of options available to him to help inform decision-making and policy development. For a president, who craved a fast and effective system that aided policy development, Brzezinski and his staff became an attractive alternative to what he perceived as the slow and lethargic performance of the State Department under Vance. While he intended to move away from the system that had existed during the Ford and Nixon administrations, he ended up embracing a similar scenario. As Kevin Mulcahy noted, 'the irony is that although Carter entered office pledged to oppose the Kissinger model of foreign policymaking, the actual result was the concentration of nearly as much power in the White House as had been the case in the Nixon administration.'¹³⁴

¹³³ Sexton, "The Wages of Principle and Power," 83-87.

¹³⁴ Kevin Mulcahy quoted in Amy B. Zegart, *Flawed by Design: The Evolution of the CIA, JCS, and NSC* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 91.

Chapter Three

1977

‘Peaceful Coexistence or Guerrilla War?’

Towards the end of 1976, both Vance and Brzezinski delivered strategy papers to Carter with foreign policy recommendations. Both documents drew upon very similar themes, arguing for greater understanding and appreciation of the complex issues facing the world and a new era of sensitivity. In terms of policies, both papers called for a new arms control deal with the Soviet Union, which reflected the reciprocal nature of détente, democratic advancement in the developing world, promotion of human rights initiatives and an Arab-Israeli peace deal.¹ The contents of the memos reflected many of the subjects Carter espoused during his campaign about the need to build a post-Vietnam foreign policy agenda but while Vance and Brzezinski shared the same priorities, their approaches brought the two of them into disagreement as soon as the administration entered office.

This chapter explores the varying degrees of conflict and consensus between the secretary of state and national security advisor during the administration’s first year in office. When Vance and Brzezinski entered their posts in January 1977, the potential for competition between them was apparent. The structure of the NSC system and the creation of the Special Coordination Committee exacerbated tensions between the principals and their departments as both jostled to affect the administration’s foreign policy agenda. The policy wars between them duly erupted within weeks of entering office as both attempted to influence the administration’s position towards strategic arms limitation talks (SALT) with the Soviet Union. SALT exposed ideological and bureaucratic tensions between the secretary of state and the national security advisor, as both attempted to advance their own contrasting negotiating positions.

¹ “Memo, Vance to Carter: ‘Overview of Foreign Policy Issues and Positions,’”; “Memo, Brzezinski, Gardner and Owen to Carter,” 3 November, 1976, Volume I, Foundations of Foreign Policy, Document 13, FRUS, 1977–1980.

Moreover, this chapter analyses the relationship between the State Department and the NSC and assesses how the bureaucratic struggles escalated in relation to SALT negotiations as well as the development of a human rights strategy. This chapter also investigates the administration's attempts to negotiate a peace settlement in the Middle East. Whereas other instances divided Vance and Brzezinski, their shared position and approach on the Middle East, their agreed upon roles and the bureaucratic harmony between officials positively affected the administration's strategy and helped engineer the Camp David Accords. However, while they found common ground on issues such as the Middle East, the Panama Canal treaties and democratic advancement in Africa, ideological and bureaucratic tensions were never far from the surface. The first year set the tone for several years of infighting between the president's principal advisors and their departments as they attempted to influence and direct the course of the administration's foreign policy agenda.

SALT II

When the administration entered office, they inherited stalled arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union. A crucial staple of détente, arms control talks presented an avenue for the two superpowers to constructively engage with one another and regulate the escalating arms race. In 1972, both sides signed the first SALT accord and committed themselves to further reductions at the Vladivostok summit in 1974, but a second arms limitation deal proved elusive.² While they agreed to fix the number of strategic launchers on both sides to 2,400 each, with MIRVs (Multiple Independently Targetable Re-Entry Vehicle) restricted to 1,320, they failed to reach an agreement on which weapons to include within the 2,400 limit or cruise missile ranges. Accordingly, no firm agreement was reached.³

Cutting the United States' nuclear arsenal and working towards the gradual elimination of all deadly weaponry was a key policy commitment of Carter's. During his

² Brands, *Since Vietnam*, 46.

³ Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 38.

inaugural address, he declared his intention to forge ahead with a new SALT treaty.⁴ It was hoped that both sides could reach an agreement within Carter's first few months in office however negotiations fell victim to the growing tensions within the administration between Vance and Brzezinski. SALT II ultimately become a by-product of their struggles as ideological and bureaucratic fault lines were exposed.

The key principals considered the agreements negotiated by Ford at Vladivostok as unsatisfactory and Carter, as a newly elected president, believed he had the right to re-negotiate the terms in a fresh round of talks.⁵ Vance and Brzezinski also considered the terms negotiated by the Ford administration as inadequate and believed a new accord was necessary to resolve the outstanding issues from the Vladivostok summit. However, their interpretations of how the administration should proceed with negotiation highlighted their divergent views on U.S.-Soviet relations as the potential for inter-departmental conflict loomed. As Brzezinski's special assistant, Robert Gates noted, both had 'a fundamentally different approach about how to deal with the Soviets.'⁶

Brzezinski, highly critical of détente, questioned the reciprocal nature of the relationship. He held the view that the Soviets had benefited more from the thawing of relations than the U.S. and nowhere was this more evident than in respect to arms control negotiations. He was horrified at the terms of the 1972 SALT I agreement, which he believed strengthened the Soviet's military prowess and weakened American defence capabilities.⁷ For him, SALT II, needed to reflect the reciprocity of détente and the Soviet Union needed to be prepared to make genuine and substantive sacrifices. This allowed them to display as much honesty about its capabilities as the U.S. He therefore advocated that the administration negotiate a comprehensive arms control agreement that committed the Soviets to the same reductions in their nuclear arsenal as the U.S. Brzezinski duly

⁴ Jimmy Carter, "Inaugural Address," 20 January, 1977, The American Presidency Project.

⁵ Hyland, *Mortal Rivals*, 208-209.

⁶ Gates, Telephone Interview with the author.

⁷ Andrinoopoulos, *Kissinger and Brzezinski*, 101.

encouraged a ‘deep cuts’ approach to negotiations, a significant deviation from the terms negotiated at Vladivostok by the Ford administration.⁸ According to Brzezinski, the proposal was a test of the Soviet’s willingness to work with the U.S. but also an opportunity to halt their military build-up and regulate the arms race.⁹

Vance meanwhile favoured a more conservative approach. Although he shared elements of Brzezinski’s analysis of détente he did not agree with his position. The aim of arms control negotiations, he argued, was to regulate and restrict the production of nuclear weapons but also engage in constructive dialogue to help improve U.S.-Soviet relations and co-operate on areas of mutual interest. For Vance, the administration needed to resolve the outstanding issues from the Vladivostok accord and proceed to sign a new SALT treaty within several months of entering office. This approach allowed them to harness cordial relations with the Soviets, capitalise on their honeymoon period with Congress and lay the foundations for a third, more substantive, SALT agreement later in the administration’s first term.¹⁰

Vance’s assessment received a ringing endorsement from his friend Paul Warnke, who Carter appointed as Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA). In their view, any major deviation would be met with a swift rejection by the Soviets, potentially embarrass the United States and undermine any future agreement.¹¹ However, Vance’s ability to affect Carter’s position on arms control was limited. His status within the administration, as well as his lack of a close relationship with Carter, prevented him from asserting his authority. Moreover, the decision-making structure of the administration hindered his attempts to advance his views.

Brzezinski became increasingly confident of having his proposed strategy accepted as the basis for the negotiations. As arms control fell under the domain of the SCC,

⁸ Newman, *Managing National Security Policy*, 84-85.

⁹ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 150.

¹⁰ “Memo, Vance to Carter: ‘Overview of Foreign Policy Issues and Positions.’”

¹¹ Strong, *Working in the World*, 38.

Brzezinski, as its chair, had the ability to control proceedings and manage the direction of the administration's strategy.¹² His department aided his endeavours with his deputy David Aaron, another 'deep cuts' convert, chairing the mini-SCC, and NSC staffer William G. Hyland operating a lower-level working group that provided both committees with background materials.¹³ At every stage in the process Brzezinski and his NSC staff controlled the administration's deliberations. Furthermore, in addition to Aaron, he also enlisted the support of two key figures in the administration, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown and Vice-President Walter Mondale.¹⁴

A clear divide amongst the administration's key advisors on arms control emerged with Brzezinski, Aaron, Brown and Mondale on the one side arguing for 'deep cuts' while Vance, Warnke and Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs Leslie Gelb favoured a more conservative deal.¹⁵ However, when the SCC met to discuss SALT, Brzezinski manipulated the agenda so Warnke spoke first and Vance last in-between input from 'deep cuts' advocates. He claimed to be merely 'balancing the softs and the hards' but in effect it handed the bulk of the discussions to those who favoured a more radical approach.¹⁶ The SCC met on several occasions to formulate a proposal but a deadlock ensued as the stubborn resistance from Vance, Warnke and Gelb countered the 'deep cuts' approach of Brzezinski, Brown, Aaron and Mondale. But the national security advisor sought to break the impasse. Utilising a further bureaucratic tool, he elevated the SCC to an NSC meeting at the White House.¹⁷

Due to his proximity to Carter both personally and professionally, Brzezinski controlled the flow of material forwarded to the president, briefed him daily and provided regular updates on discussions. He knew of Carter's position on arms control, which he

¹² Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 63.

¹³ Newman, *Managing National Security Policy*, 83-84.

¹⁴ Glad, *An Outsider in the White House*, 49-50.

¹⁵ Newman, *Managing National Security Policy*, 84.

¹⁶ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 158; Sexton, "The Wages of Principle and Power," 178.

¹⁷ Rothkopf, *Running The World*, 183.

shared. When the SCC met for the first time to discuss SALT, Brzezinski had Carter open the meeting and he spoke for forty minutes on arms control. According to U. Alexis Johnson, who worked on the SALT I and the Vladivostok framework, Carter showed considerable knowledge on the subject as he discussed his desire to see genuine reductions, which Brzezinski advocated, rather than conservative restrictions, favoured by Vance.¹⁸ Knowing the president's position on arms control, and bringing him into proceedings, the national security advisor believed he stood a greater chance of having his approach accepted. Moreover, as he elevated the status of the meeting, he excluded lower-level officials, such as Assistant Secretary Leslie Gelb but also NSC staffers Roger Molander and William Hyland who favoured a moderate arms control deal.¹⁹

Sure enough, after Carter heard detailed presentations from Brown and Aaron on the merits of the 'deep cuts' he endorsed a more substantial proposal for Vance to take to Moscow.²⁰ This meant reducing the ceiling on delivery vehicles and launchers to between 1,800 and 2,000 while the number of MIRV missiles would be capped between 1,100 and 1,200. Of those only 550 could be ICBMs (Intercontinental Ballistic Missile) and 150 other 'heavy missiles.' The president expressed a willingness to accept the Soviet backfire bomber provided it did not have a strategic capability while the U.S. would agree to limit its cruise missiles range to 2,500km. They also included measures that included limits on test flights as well as the deployment of new ICBMs and SLBMs (Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile).²¹ The administration's position represented a significant divergence from the terms negotiated at Vladivostok (See Figure 3) but it also reflected Carter's personal desire to see genuine arms control reductions.

¹⁸ U. Alexis Johnson, *The Right Hand of Power* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1984), 620.

¹⁹ Newman, *Managing National Security Policy*, 84; Rothkopf, *Running The World*, 183.

²⁰ Talbott, *Endgame*, 58-59.

²¹ Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 38-40.

Figure 3: Vladivostok vs ‘Deep Cuts’

	<i>Vladivostok</i>	<i>‘Deep Cuts’</i>
<i>Strategic Delivery Vehicles</i>	2400	1800-2000
<i>MIRVs</i>	1320	1100-1200
<i>MIRVed ICBMs & SLBMS</i>	No limits	550
<i>Cruise Missile Range</i>	No agreement	2500km

The outcome of the deliberations over the negotiating position in relation to SALT exemplified how bureaucratic politics influenced the administration. The strategy was neither developed through constructive and measured debate or an organisational consensus but rather conflict and competition between the president’s advisors. Brzezinski’s manoeuvrings in relation to SALT revealed his desire to control and manage policy development within the administration from an early stage. Rather than finding a common strategy with Vance through rational debate, Brzezinski persevered with his approach as he utilised his position and power given to him by Carter to influence the outcome of deliberations. The administration’s approach to SALT II was thus the result of the escalating bureaucratic competition between the president’s advisors, which continued to influence their position up to Vance’s arrival in Moscow.

Neither Vance nor Warnke protested, however. Anticipating a Soviet rejection they sought a compromise position, based on the terms negotiated at Vladivostok, with an exemption on the Soviet backfire and cruise missile ranges.²² Brzezinski, unimpressed with the fall-back position, commented in his diary that the administration’s position could be undermined, if ‘any of our colleagues begins to act weak-kneed and starts urging that we start making concessions to the Soviets.’²³ Furthermore, he resolved to prevent Vance and the State Department watering down their position and insisted the NSC formulate the

²² Glad, *An Outsider in the White House*, 50.

²³ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 162.

administration's negotiating stance. He gave responsibility for drafting their proposals to NSC staffers William Hyland and Roger Molander with no input from anyone in the State Department and they were not permitted to share any details with members of the U.S. delegation who travelled to Moscow.²⁴

A sense of dismay and frustration emanated within the department as little appetite existed for a 'deep cuts' agreement. As State Department spokesperson, Hodding Carter III, surmised, 'Vance and company, by which I mean the entire folks at State, the arms control community and the like, simply wanted to pick up where it had left off' as the comprehensive agreement was 'going to be utterly unacceptable to the Soviet Union who couldn't stand surprises in this field and would simply reject it out of hand.'²⁵ Leslie Gelb, who had been privy to the initial discussions on SALT was bemused, 'I don't know what the hell was going on. I thought it was bizarre. I mean just utterly bizarre.' He speculated that some within the administration had deliberately advocated unrealistic terms to embarrass the Soviets and manipulate public opinion. 'That may have been the reason why some people in the administration supported the proposal. Not that they thought it was going to happen but they wanted to show the Soviets were not interested' he recalled.²⁶

U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Malcolm Toon echoed this sentiment and referred to the proposals as 'dangerous.'²⁷ Although he supported the administration's approach, Vance too became exasperated with the position adopted by Carter. In a meeting with the Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin he expressed his irritation. After Dobrynin told him the Soviets would not deviate from the Vladivostok framework, Vance replied 'I tell him (Carter) it can't happen but...' he then 'made a helpless gesture.'²⁸

²⁴ Hyland, *Mortal Rivals*, 211.

²⁵ Carter III, Interview with the author.

²⁶ Gelb, Interview with the author.

²⁷ Malcolm Toon, "Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection: Interview with Ambassador Malcolm Toon," interview by Henry E. Mattox, 9 June, 1989, ADST.

²⁸ Cyrus Vance quoted in Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents, 1962-1986* (New York: Random House, 1995), 391.

The Soviets, aware of the administration's change of stance regarding arms control, became increasingly antagonised. Prior to Carter's election he instructed W. Averill Harriman to visit the Soviet Union and relay on his behalf, his intention to press ahead with a second SALT treaty using the Vladivostok framework as the basis for negotiations.²⁹ Furthermore, in his first correspondence with Brezhnev after his election, Carter reiterated his desire to reopen negotiations on a new treaty but made no reference to any dramatic reductions while the Soviet premier reiterated that 'the main parameter of an agreement' was the Vladivostok accord.³⁰ Carter's tone then changed in his follow up letter to Brezhnev where he declared himself unbound by previous agreements and floated the idea of a more substantial treaty.³¹ Brezhnev met the suggestion with disdain and expressed his annoyance in a follow-up letter to Carter.³²

The Soviets speculated that Brzezinski had affected the president's stance. In a meeting with NSC staffer William Hyland, Soviet Chargé d'Affaires, Yuli Vorontsov asked about the potential impact of their relationship on negotiations. While Hyland played down the speculation that surrounded them, it nevertheless reflected the unease that emanated in Moscow.³³ The Soviets, familiar with Brzezinski's work and criticisms of the Soviet Union, believed he exerted undue influence within the administration. Dobrynin later remarked, 'when Carter spoke on foreign affairs, we tended to hear the echoes of the anti-Sovietism of Brzezinski.'³⁴

The U.S. delegation arrived in Moscow with the knowledge that their proposals would be rejected by the Soviets.³⁵ Despite Vance's efforts to put forward the

²⁹ Talbott, *Endgame*, 39.

³⁰ "Letter, Brezhnev to Carter," 4 February, 1977. Volume VI, Soviet Union, January - May 1977, Document 4, FRUS, 1977-1980.

³¹ "Letter, Carter to Brezhnev," 14 February, 1977. Volume VI, Soviet Union, January - May 1977, Document 7, FRUS, 1977-1980.

³² "Letter, Brezhnev to Carter," 25 February, 1977. Volume VI, Soviet Union, January - May 1977, Document 12, FRUS, 1977-1980.

³³ "Memorandum of Conversation," 9 February, 1977. Volume VI, Soviet Union, January - May 1977, Document 6, FRUS, 1977-1980.

³⁴ Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, 375.

³⁵ Carter III, Interview with the author.

comprehensive proposal, the Soviets refused to significantly depart from the Vladivostok agreement. On the final day of the talks, Brezhnev addressed the meeting and labelled their proposals as ‘unconstructive.’³⁶ ‘We got a wet rug in the face’ Vance recalled but Brzezinski used the rejection to attack the Soviets.³⁷ He chastised them for their negative response to what he believed was a reasonable offer made in good faith that would deescalate the arms race and improve U.S.-Soviet relations.³⁸ On the final day of talks, Vance sought permission to offer the compromise proposal but Brzezinski rejected the request. ‘Vance was stunned’ Hyland recalled but the national security advisor’s denial reflected his prominent position in the administration as a key architect of their foreign policy agenda.³⁹

It also demonstrated that the administration’s position vis-à-vis the Soviet was influenced by Brzezinski, not Vance. The Soviets refusal to even consider genuine reductions in their nuclear arsenals, confirmed their insincerity and lack of commitment to the reciprocal nature of détente, Brzezinski believed. In private, he confided to Carter, ‘by committing ourselves to reductions, we have made the Soviets seem opposed to genuine arms limitations. In the past, they have often made the United States look as if it was opposed to arms limitations. The tables have now turned.’⁴⁰

Others did not share Brzezinski’s view. Paul Warnke rejected Brzezinski’s suggestion that he appear on *Meet the Press* to defend the negotiations. He took exception to the idea of going on national television to defend a proposal that he had not fully endorsed but he also believed that it would make future negotiations harder if they were so closely welded to their original position.⁴¹ The debacle in the lead up to Vance’s trip to Moscow was

³⁶ “Memorandum of Conversation,” 30 March, 1977, Volume VI, Soviet Union, January - May 1977, Document 23, FRUS, 1977-1980.

³⁷ Cyrus Vance quoted in Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind*, 270.

³⁸ Glad, *An Outsider in the White House*, 50.

³⁹ Hyland, *Mortal Rivals*, 216.

⁴⁰ “Memo, Brzezinski to Carter: ‘Weekly National Security Report #7,’” 1 April, 1977, Digital National Security Archive. Accessed 14 December 2015. <http://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB391/docs/1977.04.01%20ZB%20Weekly%20Report.pdf>.

⁴¹ Glad, *An Outsider in the White House*, 46.

a serious setback for the administration. Those who advocated a more conservative position and argued against ‘deep cuts’, were perplexed by the series of events. As Leslie Gelb reflected, ‘you couldn’t do that kind of arms control and it took us months to climb down from that comprehensive proposal that we put on the table and to more or less resume talks where Kissinger had left them.’⁴² Meanwhile, upon his return to Washington, Vance met with Dobrynin and asked the ambassador about the state of U.S.-Soviet relations. ‘The most unsatisfactory in the last ten years’ he replied.⁴³

The early SALT negotiations highlighted the ideological friction between Vance and Brzezinski but the internal bureaucratic structure exacerbated those tensions and heightened the sense of competition between them and their departments. The national security advisor’s control of the bureaucratic process during the discussions on negotiating tactics ultimately weakened Vance’s ability to affect proceedings. Moreover, Carter and Brzezinski’s refusal to allow him to offer a counterproposal irritated Vance. On the eve of their return to Washington, he reflected on the Moscow episode with William Hyland, from the NSC, and bemoaned the whole experience. ‘I think he agreed that he would have to have a much clearer idea of the degree of his autonomy in the future’ Hyland recalled.⁴⁴

A sense of disharmony within the administration emanated as Vance and the State Department realised how Brzezinski’s manoeuvrings left them undermined and unable to significantly affect policy. The early SALT negotiations with the Soviet Union was the first of many disagreements in the bureaucratic wars between Vance, Brzezinski and their staff. Moreover, the case illustrated how their rivalry adversely affected U.S. foreign policy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.

⁴² Gelb, Interview with the author.

⁴³ Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, 394.

⁴⁴ Hyland, *Mortal Rivals*, 216.

Human Rights

The Moscow incident also highlighted another area of disagreement between Vance and Brzezinski, which contributed to the Soviet's hostile attitude towards the U.S. delegation, human rights. A key feature of Carter's campaign, he entered the White House with the intention of placing human rights at the centre of his foreign policy agenda. For Carter, supporting the rights of citizens across the world was simply 'the right thing to do' and a fundamental principle of the United States to support those in need. In the wake of the Vietnam War, American conduct had severely damaged their image across the world and with a growing sense of interdependence in the developing world, it was a necessity for the U.S. to pay special consideration to human suffrage. Carter declared, 'the basic thrust of human affairs points toward a more universal demand for fundamental human rights. The United States has a historical birth right to be associated with this process.'⁴⁵

As Carter's speechwriter Patrick Anderson noted, the human rights agenda was a 'no lose' issue because while liberals approved 'conservatives liked it because it involved criticisms of Russia.'⁴⁶ However, this approach presented a potential issue for the administration between balancing their commitment to human rights against strategic considerations. The fear amongst some was that such an agenda may well compromise other foreign policy objectives and damage relationships with regimes whose human rights records made for uncomfortable reading. As journalist Bernard Gwertzman noted, 'the test will come in specific instances. For instance, will the administration let human rights problems interfere with arms control negotiations?'⁴⁷

Both Vance and Brzezinski held contrasting views on human rights in relation to the Soviet Union. The secretary of state, although concerned for the humanitarian situation in

⁴⁵ Carter, *Keeping Faith* 143; Jimmy Carter, "United Nations - Address Before the General Assembly," 17 March, 1977, The American Presidency Project.

⁴⁶ Patrick Anderson quoted in Muravchik, *The Uncertain Crusade 2*

⁴⁷ Bernard Gwertzman, "Issue and Debate: The Limits of an Activist U.S. Approach to Promoting Respect for Human Rights Abroad," *The New York Times*, 18 May, 1977, 14.

the Soviet Union, wanted to avoid publicly antagonising Moscow in the lead up to arms control talks. He feared highlighting human rights abuses, would make them less receptive in negotiations. As spokesperson Hodding Carter III recalled, ‘he just didn’t think much was gained by a lot of constant public talk about the sins of anybody you were trying to negotiate with.’ But Vance was also concerned about the wider implications of the human rights agenda on U.S. foreign policy, as Hodding Carter reflected, ‘he also was not sure that we ought to have at the centre of a very real foreign policy, a policy, which in effect, allowed us to go chewing on people so promiscuously.’⁴⁸

Brzezinski however had spent a considerable portion of his career, criticising Soviet human rights abuses. During the campaign, he urged Carter to underline the importance of the Helsinki Accord and chastise the Ford administration’s lack of concern for the domestic situation in Eastern Europe. Moreover, he placed the human rights agenda within his wider strategy of ‘peaceful engagement’ and viewed it as an opportunity to weaken Soviet influence and strengthen the United States’ moral authority across the world. As he outlined, ‘by actively pursuing this commitment we could mobilize far greater attention on the glaring internal weaknesses of the Soviet system’ and ‘put the Soviet Union ideologically on the defensive.’⁴⁹

As with ‘deep cuts’, Carter followed his national security advisor’s advice, despite Vance’s resistance, and affirmed his commitment to absolute human rights and his intention to speak out on abuses in the Soviet Union. ‘I think we come out better in dealing with the Soviet Union if I am consistently and completely dedicated to the enhancement of human rights, not only as it deals with the Soviet Union but all other countries’ Carter told the press.⁵⁰ His statement generated, ‘an atmosphere of hysteria’ within the Kremlin. The

⁴⁸ Carter III, Interview with the author.

⁴⁹ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 149; *ibid*, 37.

⁵⁰ Jimmy Carter, “The President’s News Conference,” 8 February, 1977, The American Presidency Project.

Soviets interpreted his comments as ‘convenient propaganda’ and they relayed to the president their unhappiness.⁵¹

They were further incensed when the U.S. made direct contact with the Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov. It was Sakharov who first initiated correspondence with the president following his election to praise his stance on human rights. Carter, who remembered Gerald Ford’s refusal to meet with the Soviet dissident Alexander Solzhenitsyn in 1975, found it difficult to ignore the letter.⁵² In a brief and uncontroversial response, Carter reaffirmed his commitment to human rights but a vitriolic Brezhnev labelled Sakharov a ‘renegade who proclaimed himself an enemy of the Soviet state.’ He went on, ‘we would not like to have our patience tested in any matters of international policy including the questions of Soviet-American relations. This is not the way to deal with the Soviet Union.’⁵³

Carter’s position vis-à-vis the Soviets further exasperated Vance and the State Department when on 22 May, 1977, the president spoke publicly of his commitment to absolute human rights. Because of their ‘inordinate fear of communism’ the U.S. had been too keen to ‘embrace any dictator who joined us in that fear.’ ‘For too many years’ he declared, ‘we’ve been willing to adopt the flawed and erroneous principles and tactics of our adversaries, sometimes abandoning our own values for theirs.’ He finished by noting that ‘our policy is based on an historical vision of America’s role...Our policy is designed to serve mankind.’⁵⁴ Brzezinski labelled the speech a landmark address but it also underlined the differences between himself and Vance over human rights.⁵⁵ As journalist David Binder noted, much of the speech reflected the thinking of Brzezinski with no input from Vance or

⁵¹ Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, 389-390.

⁵² Hanhimäki, *The Rise and Fall of Détente*, 110.

⁵³ “Letter, Brezhnev to Carter,” February 4, 1977.

⁵⁴ Jimmy Carter, “Address at Commencement Exercises at the University of Notre Dame,” 22 May, 1977, The American Presidency Project.

⁵⁵ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 56.

the State Department, and had been drafted while the secretary was in Europe attending an international summit.⁵⁶

The Moscow episode laid bare the potential pitfalls of inserting human rights considerations into wider foreign policy objectives. In the post-Vietnam era, Carter wanted to use human rights to help the U.S. regain its moral credibility and build friendships across the world. He wanted to institutionalise human rights within the administration and become a core staple of American diplomacy. However, like arms control, Carter had no clear strategy to achieve his pledges and left the development of the policy to his advisors. Accordingly, the evolution of the administration's human rights agenda proved to be problematic and it was not until February 1978 that a definitive strategy was adopted. The intervening period led to confusion and charges of retreat from the press and critics. Moreover, varying degrees of conflict and consensus between Vance and Brzezinski as to how the administration should implement its agenda fed into the debates between the two individuals and their respective departments.

Both Vance and Brzezinski had very clear commitments to promoting human rights but were concerned about Carter's pledge of 'absolute' human rights. For Vance, it was an important for the U.S. to be a 'beacon on the hill for the rest of mankind' and in his post-election meeting with Carter, both he and the president agreed on advancing the human rights agenda. At the same time, he advised that the administration 'had to be flexible and pragmatic in dealing with specific cases that might affect our national security' and 'avoid rigidity.'⁵⁷ The administration needed to work on a case by case basis so the human rights initiatives could be 'universal in application, yet flexible enough to be adapted to individual situations.'⁵⁸ Head of Policy Planning in the State Department, Anthony Lake shared Vance's view and urged him to develop a strategy to 'establish a general U.S. posture of

⁵⁶ David Binder, "President to Ask Broader System of U.S. Alliances," *The New York Times*, 21 May, 1977, 1; John MacLean, "Vance Continues Road Show Policy," *The Chicago Tribune*, 2 June, 1977, 28.

⁵⁷ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 29-33.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 46.

concern for human rights, but which present some of the complexities involved, which avoid raising unrealistic expectations.’⁵⁹

Vance attempted to clarify his approach on *Face the Nation*. ‘We will speak out when we believe it appropriate to do so with respect to the human rights issue’ he said but when quizzed about specific criticisms of Soviet human rights abuses he remarked, ‘there will be other times when we feel it appropriate to communicate by quiet diplomacy with the country involved.’⁶⁰ Furthermore, in a speech in April 1977, Vance defined basic human rights as freedom from government oppression, the right to basic vital needs (shelter, food, healthcare, and education) and the right to enjoy political and civil liberties but he also explained, ‘in pursuing a human rights policy, we must always keep in mind the limits of our power and our wisdom. A sure formula for defeat of our goals would be a rigid, hubristic attempt to impose our values on others. A doctrinaire plan of action would be as damaging as indifference.’⁶¹ Critics accused Vance backing away from human rights while others argued that his speech only caused confusion. To others, it reflected the view that a blanket human rights agenda was potentially unworkable.⁶²

Brzezinski meanwhile shared Vance’s concerns about the need to balance their commitment to human rights with strategic considerations. He had urged Carter to highlight Soviet human rights abuses, to undermine their influence and enhance the position of the U.S. but he cautioned against a blanket human rights policy that interfered with wider foreign policy objectives. As he noted in his memoirs, ‘I put stronger emphasis perhaps than Carter on the notion that strengthening American power was the necessary point of departure.’⁶³

⁵⁹ “Memo, Lake to Vance: ‘Human Rights,’” 4 February, 1977, Volume II, Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, Document 9, FRUS, 1977–1980.

⁶⁰ Cyrus R. Vance, “Secretary Vance Interview on Face the Nation, February 27, 1977,” *Department of State Bulletin* 76 (March 21, 1977): 246-247.

⁶¹ Cyrus R. Vance, “Address by Secretary Vance: Human Rights and Foreign Policy, April 30, 1977,” *Department of State Bulletin* 76 (May 23, 1977): 506.

⁶² Destler, Gelb, and Lake, *Our Own Worst Enemy*, 105.

⁶³ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 149.

Despite their scepticism both acknowledged the president's wish to incorporate human rights into the administration's approach to world affairs and they sought to institutionalise the agenda in their respective departments. Brzezinski created a 'Global Issues' cluster within the NSC to deal with human rights. He hired Jessica Tuchman, an advisor to Congressman Morris Udall, because of her perceived compassionate liberal views, which counterbalanced his alleged hawkishness.⁶⁴ Tuchman was given free reign to develop her ideas but with Brzezinski's strategic considerations in mind. The relationship between her and the NSC was uncontroversial as many shared Brzezinski's view that while human rights should be weighed against strategic considerations. As such the department was united in its approach, in direct contrast to the situation that developed in the State Department.⁶⁵

Vance communicated with all diplomats and assistant secretaries in February 1977 encouraging greater adherence to human rights issues in their respective posts. He stressed they should use 'quiet diplomacy and symbolic gestures or statements of disapproval...such as withholding aid and other means of assistance' but take into consideration its potential impact on American influence within their region.⁶⁶ Reflecting his ambivalence to a blanket human rights strategy, he delegated responsibility to his deputy Warren Christopher to coordinate his department's approach.⁶⁷

However, the State Department proved unable to unite itself behind Carter's human rights agenda and the bureaucracy faltered in its attempt to develop a clear and consistent policy. While some officials attempted to promote human rights across the various bureaus, their attempts were met with resistance as a lack of consensus among assistant secretaries

⁶⁴ Ibid, 125.

⁶⁵ Dumbrell, *The Carter Presidency*, 182.

⁶⁶ Schmitz and Walker, "Jimmy Carter and the Foreign Policy of Human Rights," 122.

⁶⁷ "Memo, Christopher to Vance: 'Human Rights,'" 9 February, 1977, Volume II, Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, Document 12, FRUS, 1977-1980.

gave way to bureaucratic conflict. Moreover, as the NSC formulated its strategy, free of bureaucratic wrangling, further institutional frustration and resentment developed.

Upon entering his post, Vance appointed civil rights activist and Carter campaign manager Patricia Derian as Co-Ordinator for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs. At times outspoken, Derian resolved to bring human rights consideration to the forefront of the State Department's approach to international affairs. Under Secretary of State David Newsom later remarked that Derian wanted to overthrow every right-wing dictatorship.⁶⁸ This regularly brought her into conflict with those in the department who did not share her thesis and were unwilling to embrace Carter's human rights agenda. Richard Holbrooke, Assistant Secretary for East Asia, and Terrance Todman, Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs, frequently clashed with Derian.⁶⁹ Throughout 1977, Holbrooke argued that her criticism and calls for to cut aid to the regime of Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines jeopardised the future of U.S. bases on the island. Vance meanwhile dismissed Todman from his position after the assistant secretary publicly criticised the application of human rights policy in Latin America.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, the department failed to embrace Derian's commitment. As Sandra Vogelgesang, a human rights officer on the State Department Policy Planning Staff noted, pressure from moderates like Vance, Christopher and Lake contributed to the shift in approach by the agency to be more accommodating to the concerns of the relevant bureaus.⁷¹

While arguments raged between respective bureaus in the State Department, Tuchman and some members of the NSC became concerned about the impact of their disputes on human rights policy. Bureaucratic tension soon arose as NSC officials urged Brzezinski to take control of the human rights agenda. David Aaron complained to Brzezinski on 12 April, 1977, about the situation and remarked, 'I believe the only answer is

⁶⁸ Muravchik, *The Uncertain Crusade*, 12.

⁶⁹ Smith, *Morality, Reason, and Power*, 51-52.

⁷⁰ Dumbrell, *The Carter Presidency*, 182; Glad, *An Outsider in the White House*, 245.

⁷¹ Muravchik, *The Uncertain Crusade*, 33.

a Special Coordinating Committee Working Group on the human rights issues...My concern with State, as indicated in the attached, is that they don't know what they are talking about half the time.⁷²A week later Tuchman wrote to Brzezinski bemoaning the lack of leadership from the State Department. 'Assistant secretaries at State often confuse the issue through testimony, which serves their interest but directly conflicts with what other witnesses are saying' she wrote, also noting that her fellow human rights advocates, Derian and UN Ambassador Andrew Young were 'unpredictable.' She alleged that Derian was not able to affect human rights policy either 'bureaucratically or personally.'⁷³

Brzezinski did not respond directly to either memo, but a month later he proposed the development of a PRM on human rights to Carter. In a handwritten note attached he wrote, 'please note that I have deliberately placed the review—a truly interagency matter—under SCC (and not under PRC–State).'⁷⁴ Although the SCC took responsibility for developing the human rights policy, Brzezinski underlined the need for an interagency response and gave responsibility for chairing the SCC meeting to Warren Christopher. The deputy secretary of state was in many respects a bridge between Vance and Brzezinski on human rights but his appointment also symbolised the fact that neither wanted to take control of the issue.⁷⁵

In May 1977, Christopher produced a draft PRM that defined human rights in three categories: freedom from government violations, economic and social rights and the right to enjoy civil and political freedoms. The PRM noted, 'while the promotion of human rights is a fundamental tenant of our foreign policy, raising it to a higher level of priority brings certain costs...There will clearly be situations in which efforts to achieve our human rights goals will have to be modified, delayed or curtailed in deference to other important

⁷² "Memo, Aaron to Brzezinski: 'Human Rights,'" 12 April, 1977, Volume II, Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, Document 32, FRUS, 1977–1980.

⁷³ "Memo, Tuchman to Brzezinski: 'Human Rights,'" 20 April, 1977, Volume II, Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, Document 38, FRUS, 1977–1980.

⁷⁴ "Memo, Brzezinski to Carter: 'Human Rights PRM,'" 19 May, 1977, Volume II, Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, Document 45, FRUS, 1977–1980.

⁷⁵ Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 32.

objectives.’ This accommodated the respective viewpoints of both Vance and Brzezinski on human rights but the PRM did offer advice on how the administration should proceed with its policy. Christopher noted that public rhetoric, such as Carter’s denunciation of the Soviets, despite Brzezinski’s advice, was counterproductive and had no positive influence on policy. He recommended that human rights issues in some instances should be discussed privately before any public proclamations.⁷⁶

Furthermore, it stressed the importance of using increases and decreases in aid as a means of affecting change. In April 1977, Brzezinski proposed to Vance and Treasury Secretary Michael Blumenthal that a ‘small interagency group’ be created to deal with the foreign assistance programme with Christopher as its head.⁷⁷ The ‘Christopher group’ contained representatives from the White House, the Human Rights Bureau of the State Department and officials from Defense, the NSC and the Treasury.⁷⁸ The group applied human rights considerations to requests for military and economic aid however, resistance across the executive branch saw the remit of the group gradually watered down as disagreements plagued its mandate.⁷⁹

Much of the group’s attention focused on Latin America. Throughout 1977, the group considered and either restricted, prohibited or dropped bilateral aid and loan proposals to Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Paraguay and Uruguay.⁸⁰ In public too, the administration took a stronger stance against Latin American countries. Even Vance, who usually reserved his opinions for private discussions, rather forthrightly put considerations for human rights in Latin America on the agenda while making a speech at the Organisation of American States (OAS) in June 1977 stating, ‘each of our governments has accepted the obligation to promote respect for human rights among

⁷⁶ “Presidential Review Memorandum: Human Rights (Draft),” 7 July, 1977, JCPL.

⁷⁷ “Memo, Brzezinski to Vance and Blumenthal: ‘Decision-Making on Human Rights Issues as They Relate to Foreign Assistance,’” 1 April, 1977, Volume II, Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, Document 31, FRUS, 1977–1980.

⁷⁸ Sneh, *The Future Almost Arrived*, 137.

⁷⁹ Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 30-31.

⁸⁰ Smith, *Morality, Reason and Power*, 53-54.

all nations. There is no ambiguity about these obligations.⁸¹ Brzezinski meanwhile acknowledged that the administration's stance on human rights had seen in improvements in Colombia, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela.⁸² But Latin America was an easier target for the group. As Anthony Lake explained to Vance at the beginning of 1978, because of the continent's reliance on U.S. economic, security and military assistance, nations showed a disinclination to turn to the Soviet Union and made them more amenable to the administration's human rights agenda.⁸³

In other areas the Christopher group, and the administration more generally, took little or no action to punish human rights abuses concerning their allies. Although aware of the Shah of Iran, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi's crimes against his own citizens, apart from private discussions and encouragement between officials, the administration took no action. Nor was the negotiation of arms contracts, which Carter wanted to reduce, linked to the improvement of the human rights situation in Iran.⁸⁴ The case of Iran highlighted the tenuous balance between strategic and human rights concerns but as William Odom, Brzezinski's military assistant, pointed out, 'if the Shah of Iran buys our arms, we can justify that as a measure toward stabilization of the region, (certainly a gain for some human rights) but we should not let anyone believe that such sales mean U.S. moral approval of SAVAK's actions.'⁸⁵

China meanwhile received no attention in respect to human rights and the administration stayed completely silent on the issue throughout their time in office, in part

⁸¹ Cyrus R. Vance, "Address by Secretary Vance: OAS General Assembly at Grenada, 14 June, 1977," *Department of State Bulletin* 77 (18 July, 1977): 69-70.

⁸² "Memo, Brzezinski to Eizenstat et al: 'Human Rights Improvements,'" 16 May, 1977, Domestic Policy Staff - Stuart Eizenstat's Subject File, Box 208, JCPL.

⁸³ "Memo, Lake to Vance: 'The Human Rights Policy: An Interim Assessment,'" 20 January, 1978, Volume II, Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, Document 105, FRUS, 1977-1980; Smith, *Morality, Reason and Power*, 53-54; Africa received similar attention from the administration for similar reasons with Benin, the Central Africa Republic, Ethiopia, Rhodesia, South Africa and Uganda all receiving cuts in aid, loan refusals or embargos.

⁸⁴ Sick, Interview with the author.

⁸⁵ "Memo, Odom to Brzezinski: 'Weekly Report,'" 20 October, 1977, Volume II, Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, Document 82, FRUS, 1977-1980.

due to Brzezinski's desire to normalise diplomatic relations.⁸⁶ Christopher acknowledged in his draft PRM on human rights in July 1977 that, 'potential normalisation with China and Cuba will place some strain on the credibility of our human rights policy, for in both cases other considerations will govern...with respect to human rights we will have little if any leverage or influence with the PRC.'⁸⁷

The lack of consistency of the human rights agenda was a charge the administration struggled to shake throughout its term in office however both Vance and Brzezinski attempted to strike a balance between strategic considerations and concern for human suffrage. PD/NSC-30, published in February 1978, amalgamated their views. The administration's approach to human rights relied on 'positive inducements and incentives' with aid used to either reward improvements or punish consistent violators. However, PD/NSC-30 also confirmed the strategy would be applied with 'due consideration to the cultural, political, and historical characteristics of each nation, and to the fundamental U.S. interests with respect to the nation in question.'⁸⁸

The human rights initiative brought varying degrees of conflict and co-operation between Vance, Brzezinski and their respective departments. While both agreed on the need to use human rights tactically, to avoid confrontation with allies and not interfere with wider foreign policy objectives, they disagreed about its application in some areas, particularly in relation to the Soviet Union. Vance viewed criticism of Soviet human rights abuses as counterproductive, whereas Brzezinski considered it part of his wider approach of peaceful engagement with the third world and those threatened by communism. As he noted, human right was important to 'diminish hostility toward the U.S.' but also lessen Soviet influence across the globe.⁸⁹ Moreover, bureaucratic rivalry emanated between the State Department and Brzezinski's Global Issues cluster of the NSC. The resistance of assistant secretaries and

⁸⁶ Apodaca, *Understanding U.S. Human Rights Policy*, 63

⁸⁷ "Presidential Review Memorandum: Human Rights (Draft)."

⁸⁸ "Presidential Directive/NSC-30: Human Rights," 17 February, 1978, JCPL.

⁸⁹ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 54.

other key officials, undermined the administration's commitment to human rights, while the NSC attempted to forge a clear a definitive strategy. As a result, the administration developed an approach that did not reflect Carter's commitment to absolute human rights but instead mirrored the bureaucratic and ideological divisions within the administration.

Arab-Israeli Peace

The third key foreign policy objective the administration embraced in their first year in office was peace talks in the Middle East. During the Six Day War of 1967 with Egypt, Jordan and Syria, Israel seized territory in the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, displacing a million Palestinians in the process. Hostilities continued with the Yom Kippor War of 1974 as Israel successfully defended itself however in the wake of the conflict the UN passed resolutions 243 and 338, which called for a negotiated settlement between the nations involved and ordered Israel to withdraw its forces from the occupied territories and respect the pre-1967 borders.⁹⁰

Unlike SALT and human rights, the issue united Vance, Brzezinski and Carter as they attempted to forge a strategy and orchestrate an agreement between Israel and its neighbours to bring peace to a volatile region. According to Brzezinski, he, Carter and Vance were 'very much on the same wavelength insofar as the Middle East is concerned.'⁹¹ Cordial relations between the secretary of state and the national security advisor proved to be crucial to the administration's approach as they co-ordinated effectively with one another. As NSC staffer, William Quandt recalled, 'if Vance was the steady, patient negotiator, Brzezinski was the theoretician and manipulator.'⁹²

Moreover, whereas tensions between the State Department and the NSC adversely affected the development of policy in other areas, on the Middle East, both worked collaboratively and harmoniously with one another. Quandt, who headed the Middle East

⁹⁰ Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 76.

⁹¹ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 89.

⁹² Quandt, *Camp David*, 35.

cluster in the NSC, worked closely with Alfred Atherton, the Assistant Secretary of State for Near East and South Asian Affairs and his replacement Harold Saunders.⁹³ For Vance, it was important that the two departments worked cohesively and he embraced Quandt's role in the team. As Saunders noted, 'Vance was not the kind of person who would have indulged in petty bureaucracy. He welcomed Bill as soon as he joined the NSC.'⁹⁴ Quandt meanwhile recalled the importance of working closely with those in the State Department, 'they wanted us to keep the relationship in good repair because they knew from previous experiences that if the two parts of bureaucracy were working at odds it could really screw things up.'⁹⁵

The administration based their approach on a Brookings Institution study published in 1975, which contained contributions from Brzezinski and Quandt. According to Saunders, it reflected the private views of many in the administration. The report called on the Israelis to withdraw from the occupied territories and return to the pre-1967 borders but also encouraged the Arab states and Israel to normalise diplomatic relations with one another. Moreover, it advocated a negotiated settlement with respect to Palestinian self-determination.⁹⁶ The administration used the report as a blueprint for negotiations, as they planned to bring the relevant parties together at a conference in Geneva during the administration's first year in office. Vance travelled to Israel, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Syria on a fact-finding mission in February 1977 to lay the foundations for the talks.⁹⁷

In their initial discussions, the Israelis appeared receptive to a negotiated settlement however the election of Menachem Begin and Likud at the expense of Yitzhak Rabin and the Labour Party in May 1977 proved to be a significant setback. While talks with Rabin had been productive, when Begin visited the White House he outright rejected the idea of a

⁹³ Alfred Leroy Atherton Jr., "Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection: Interview with Ambassador Alfred Leroy Atherton Jr.," interview by Dayton Mak, Summer 1990, ADST.

⁹⁴ Harold H. Saunders, "Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection: Interview with Dr. Harold H. Saunders," interview by Thomas Stern, 24 November, 1993, ADST.

⁹⁵ Quandt, Interview with the author.

⁹⁶ Jensehaugen, "Blueprint for Arab-Israeli Peace?," 498-500.

⁹⁷ McDonald, "Blessed Are the Policy Makers," 465.

Geneva summit and negotiations on a return to the pre-1967 borders or Palestinian self-determination.⁹⁸ Begin proved to be a difficult operator throughout negotiations on Arab-Israeli affairs and his relationship with Carter suffered as a result. The president later called Begin a ‘psycho’ but while he struggled to cultivate a working relationship with the Israeli prime minister, Vance’s intervention proved invaluable.⁹⁹

During his travels, Vance’s style, coupled with his diplomatic experience and expertise endeared himself to those he visited and spoke with. According to Quandt, ‘Vance did not lie to people...after a while we started getting feedback saying, “we’ve checked with our colleagues out here and Vance is telling everybody the same thing” ...people tended to believe that he wasn’t jerking them around.’¹⁰⁰ The Israelis viewed him as an open and honest individual and Vance managed to find common ground with Begin where others failed. ‘We all kind of disliked Begin but he (Vance) was always very cordial with him’ remembered Quandt.¹⁰¹ Brzezinski meanwhile had no diplomatic background with the Arab leaders, personal connections or a general feel for their objectives.¹⁰² Moreover, he was subjected to a vicious campaign from pro-Israeli groups, who accused him of being ‘pro-Palestine and anti-Semitic.’¹⁰³ Vance’s close relationships with key figures proved vital. Whereas previously he had been side-lined, he managed to assert his authority as the president’s chief diplomat on his travels. This led U.S. Ambassador to Israel Samuel W. Lewis to remark, ‘this was Vance’s show.’¹⁰⁴

After several failed attempts to get negotiations back on track, Vance instigated a joint effort with the Soviet Union to reignite the idea of a Geneva conference and they issued a joint communiqué, which stressed the need to move forward towards peace. However, a

⁹⁸ Kaufman and Kaufman, *The Presidency of James Earl Carter Jr.*, 55-60.

⁹⁹ Steven L. Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict: Making America’s Middle East Policy, from Truman to Reagan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 356.

¹⁰⁰ Quandt, Interview with the author.

¹⁰¹ Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 83; Quandt, Interview with the author.

¹⁰² David Ignatius, “Solving the Arab-Israeli Conflict,” in *Zbig*, ed. Gati, 186.

¹⁰³ Quandt, “Dealing with the Middle East,” 114; Stein, *Heroic Diplomacy*, 190.

¹⁰⁴ Samuel W. Lewis, “Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection: Interview with Ambassador Samuel W. Lewis,” interview by Peter Jessup, 9 August, 1998, ADST.

reference to the need for Palestinian rights to be upheld, angered the Israelis. Already infuriated by the administration's decision to stop their sales of Kfir Jet planes to Ecuador coupled with Carter's public commentary on the talks and references to a 'Palestinian homeland' they showed a disinclination to engage in talks.¹⁰⁵

Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, disillusioned with the process as well as his Arab neighbour's attitude towards a settlement, took it upon himself to revive the talks. Much to the administration's surprise, he publicly announced that he planned to visit Israel and speak in the Knesset. On November 19, Sadat landed in Israel.¹⁰⁶ His intervention revitalised hopes for a peace settlement in the Middle East. Although Vance and Carter continued to work towards a separate interim settlement on Palestine, a deal between Israel and Egypt in 1978 became their primary objective going forward.¹⁰⁷

Vance then travelled to the Middle East the following month to meet with various leaders and when he arrived in Jerusalem, he endorsed the idea of a bilateral agreement between Israel and Egypt. Carter then considered the idea of convening a summit at Camp David in September 1978. He floated the idea with Sadat and Begin and, although cautious, both agreed.¹⁰⁸ The president believed they stood a good chance of achieving a peace accord if Sadat and Begin met face to face to discuss the issues their nations. Quandt considered their strategy overly optimistic and naïve. 'My reaction was, "oh my goodness, we're here for group therapy"' he later recalled.¹⁰⁹

As Quandt predicted, little progress was made in the first few days at Camp David as both Sadat and Begin threatened to leave the talks. The Egyptian president wanted to link a peace deal between the two countries to Palestinian autonomy, leading to a swift and firm refusal from the Israeli prime minister.¹¹⁰ Vance then intervened and urged the president to

¹⁰⁵ Strieff, *Jimmy Carter and the Middle East*, 25-30.

¹⁰⁶ Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 341.

¹⁰⁷ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 195.

¹⁰⁸ Hargrove, *Jimmy Carter as President*, 126-129.

¹⁰⁹ William B. Quandt, "Discussant," in *Jimmy Carter*, ed. Rosenbaum and Ugrinsky, 162-163.

¹¹⁰ Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 82.

change his tactics. Prior to the summit, the secretary met with an old friend, the political scientist Roger Fisher, who specialised in diplomatic negotiations, and asked him for his advice on the administration's approach. Fisher provided Vance with a draft of a book he was working on and the secretary became taken with one of the strategies outlined in the book, the 'one text procedure.' The idea was that the mediator in discussions creates a single document with various points and asks those involved to respond. As both sides put forward their ideas, the document is amended accordingly, while any issues not contested are deemed acceptable. Vance now decided to put this tactic into action at Camp David.¹¹¹

His team devised a document with list of terms and conditions and presented them separately to the Israeli and Egyptian delegations. Over the course of the summit, Carter and Vance shuttled back and forth between the two camps and re-drafted the document to incorporate their demands. In total, Harold Saunders drafted over twenty different alternative versions of the document entitled 'Necessary Elements of Agreement.'¹¹² After thirteen days of negotiations, they eventually finalised a deal. The summit ended with the signing of the Camp David Accords, which consisted of two agreements. The first, 'The Framework for Peace in the Middle East' called for Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza over a five-year period under a transitional authority of Israel, Egypt, Jordan and representatives of Palestine. At the end of the five-year period, the status of the West Bank and Gaza would be determined by those involved. The second part of the accords, 'The Framework for the Conclusion of a Peace Treaty Between Egypt and Israel' required Israel to withdraw from the Sinai and that both nations establish diplomatic relations with each other.¹¹³

Although not the comprehensive agreement they originally sought, the deal was a significant foreign policy success for the Carter administration. While Carter's personal diplomacy at the Camp David summit has been well documented, Vance's contribution was equally important. 'Vance deserves much of the credit for patiently shaping the Camp David

¹¹¹ Wright, *Thirteen Days in September*, 152-153.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 152-153.

¹¹³ Strieff, *Jimmy Carter and the Middle East*, 134.

Accords and the text of the peace treaty' Quandt later stated.¹¹⁴ Even his adversary, Brzezinski acknowledged that Vance was 'tireless in seeking compromises and persistent in pressing the two sides to accommodate.'¹¹⁵ The Middle East case allowed Vance to showcase his diplomatic skills and assert his authority within the administration as an effective 'thinker' in addition to a 'doer.'

But the administration's approach to the Middle East also demonstrated how effectively the principals and their departments worked with one another. At the lower-level, the relationship between the key players, Quandt, Saunders and Atherton helped build the foundations of the agreement. Saunders later recalled, 'I have never known a finer group of human beings or a more capable group of professionals. We liked working together, and I think it showed in what we did.'¹¹⁶ Whereas SALT negotiations divided them and fuelled a sense of competition, the foreign policy process within the administration operated successfully. The case of the Middle East confirmed how the shared ideas, strategies and objectives of both the principals and their departments contributed to the team ethic that existed as they attempted to move forward with peace negotiations throughout 1977 and into 1978.

Conclusion

In addition to the Camp David Accords, the administration also achieved notable successes in Africa and Central America. Having agreed to pay closer attention to developments in the third world, Vance, with UN Ambassador Andrew Young, spearheaded the administration's attempts to advance democratic causes in Southern Africa and peacefully negotiate the deconstruction of Apartheid. Their efforts between 1977 and 1979 resulted in the agreement that oversaw a transition to majority rule in Rhodesia with democratic elections held in

¹¹⁴ William B. Quandt quoted in Daadler and Destler, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 110.

¹¹⁵ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 273.

¹¹⁶ Harold H. Saunders, "Discussant: Harold H. Saunders," in *Jimmy Carter*, ed. Rosenbaum and Ugrinsky, 164.

August 1980.¹¹⁷ Elsewhere, in September 1977, Carter and General Omar Torrijos signed the Panama Canal Treaties, which resolved the future of the canal zone. The agreement guaranteed the neutrality of the canal with continued U.S. military support to defend it until the Panamanians took full control the canal by 2000.¹¹⁸ Upon signing the treaty, Carter remarked that the treaty represented ‘the commitment of the United States to the belief that fairness, and not force, should lie at the heart of our dealings with the nations of the world.’¹¹⁹ This statement, and many of his early initiatives, embodied Carter’s efforts to forge a post-Vietnam foreign policy based on respect for national interdependence and human suffrage. Both cases, in addition to Middle East talks, demonstrated the ability of Vance and Brzezinski to work effectively with one another. When they appreciated their roles, shared the same vision and approach, they operated collegially with a positive impact on foreign policy.

Both SALT negotiations and the human rights agenda brought to the forefront the institutional conflict between the two departments and illustrated the degree to which bureaucratic politics operated within the administration. SALT negotiations highlighted ideological and bureaucratic tensions between Vance, Brzezinski and their departments. The role Brzezinski had been afforded certainly contributed to the disagreements and fuelled the sense of competition between them as both attempted to put forward their competing tactics for the negotiations. Rather than negotiate a consensual strategy according to the rules of the rational actor, Brzezinski aggressively pursued an approach that was at odds with Vance and his department. Even Vance’s attempt to develop a conciliatory fall-back position in the event of a Soviet rebuttal was met with opposition from Brzezinski. Competition and conflict, rather than collegial mediation, drove deliberations over SALT.

¹¹⁷ Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 59-60; Andrew J. De Roche, “Standing Firm for Principles: Jimmy Carter and Zimbabwe,” *Diplomatic History* 23, no. 4 (1999): 657–659.

¹¹⁸ Hogan, *The Panama Canal in American Politics*, 88-89.

¹¹⁹ Jimmy Carter, “Panama Canal Treaties Remarks at the Signing Ceremony at the Pan American Union Building,” 7 September, 1977, The American Presidency Project.

Human rights, similarly, was another example where their rival objectives affected the implementation of policy. While Vance wished to keep human rights considerations away from SALT negotiations, Brzezinski urged Carter to publicly condemn their abuses. Moreover, the lack of co-operation within the State Department created problems as the NSC sought to develop and implement the policy. Only the effective management of the issue by Warren Christopher prevented an inter-agency conflict on the matter. However, disharmony within the State Department, unable to unite behind the president's initiative, resisted attempts to install human rights considerations within their bureaus. The internal organisational process faltered as the State Department struggled to maintain bureaucratic discipline and develop a consistent approach to human rights. Both events emboldened the NSC as their power and status within the administration continued to rise.

Towards the end of 1977, Brzezinski sought to assert his authority more forcefully. He wrote to Carter in November and expressed his frustration with aspects of their agenda. 'While I believe that the various initiatives you have taken have been right, and individually correct, I feel that we are confronting a growing domestic problem involving public perception of the general character of that policy. To put it simply and quite bluntly, it is seen as 'soft'' he told the president, 'you ought to take, before too long, a decision of some sort either on security or foreign policy matters that has a distinctively 'tough' quality to it.'¹²⁰

In February 1978, he wrote to Carter again and urged him to be more assertive in foreign policy matters. 'A president must not only be loved and respected; he must also be feared' he wrote, 'I suspect that an impression has developed that the administration (and you personally) operates very cerebrally, quite unemotionally. In most instances, this is an advantage; however, occasionally emotion and even a touch of irrationality can be an

¹²⁰ "Memo, Brzezinski to Carter: 'NSC Weekly Report #37,'" 18 November, 1977, Volume XXVIII, Organization and Management of Foreign Policy, Document 12, FRUS, 1977-1980.

asset.¹²¹ His desire for the administration to be more assertive in its foreign policy brought him into conflict with the more patient style of Vance. As the administration entered its second year, the president's advisors resumed their struggles, not only on individual policies, but over the nature of the administration's foreign policy agenda.

¹²¹ "Memo, Brzezinski to Carter: 'NSC Weekly Report #48,'" 24 February, 1978, Volume XXVIII, Organization and Management of Foreign Policy, Document 13, FRUS, 1977–1980.

Chapter Four

1978

The Arc of Crisis and the China Card

Following the rejection of the administration's 'deep cuts' proposals in March 1977, Vance spent considerable time attempting to revive hopes of an arms control agreement with the Soviet Union. Talks resumed in May when Vance and Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko agreed to use the Vladivostok agreement as the basis for negotiations with some reductions in certain areas.¹ However, throughout 1978, Brzezinski undermined Vance's efforts as the bureaucratic rivalry between them heightened. As Brzezinski's Special Assistant Robert Gates noted, 'their differences were deep, philosophical, and were centred, in the first instance, on how to deal with the Soviet Union.'²

Tensions between them had come to the surface when Brzezinski encouraged the 'deep cuts' proposal and following its rejection, he bemoaned that Carter was spending an 'inordinate amount of time' on SALT as Vance spearheaded a new negotiating position for the administration.³ While close collaboration on Middle East issues yielded some success in 1978, for Brzezinski, the administration needed to take a stronger stance vis-à-vis the Soviet Union as he sought to challenge their role in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Soviet and Cuban activity in the Horn of Africa and Angola came to dominate the administration's agenda in early 1978 while attempts to normalise diplomatic relations with China exposed divisions between Vance and Brzezinski as both jostled with one another to steer the course of U.S. foreign policy.

As this chapter illustrates, their divergent views on détente, and how to deal with the Soviet Union, brought the pair into conflict with one another as the policy wars escalated.

¹ Hyland, *Mortal Rivals*, 216.

² Gates, *From the Shadows*, 71.

³ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 166.

Brzezinski took on a more assertive role as he outmanoeuvred Vance in his attempt to shift the focus of their foreign policy agenda. In the process, the secretary of state's authority gradually weakened, as the national security advisor positioned himself as the chief architect of U.S. foreign policy. This chapter also addresses the competition between their respective agencies, the NSC and the State Department, as both competed with one another to affect the administration's approach to the Ogaden War, Shaba II and normalisation of relations with China. The resultant bureaucratic struggles, saw the NSC assert their domination over the State Department and establish themselves as the primary arena for policy development within the Carter administration.

The Ogaden War

Considered a strategically important area of the world given its proximity to the Middle East as well as shipping routes through the Suez Canal and the Red Sea, the Horn of Africa, a peninsula consisting of Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti and Sudan, became a highly disputed area in early 1978.⁴ Of those countries in the Horn, the United States previously had a close affiliation with Ethiopia under the regime of Emperor Haile Sellasie. The two nations enjoyed a long association after World War Two when economic and military aid flowed into the country as the U.S. presence steadily grew throughout the 1960s and into the early 1970s.⁵ The Nixon and Ford administrations, distracted by Vietnam and Watergate, neglected Ethiopia as the Selassie regime faltered and a bloody internal conflict resulted in the monarch's fall from power.⁶ After spearheading the overthrow of the Selassie regime and installation of the Derg, Major Mengistu Haile Mariam spent the next two years purging rivals and consolidating his position before gaining complete control in February 1977, just weeks after Carter's inauguration.⁷

⁴ Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 119.

⁵ Henze, *The Horn of Africa*, 57-64.

⁶ *Ibid*, 1.

⁷ Hanhimäki, *The Rise and Fall of Détente*, 128.

The brutality of the revolution and the repressive nature of his regime made the United States uncomfortable with both Congress and the press strongly condemning their actions and calling on the new administration to address the situation.⁸ In an attempt to stay true to their commitment to human rights, Carter dispatched Talcott Seelye, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, in February 1977 to inform Mengistu that while the U.S. wanted to maintain good relations they would be rescinding its military aid package to Ethiopia. Mengistu responded in April 1977 by publicly inciting violence against American personnel and institutions in Ethiopia. The administration then ordered the immediate closure of the American army base, Kagnew station, as well as the offices of United States Information Service (USIS), Naval Medical Research Unit (NAMRU) and the U.S. Military Assistance Group. They also closed the American consulate in Asmara and reduced the personnel at the U.S. embassy to just twenty-eight individuals as relations soured.⁹

As Mengistu renounced his nation's ties with the U.S., he made overtures towards the Soviet Union. He had already nationalised swathes of the economy and passed social reforms aimed at creating an 'all-Ethiopian Socialist movement' and courted the support Cuba and the Soviet Union.¹⁰ After Fidel Castro provided a glowing report on the Derg's handling of the revolution, Mengistu successfully pleaded to Moscow for an economic and military aid package worth \$504million.¹¹

This move displeased another Soviet ally in the Horn, Somalia. Until 1977, Somali President Siad Barre enjoyed a close relationship with the Soviet Union following his rise to power in 1969. Somalia provided the Soviets with access to the port of Berbera in return for military aid and assistance, signing a formal friendship treaty in 1974.¹² The Soviets showered \$181million worth of arms on Somalia between 1967 and 1976 but as the Soviets

⁸ Jackson, *Jimmy Carter and the Horn of Africa*, 43-44.

⁹ Korn, *Ethiopia, the United States, and the Soviet Union*, 27-28.

¹⁰ Henze, *The Horn of Africa*, 140-41.

¹¹ Yordanov, *The Soviet Union and the Horn of Africa during the Cold War*, 168-169.

¹² Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 119.

forged closer ties to Mengistu and Ethiopia, their relationship declined.¹³ While Castro lavished praise on Mengistu, he criticised Barre, questioned his socialist credentials and expressed concern over his territorial designs on the Ogaden region.¹⁴ Using the military aid and assistance the Soviets provided, Barre seemed intent on taking advantage of the volatile situation to reunite Ethiopia with Kenya and Djibouti under a Somali flag.¹⁵ Castro reported that Barre's ambition posed a threat to Mengistu's regime but backing Ethiopia could result in the loss of Somalia's friendship. Thus, the Soviets continued to reaffirm their commitment to both countries in the hope of reaching a peaceful settlement.¹⁶

While his relationship with the Soviets deteriorated, Barre courted the support of the United States but the Carter administration kept its distance from developments in the Horn on human rights grounds.¹⁷ Furthermore, in light of the American experience in Southeast Asia, the administration was keen to avoid intervening in a conflict far from home. As Carter declared in his inaugural address, 'we will not seek to dominate nor dictate to others. As we Americans have concluded one chapter in our nation's history and are beginning to work on another, we have, I believe, acquired a more mature perspective on the problems of the world.'¹⁸ A policy of non-intervention, not only recognised the growing demand for national interdependence and human suffrage in the developing world but affirmed Carter's image of the U.S. as a force for good on the international stage. It also signified a significant shift in U.S. foreign policy in the post-Vietnam era, which Carter highlighted in his speech at the University of Notre Dame, declaring, 'we are now free of that inordinate fear of communism which once led us to embrace any dictator who joined us in that fear.'¹⁹

¹³ Lefebvre, *Arms for the Horn*, 44.

¹⁴ Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind*, 273.

¹⁵ Jackson, "The Carter Administration and Somalia," 707.

¹⁶ Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind*, 273-275.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 276.

¹⁸ Jimmy Carter, "United States Foreign Policy Remarks to People of Other Nations on Assuming Office," January 20, 1977, The American Presidency Project.

¹⁹ Carter, "Address at Commencement Exercises at the University of Notre Dame."

With this pledge in mind, when Somalia made a tentative approach to the United States for military support, the Policy Review Committee dismissed Barre's overtures as merely an attempt to play the U.S. and the Soviet Union off one another in a proxy war.²⁰ When the PRC explored the possibility of the United States and Somalia 'becoming friends', the consensus of opinion fell against closer ties.²¹ The administration still hoped to improve relations with Ethiopia and opposed severing their links completely. As Brzezinski noted in a memo to Vice-President Mondale, 'we haven't reached the point where we feel we should give up Ethiopia in exchange for Somalia.'²² His expert on Africa, Paul Henze, judged Ethiopia to be the more strategically important country in the Horn and argued against getting too close to Somalia.²³ Vance meanwhile contended that increased support for Somalia would only aggravate relations with Ethiopia further and push them closer to the Soviets.²⁴ The PRC noted that in the short term, prospects for improved relations with Ethiopia remained bleak but in the medium to long term, a sense of optimism pervaded. It warned against overtures towards Somalia or any actions perceived as hostile to the Ethiopians.²⁵

The PRC's conclusions reflected the views of Vance and Brzezinski, both in accord over the administration's position on the situation in the Horn.²⁶ It also corresponded with Vance and Carter's non-interventionist policies. Vance's experiences of American involvement in Central America and Southeast Asia had illustrated to him, the limitations of intervention in regional disputes. At a meeting of the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO)

²⁰ "Summary of Conclusions: PRC Meeting," 11 April, 1977, Meetings PRC - 4/11/77 Folder, Subject File - Box 24, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, JCPL.

²¹ Mitchell, *Jimmy Carter in Africa*, 195; Zanchetta, *The Transformation of American International Power in the 1970s*, 210.

²² "Memo, Brzezinski to Mondale: 'Somalia,'" 24 March, 1977, 3/77 Folder, Horn/Special - Box 1, National Security Agency Staff Material, JCPL.

²³ "Memo, Henze to Brzezinski: 'Military Aid for Somalia,'" May 14, 1977, 4/77-5/77 Folder, Horn/Special - Box 1, National Security Agency Staff Material, JCPL.

²⁴ Smith, *Morality, Reason, and Power*, 153.

²⁵ "Presidential Review Memorandum/NSC-21: Horn of Africa," 1 April, 1977, Digital National Security Archive. Accessed 27 September 2016.

http://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/carterbrezhnev/docs_global_competition/Tab%202/19770401%20-%20The%20Horn%20of%20Africa,%20Presidential%20Review%20Memorandum.pdf.

²⁶ Zanchetta, *The Transformation of American International Power in the 1970s*, 210.

council of ministers in May, Vance declared, ‘African problems should be resolved peacefully in an African context and in a manner acceptable to the African nations themselves. We are opposed to the use of force by external powers to bring about change in Africa.’²⁷ Furthermore, coupled with ‘losses’ in China, Egypt and Yugoslavia, he did not believe the Soviets stood to profit from the situation. Whilst urging trepidation, he also argued against overstating their influence in the Horn for fear it may affect wider foreign policy goals on the continent.²⁸

Brzezinski initially supported the administration’s reserved approach to the dispute. Conscious of the Soviet and Cuban presence in the Horn he questioned Moscow’s commitment to Mengistu considering the tense domestic situation, which he believed made Ethiopia an unstable and unattractive proposition for the Soviets.²⁹ He also remained sceptical about providing direct military aide to Siad Barre. As he told Carter, ‘Somalia is already one of the most heavily armed countries in Africa and makes no secret of its territorial claims against its neighbours. We cannot really gain by getting involved in this problem.’³⁰

However, by mid-1977, his NSC expert, Paul Henze broached the subject of providing defensive arms to Somalia. ‘We want to show friendliness towards Somalia but keep enough constraints on our renewed relationship to discourage the Somalis from adventurism. And we need to keep our own future options open’ he surmised in a memo to Brzezinski. With Congress unlikely to approve such a measure, he proposed encouraging their allies to supply arms as an alternative source.³¹ Providing defensive arms through their allies, allowed the U.S. to forge closer ties with Somalia without severely aggravating their

²⁷ Cyrus R. Vance, “Statement before the CENTO Council of Ministers, May 14 1977,” *Department of State Bulletin* 76 (June 6, 1977): 617.

²⁸ McLellan, *Cyrus Vance*, 49.

²⁹ Sexton, “The Wages of Principle and Power,” 216; Zanchetta, *The Transformation of American International Power in the 1970s*, 210.

³⁰ “Memo, Brzezinski to Carter: ‘Military Aid for Somalia,’” n.d., 4/77-5/77 Folder, Horn/Special - Box 1, National Security Agency Staff Material, JCPL.

³¹ “Memo, Henze to Brzezinski: ‘Military Aid for Somalia.’”

links with Ethiopia. But only weeks later the situation escalated when Somalia crossed the border and invaded the Ogaden region of Ethiopia.³²

The Somali forces made quick and considerable gains against a struggling Ethiopian army, which now turned to the Soviet Union. Barre invaded the Ogaden with the belief that the Soviets would not back Ethiopia but Moscow provided 1,000 military advisers over the course of the war while Cuba dispatched 17,000 troops.³³ Some within the Politburo believed aiding Ethiopia, provided an opportunity to restore its influence in the region, given their dwindling standing in neighbouring Egypt, while others viewed it as simply backing a fellow revolutionary ally. Furthermore, the Soviets also believed their increased support for Ethiopia did not threaten détente or relations with the United States as they insisted their support was ‘purely defensive’ and would not encourage Ethiopia to advance over the border into Somalia.³⁴

With the Soviets now backing their rivals Ethiopia, Soviet-Somali relations officially ended. On 13 November, 1977, Barre renounced the friendship treaty and terminated diplomatic relations with Cuba. Fearing that Soviet activity in Ethiopia may spark a communist insurrection in their country, American allies Egypt, Iran and Saudi Arabia were all permitted and encouraged to provide \$400m in military aid to Somalia by the administration.³⁵ They believed that the conflict would become a burden for the Soviets and potentially damage, rather than advance their position in the region. Even Vance remarked the Soviets may ‘fall off both horses.’³⁶

The administration held its initial position on the Horn. Carter confirmed in November 1977 they would provide Somalia with defensive arms after they withdrew from the Ogaden.³⁷ However, through late 1977 and early 1978 evidence emerged of increased

³² Mitchell, *Jimmy Carter in Africa*, 70.

³³ Zanchetta, *The Transformation of American International Power in the 1970s*, 215.

³⁴ Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind*, 272-279.

³⁵ Yordanov, *The Soviet Union and the Horn of Africa during the Cold War*, 188-189.

³⁶ Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind*, 276.

³⁷ Jackson, “The Ogaden War and the Demise of Détente,” 29.

Soviet and Cuban support for Mengistu as the Ethiopians prepared for a counteroffensive against Somalia. This increased Brzezinski's concern that their presence in the Horn was less about defending Mengistu but rather an attempt to establish a foothold in the Horn. By forcing Barre out of Ethiopia, he believed the Soviets would not discourage Ethiopia from advancing over the Somali border, gaining control of a strategically vital part of the world.³⁸ He came to view the situation in the Horn as a clear case of Soviet expansionism that threatened the United States' position in the region while failure to intervene potentially damaged American credibility with its allies.³⁹ Henze later suggested that Brzezinski did not care about Somalia or Siad Barre but thought the administration needed to tackle 'Soviet free-wheeling in the region.'⁴⁰

In November 1977, Carter gave Brzezinski permission to conduct background briefings with members of the press. Using this avenue, he fed the press with stories on 'the growing Soviet-Cuban military presence' in the Horn.⁴¹ At the beginning of November, the State Department acknowledged the presence of Soviet and Cuban advisors in Ethiopia but denied speculation about a large number of Cuban soldiers fighting alongside the Ethiopians.⁴² By February 1978, reports estimated nearly 3,000 Cubans were fighting in the Horn while the Soviets provided 1,500 military advisors.⁴³ Within weeks intelligence gathered put the number of Cuban troops in Ethiopia as closer to 10,000.⁴⁴ Brzezinski then went public with the figures and openly condemned the Soviets for their involvement, labelling it a clear example of 'external, foreign intrusion into a purely regional conflict.'⁴⁵ In private, he raised the issue more forcefully with the Soviet Ambassador, Anatoly

³⁸ Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 642-647.

³⁹ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 178-179.

⁴⁰ Henze, *The Horn of Africa*, 2.

⁴¹ Glad, *An Outsider in the White House*, 78.

⁴² Graham Hovey, "U.S. Says Cuban Adviser Unit in Ethiopia Tripled Since," *The New York Times*, 5 November, 1977, 2.

⁴³ "The Soviet Presence Expanding in Ethiopia," *The Boston Globe*, 14 February, 1978, 12.

⁴⁴ Jackson, *Jimmy Carter and the Horn of Africa*, 86.

⁴⁵ Graham Hovey, "Brzezinski Asserts That Soviet General Leads Ethiopia Units," *The New York Times*, 12 February, 1978, 1.

Dobrynin and warned him that Soviet activities in the Horn damaged relations with the U.S. as well as co-operation in other areas, like SALT.⁴⁶

The Soviets dismissed his vitriol. Dobrynin declared it another example of ‘Brzezinski’s insistence on opposing communism wherever he found it.’ Nevertheless, the Soviet ambassador rationalised that ‘uproar in the West’ and the strength of feeling emanating from the stories adversely affected their relations with the United States.⁴⁷ As a compromise, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko proposed a joint mediation effort with the U.S. but Brzezinski dismissed it as ‘the classic Soviet solution to regional disputes’ that only served to legitimise their presence in the region.⁴⁸ Despite Dobrynin and Gromyko’s insistence that they would not let the Ethiopians cross the border into Somalia, Brzezinski did not believe either of them.⁴⁹

Ethiopia had, he believed, provided the Soviets with the opportunity to expand its influence in the Horn, which threatened the American interests as well as their influence in the neighbouring Arab countries.⁵⁰ The House Committee on International Relations strengthened his position, when they expressed concern about Soviet and Cuban involvement in the Horn. ‘What is happening in the Horn of Africa today is much more than a conflict between two African countries’ they noted, ‘by undermining the fragile governments that exist in the Horn, Soviet influence could rapidly spread throughout the region and along the entire East Coast of Africa.’⁵¹ Brzezinski lobbied Carter to be tougher on the Soviets. ‘Public pressure on Cuba regarding Africa came none-too-soon’ he said as the opportunity to appear tough and score a significant foreign policy victory with the public presented itself in the Horn of Africa.⁵²

⁴⁶ Sexton, “The Wages of Principle and Power,” 219

⁴⁷ Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, 402-406.

⁴⁸ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 180-81.

⁴⁹ Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind*, 279-283.

⁵⁰ DeJanes, “Managing Foreign Policy,” 263.

⁵¹ Jackson, *Jimmy Carter and the Horn of Africa*, 82.

⁵² “Memo, Brzezinski to Carter: ‘NSC Weekly Report #37.’”

To Vance and those in the State Department the situation in the Horn of Africa as a ‘a text-book case of Soviet exploitation of a local conflict.’⁵³ Although the Soviet Union sought to exploit the situation, the secretary of state and his advisors viewed them as a ‘*symptom* of the problem, not *the* problem.’⁵⁴ The ‘inherently pro-Ethiopia’ African Bureau of the State Department advocated improved relations with them and not Somalia, whom they saw as ‘the pariah of Africa.’ Support for Somalia only offered short-term gain, while tolerance of territorial expansion as well as the repressive regime of Siad Barre damaged their credibility across the continent in the long term.⁵⁵ Others in the State Department ridiculed Brzezinski’s about-turn as typical Cold War thinking. ‘Somalia was lousy because it was under Soviet influence but then it became great because it was no longer under Soviet influence. Ethiopia was great because it was under American influence and then it was lousy because it was under Soviet influence’ recalled USUN Deputy Representative Donald McHenry.⁵⁶ The department’s position remained the same. Given the local nature of the conflict, they stressed the need for those involved to negotiate a peaceful resolution.

Initially, Carter fell on the side of Vance and the administration continued to keep its distance and refused to provide any support to Somalia, even as late as January 1978 when the Soviet and Cuban helped orchestrate the Ethiopian counteroffensive.⁵⁷ At the end of January, the State Department organised a five-power summit with Britain, West Germany, France and Italy, which called for the withdrawal of Somali troops from the Ogaden and a negotiated settlement that saw the region federated with Ethiopia but retain some independence. Nevertheless, they stressed that those issues needed to be negotiated by those involved, the U.S. and others should keep their distance.⁵⁸

⁵³ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 74.

⁵⁴ Donald F. McHenry, “Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection: Interview with Ambassador Donald F. McHenry,” interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, 23 March, 1993, ADST.

⁵⁵ Lefebvre, *Arms for the Horn*, 192-194.

⁵⁶ McHenry, Interview with the author.

⁵⁷ Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 641-642.

⁵⁸ Woodroffe, “*Buried in the Sands of the Ogaden*,” 76-77.

However, Brzezinski succeeded in persuading some members of the administration to take a harder tone with the Soviets. UN Ambassador Andrew Young strongly condemned the Soviet and Cuban presence in the Horn and accused them of ‘contributing to the escalation of death and destruction.’⁵⁹ Carter himself criticised the Soviets for getting involved in the conflict and accused them of undermining attempts by the U.S. and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to negotiate a peaceful settlement by continually shipping arms to the Horn.⁶⁰ Vance also labelled their actions as ‘disappointing.’⁶¹

Apart from public denunciations, little appetite existed within the administration to take a differing course of action that Brzezinski craved. Vance also stressed the need to tone down their vitriol towards the Soviet’s behaviour. He bemoaned Brzezinski’s background briefings, which he believed contributed to a hardening of public opinion towards the Soviets and had a detrimental impact on other foreign policy goals, primarily SALT.⁶² Significant differences between the secretary of state and national security advisor emerged while a clear chasm developed between the globalists in the NSC, who viewed the situation through the East-West framework, and the regionalists in the State Department who interpreted events as a local conflict.

The NSC lobbied more forcefully for stronger condemnation of the Soviet and Cuban presence in the Horn. To them, the Soviet exploitation of a local conflict represented an attempt gain an upper hand against the United States in the Horn. Moreover, if left unchecked, it created the potential for further interventions in the developing world.⁶³ Henze described the State Department’s five-power summit as, ‘a remarkable testimony to the poverty of real thinking in State’ and argued that they ‘seem lusting to draw the Soviets into

⁵⁹ Kathleen Teltsch, “Young Accuses Cuba and Soviet,” *The New York Times*, 7 December, 1977, 6.

⁶⁰ Jimmy Carter, “The President’s News Conference,” 12 January, 1978, The American Presidency Project.

⁶¹ Jay Ross, “Vance Says 2,000 Cubans In Ethiopian Combat Role,” *The Washington Post*, 10 February, 1978, A20.

⁶² Vance, *Hard Choices*, 84.

⁶³ Gates, *From the Shadows*, 77; Gates, Telephone Interview with the author.

a discussion on the Horn.⁶⁴ The administration, he believed, needed to ‘make their stay as costly as possible and the source of fundamental strain for them.’⁶⁵

To Brzezinski, Vance and his department’s position equated to weakness. As he noted in his journal, ‘everyone is afraid of getting into a crisis, and hence the general tendency is to downplay the seriousness of the issue.’⁶⁶ The U.S. needed to show its allies in the region its resolve and challenge what he perceived as Soviet expansionism. He did not believe the assurances offered by Gromyko and Dobrynin and refused the guarantee offered by Mengistu to his deputy David Aaron, when he travelled to Ethiopia in February, that they did not intend to cross the border and invade Somalia. *The New York Times* reported a State Department source, as saying ‘what’s he trying to do, undermine his own deputy?’⁶⁷

Utilising bureaucratic prerogatives, Brzezinski took control of the situation and categorised it as a ‘crisis.’ By doing so, he placed it under the domain of the SCC with himself as chair, which gave him the authority to control and manage their deliberations. Strong words and public condemnation were important but the U.S. needed to demonstrate more directly their displeasure at Soviet actions to deter any such moves in the future. He began to float the idea of sending an American aircraft carrier task force into the vicinity of the Horn as it represented a ‘strong message to the Soviets’ and a ‘tangible backing for our strong words.’⁶⁸ At an SCC meeting on 10 February, Brzezinski, supported by Aaron, put the idea forward but Vance, Brown and Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Richard Moose, immediately rejected it.⁶⁹ Even the suggestion of using some form of military action in this dispute appalled them. ‘You could sense the anxiety in the room when I mentioned the possibility of more direct action’ Brzezinski later recalled.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ “Note, Henze to Brzezinski ‘State’s 5-Power Horn Meeting,’” 24 January, 1978. Volume XVII, Part 1, Horn of Africa, Document 44, FRUS, 1977-1980.

⁶⁵ Paul Henze quoted in Woodroffe, *“Buried in the Sands of the Ogaden,”* 80.

⁶⁶ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 181.

⁶⁷ Hovey, “Brzezinski Asserts That Soviet General Leads Ethiopia Units,” 1.

⁶⁸ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 182.

⁶⁹ Glad, *An Outsider in the White House*, 79.

⁷⁰ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 181-182.

Nevertheless, he persisted with the idea and raised it at a further SCC meeting on 21 February. He argued the deployment of an aircraft carrier, for purely political reasons, in order ‘to make clear the serious consequences of an invasion.’ Moreover, he suggested that a task force ‘could be a confidence building measure, encouraging countries in that region that the U.S. is present, stands with them, will protect the flow of arms, and will provide protection from the Russians.’ To Vance, this was ‘playing a bluff we cannot carry through.’ Harold Brown, who noted that the carrier would have ‘negative consequences’ remarked, ‘what you (Dr. Brzezinski) want to deter – the Russians – do not need to be deterred.’ Brzezinski then retorted that he ‘foresaw immediate regional and international consequences to an invasion of Somalia and that this action would contribute to uncertainty and destabilisation in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. The lesson they would learn is that if they were in a contest, they should not get caught relying on the United States.’⁷¹

At an NSC meeting the same day, with Carter present, Brzezinski continued to make the case for deploying a carrier to the region, suggesting that it ‘could deter the Ethiopians and Cubans from invading, this would retrieve the situation.’ Furthermore, ‘if the United States is afraid to take the Cubans on now, what will this do to the confidence in us of other countries?’ Both Vance and Brown countered this with the secretary of state suggesting, ‘the Somalis brought this on themselves. They are no great friend of ours, and they are reaping the fruits of their actions. For us to put our prestige on the line and take military steps is a risk we should not take.’ The president agreed and voiced his concern that their involvement was escalating unnecessarily.⁷² Brzezinski viewed the rejection of the air carrier idea as a bitter blow. Of those who opposed him, he singled out Vance, Brown and General David C. Jones, chair of JCS, ‘all of them seem to me to be badly bitten by the Vietnam bug and as a consequence are fearful of taking the kind of action which is necessary.’⁷³

⁷¹ “Record of a Special Coordination Committee Meeting,” 21 February, 1978, Volume XVII, Part 1, Horn of Africa, Document 58, FRUS, 1977-1980.

⁷² “Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting,” 23 February, 1978, Volume XVII, Part 1, Horn of Africa, Document 62, FRUS, 1977-1980.

⁷³ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 183-184.

The discord between Vance and Brzezinski grew. The later noted, ‘for the first time in the course of our various meetings, he (Vance) started to show impatience, to get red in the face, and to raise his voice. I could sense that personal tension was entering into our relationship’ particularly when the question of linkage arose.⁷⁴ The policy of linkage – the ‘linking of one matter to another as a bargaining counter to trade or to levy pressure’ in an area of common agreement, had been used frequently by Nixon and Kissinger as means of deterring the Soviets or forcing concessions.⁷⁵ Brzezinski regarded it as a necessary policy tool to regulate Soviet excesses and ensue co-operation but Vance opposed linkage, as he believed it to be counterproductive toward certain foreign policy goals.⁷⁶ However, he publicly conceded that linkage would have an adverse effect on public attitudes vis-à-vis the Soviets and in particular, SALT negotiations. As he noted in a press conference, ‘I am not suggesting any direct linkage, but I do suggest it affects the political atmosphere in which these discussions take place.’⁷⁷

‘As soon as the linkage issues surfaced, Cy became very angry and agitated’ Brzezinski recalled.⁷⁸ At a prior SCC meeting on 26 January, the participants reached an agreement that ‘the U.S. government should be cautious about taking actions that would in themselves encourage a sense of crisis or confrontation with the Soviets.’⁷⁹ The State Department accepted that linkage could arise from Soviet activities in the Horn. Spokesperson Hodding Carter III and Director of the ACDA Paul Warnke acknowledged a potential ‘spill over’ effect in Congress and the nation but Warnke also stressed that ‘a SALT treaty is not a reward for Soviet good behaviour. It’s a way in which we advance our own interests.’ Therefore, negotiations should proceed regardless of events in Africa.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ Ibid, 182.

⁷⁵ Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 32-33.

⁷⁶ Sexton, “The Wages of Principle and Power,” 140-144.

⁷⁷ Cyrus R. Vance, “The Secretary: News Conference, 10 February 1978,” *Department of State Bulletin* 78, no. 2012 (March 1978), 16.

⁷⁸ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 186.

⁷⁹ “Record of a Special Coordination Committee Meeting,” 26 January, 1978, Volume XVII, Part 1, Horn of Africa, Document 46, FRUS, 1977-1980.

⁸⁰ Murrey Marder, “U.S. Links SALT Fate to Horn of Africa,” *The Washington Post*, 2 March, 1978, A1.

Nevertheless, in a meeting with Dobrynin on 31 January, Vance confided that it might be too difficult a promise to keep, given the views of some within the administration. ‘Let me tell you straight that there are people close to the president telling him that the latest Soviet actions are a direct personal challenge to the president, a test of his fairness, and he should show the Russians he is not to be trifled with’ he noted to the ambassador. ‘I understood Vance’s sense of alarm’ Dobrynin recalled in his memoirs.⁸¹

Brzezinski however seemed determined to link Soviet activities in the Horn to arms control negotiations. On 1 March, he told the press, ‘if tensions were to rise because of the unwarranted intrusion of Soviet power that will inevitably complicate the process’ but also ‘any ratification that would follow the successful conclusion of the (SALT) negotiations.’ White House Press Secretary Jody Powell later confirmed that Brzezinski’s view reflected the position of the administration but it clearly did not.⁸² The next day Vance testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Attempting to reaffirm the administration’s position, he stated that ‘there is no linkage between the SALT negotiations and the situation in Ethiopia.’⁸³ At the same time however Carter made contradictory remarks at his news conference with the president remarking:

The Soviets' violating of these principles would be a cause of concern to me, would lessen the confidence of the American people in the word and peaceful intentions of the Soviet Union, would make it more difficult to ratify a SALT agreement or comprehensive test ban agreement if concluded, and therefore, the two are linked because of actions by the Soviets. We don't initiate the linkage.⁸⁴

Vance, furious with the events that had unfolded, pointed the finger of blame directly at Brzezinski at an SCC meeting later that day:

CV: I think it is wrong to say that this is going to produce linkage, and it is of fundamental importance.

ZB: It is going to poison the atmosphere.

⁸¹ Cyrus Vance quoted in Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, 405-406.

⁸² Marder, “U.S. Links SALT Fate to Horn of Africa,” A1.

⁸³ Bernard Gwertzman, “Top Carter Aides Seen in Discord On How to React to Soviet Actions,” *The New York Times*, 3 March, 1978, A3.

⁸⁴ Jimmy Carter, “The President’s News Conference,” 2 March, 1978, The American Presidency Project.

CV: We will end up losing SALT and that will be the worst thing that could happen. If we do not get a SALT treaty in the president's first four years, that will be a blemish on his record forever.

ZB: It will be a blemish on his record also if a treaty gets rejected by the Senate.

CV: Zbig, you yesterday and the president today said it may create linkage and I think it is wrong to say that.

Harold Brown then spoke in support of Vance, 'there is going to be linkage – but we should not encourage it... We should find something else to beat the Soviets with.' Vance then reflected, 'we are at the point where we are on the brink of ending up with a real souring of relations between ourselves and the Soviet Union and it may take a helluva long while to change.' Brzezinski continued to press on linking SALT to Soviet actions in the Horn, stating, 'they must understand that there are consequences in their behaviour. If we do not react, we are destroying our own posture.' Vance brought the debate to a close 'this is where you and I part. The consequences of doing something like this are very dangerous.'⁸⁵

The heated discussions between the pair revealed significant differences between them not only in relation to the Horn but to wider issues relating to détente and U.S.-Soviet relations. They not only battled over the administration's response to a single issue but engaged in a wider debate on the approach to foreign affairs as they attempted to influence the president. Brzezinski used the crisis to advance his own views and approach towards the Soviets. Although he failed to change policy significantly, he succeeded in getting it on the agenda and debated amongst the president and his advisors. Tellingly, towards the end of the meeting, Vance noted 'a year ago the Soviets were in Somalia and in Ethiopia as well – now it has become a daily crisis. We are stirring it up ourselves.'⁸⁶

Ironically, the situation in the Horn quickly deescalated in the weeks after the linkage debacle and Brzezinski's suggestion that the U.S. send an aircraft carrier to the region. On 8 March, after losing nearly 8,000 men and seeing his military decimated during the conflict, Siad Barre announced the withdrawal of Somali forces from the Ogaden.

⁸⁵ "Record of a Special Coordination Committee Meeting," 2 March, 1978, Volume XVII, Part 1, Horn of Africa, Document 65, FRUS, 1977-1980.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

Ethiopia did not take advantage and cross the border as Brzezinski and others had speculated.⁸⁷ However, events in the Horn proved to be a considerable setback for Vance and his approach to foreign policy. The press quickly noticed the divergence in Vance and Brzezinski's assessment of the situation as speculation intensified. State Department officials expressed their annoyance at recent events with one source quoted in *The Washington Post* referring to Brzezinski's linkage policy as 'effective as shooting yourself in the foot.'⁸⁸ Another implied that 'differences are causing concern to others who fear that American policies will appear confusing.'⁸⁹ Correspondent Jim Hoagland meanwhile noted:

upper echelon State Department officials...are disturbed that Brzezinski's insistence on drawing lines against the Soviets in distant places like the Horn of Africa will turn that view into a rapidly self-fulfilling prophecy...Moreover they fear that Brzezinski is trying to use his advocacy of a tougher approach to expand his bureaucratic power, at state's expense.⁹⁰

A general concern pervaded the State Department that events in early 1978 signalled a shift in policy towards the Soviet Union, as well as a scrapping of the regionalist approach they advocated, in favour of a hard-line anti-Soviet strategy. Vance too shared similar concerns over the administration's approach. 'Our African policies were sound and, I was convinced, would protect our interests as long as we kept a clear sense of what was attainable. We needed to be more consistent in explaining the purposes of our policies or we would end up creating public uncertainty and confusion' he recalled in his memoirs.⁹¹ Even Brzezinski's expert on the NSC Paul Henze, criticised the administration's approach to the crisis remarking in a memo to his boss, noting that, 'very little in our approach to the Horn over the past year could be characterised as exhibiting qualities of high statesmanship.'⁹² Anthony Lake of the State Department Policy Planning Committee meanwhile reflected,

⁸⁷ Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 125-126.

⁸⁸ Murrey Marder, "'Linkage' Bares a Rift In Detente Strategy'," *The Washington Post*, 6 March, 1978, A1.

⁸⁹ Gwertzman, "Top Carter Aides Seen in Discord On How to React to Soviet Actions," A3.

⁹⁰ Jim Hoagland, "Brzezinski: An Eagerness to Show 'Resolve,'" *The Washington Post*, 14 March, 1978, A1.

⁹¹ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 88.

⁹² "Memo, Henze to Brzezinski: 'The Carter Administration and the Horn - What Have We Learned?'" 10 March, 1978, 3-78 Folder, Horn/Special - Box 2, National Security Agency Staff Material, JCPL.

‘instead of claiming credit for a success, the NSC continued to emphasise the role of the Cubans and the Soviets...why focus more on the threat than our actions to counteract it?’⁹³

The situation not only highlighted ideological differences between Vance and Brzezinski but also the bureaucratic tussle that existed for influence over the administration’s agenda. While the approach of Vance and the State Department became the accepted course of action, Brzezinski exploited the bureaucratic process to advance his own views, despite a lack of support. Carter, busy with other issues, came to rely on the information provided by his national security advisor.⁹⁴ Brzezinski used his daily brief with the president to affect the administration’s approach to the Horn and underline the threat posed by Soviet and Cuban intervention while he used the press to feed stories about their activities and whip up an anti-Soviet fervour.⁹⁵

As he categorised events in the Horn as a ‘crisis’ in early 1978, discussions took place under the direction of the SCC, which Brzezinski chaired. This allowed him to set the agenda of meetings and put forward the idea of sending an aircraft carrier to the Horn. Despite the opposition to his suggestion, his communications with Carter did not reflect the unanimous rejection of his proposal at an SCC meeting. In his report, Brzezinski wrote that during the discussions, only some disagreement emerged. In his memoirs, Vance wrote that some of Brzezinski’s reports of discussions contained discrepancies. The SCC meetings on the Horn were a clear example.⁹⁶ After the argument over linkage, Brzezinski attempted to play down the dispute by insisting that ‘an extensive discussion of steps that could be taken to demonstrate our displeasure to the Soviets’ while simply noting that ‘Secretary Vance was strongly opposed to any linkage with SALT’ in the summary of conclusions memo to the president.⁹⁷

⁹³ Lake, “Carter’s Foreign Policy: Success Abroad, Failure at Home,” 152.

⁹⁴ Glad, *An Outsider in the White House*, 84.

⁹⁵ Gates, Telephone Interview with the author.

⁹⁶ Jackson, “The Ogaden War and the Demise of Détente,” 35

⁹⁷ “Summary of Conclusions: SCC Meeting,” 2 March, 1978, RAC Project Number NLC-15-69-8-5-7, JCPL.

At numerous stages during the crisis, Brzezinski attempted to influence the president using the bureaucratic arrangements within the administration. While he did not initially succeed, a noticeable shift in the administration's approach followed at the end of hostilities in the Horn. His role in exploiting the bureaucratic processes certainly aided his cause but also detrimentally affected Vance's position as well as his approach to handling U.S.-Soviet relations and SALT negotiations. It laid bare the frictions between himself and Brzezinski and the desire to control the administration's foreign policy agenda. In light of events in the Horn, *The New York Times* wrote that while Carter attempted to maintain unity within his administration, 'other officials expect the internal tug-of-war for the president's mind to continue.'⁹⁸

Shaba II

The dust had barely settled on the Horn of Africa situation before a similar conflict emerged between Angola and Zaire over Shaba province. Plagued by war since gaining independence in 1975, Angola became a Cold War battleground between the United States, the Soviet Union and Cuba. The Soviets and Cubans supported the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) headed by President Agostinho Neto. The U.S. meanwhile secretly provided funding and arms to the Front for the National Liberation of Angola (FNLA) led by Holden Roberto as well as the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) ran by Jonas Savimbi. In 1976 however, Congress rejected calls for greater backing of the Angola rebels and halted funding.⁹⁹ At the same time, Cuban support for the MPLA and Neto increased with 36,000 soldiers dispatched to Angola in addition to vast amounts of humanitarian aid to support the country.¹⁰⁰

When the Carter administration came into office, they explored the possibility of improving political and economic ties with Cuba, in the hope of eventually normalising

⁹⁸ Hendrix Smith, "Conflicting Voices From Administration," *The New York Times*, 11 March, 1978, 16.

⁹⁹ Gleijeses, "Moscow's Proxy?," 100; Brands, *Since Vietnam*, 17-18.

¹⁰⁰ Gleijeses, "Moscow's Proxy?," 98.

diplomatic relations. They also hoped increased co-operation might persuade Fidel Castro to reduce Cuba's presence in Angola.¹⁰¹ Vance and the State Department supported this position and believed that the possibility of removing the embargo on Cuba gave them sufficient leverage to gradually reduce their presence in Angola. Brzezinski remained sceptical. Although an opportunity existed to weaken the Soviet-Cuban relationship, he doubted that Castro desired to sever ties with Angola. Indeed, the Cubans insisted their role was purely defensive and humanitarian and refused to let the U.S. dictate its position in Africa. Normalisation of relations with Cuba remained on hold.¹⁰²

While attempting to improve ties with Cuba, both Vance and UN Ambassador Andrew Young lobbied Carter to begin talks with Angola with a view to normalising relations. They argued that improved ties with Angola aided their diplomatic efforts in South Africa, Rhodesia and Namibia. This would not only stabilise the region and secure Angola's borders but it would reduce the need to have the Cubans there as a defensive force, ultimately weakening their influence.¹⁰³ Neither believed that this was a red line in negotiations and Vance conceded they could not realistically expect Neto and the MPLA to loosen their ties to Cuba given the threat posed to Angola by FNLA and UNITA. Young agreed, infamously suggesting that the Cubans brought a degree of 'stability and order' to Angola.¹⁰⁴

This exposed differences between the regionalists in the administration, headed by Vance, and the globalists led by Brzezinski who opposed increased co-operation with Angola while the Cubans still had a military presence in the country.¹⁰⁵ According to USUN Deputy Representative, Donald McHenry, whenever the subject of normalising relations with Angola arose Brzezinski intervened in opposition to it. 'Every time that there was an

¹⁰¹ Jimmy Carter, "Presidential Directive/NSC-6: Cuba," 15 March, 1977, JCPL.

¹⁰² LeoGrande and Kornbluh, *Back Channel to Cuba*, 159-161; Gleijeses, "Moscow's Proxy?," 106-107.

¹⁰³ Bartlett C. Jones, *Flawed Triumphs: Andy Young at the United Nations* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1996), 75-76.

¹⁰⁴ Morley, *Imperial State and Revolution*, 257.

¹⁰⁵ Smith, *Morality, Reason, and Power*, 147-148.

effort to improve relations with the Angolans, Brzezinski would come up with some kind of way to make sure it didn't happen' he recalled, 'it was always done in such a way that there was an effort to appear in favour of something but the timing wasn't right or you had to consult with this person or they had to agree to some of condition that was impossible.'¹⁰⁶ To Brzezinski recognition of Angola without any reduction in the Cuban presence legitimised their role. Carter agreed and sided with his national security advisor.¹⁰⁷ In any event, hopes of normalising relations faded following the conflict in the Shaba region between March and May 1977.

Hostilities erupted when exiled Katangan Congolese soldiers crossed the border into the Shaba province of Zaire from Angola on 11 March, 1977. The Katangans, who fled to Angola in the 1960s, forged close links to Neto and the MPLA who supported them with military training and arms. They formed themselves into the Congolese National Liberation Front (FLNC) with the intention of overthrowing the regime of Mobutu Sese Seko. Zaire meanwhile supported two of the anti-Neto rebel groups in Angola, the FNLA and UNITA, contributing to the growing mistrust and hostility between the two nations. When the FLNC entered the Shaba, Neto did little to discourage them.¹⁰⁸

Early successes by the Katangans, threatened Mobutu's regime. Vance labelled the Zairian army as 'useless' while others expressed concern that without any international support, Mobutu could be defeated. The Carter administration did not hold a particularly favourable opinion of Mobutu and his regime, citing his appalling human rights record, but with economic interests in Zaire at risk, they decided to provide a non-lethal aid package. The administration, reflecting the views of Vance and the State Department, viewed the conflict as a local one and encouraged a diplomatic resolution from the countries in the region.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ McHenry, Interview with the author.

¹⁰⁷ Wright, *The Destruction of a Nation*, 96.

¹⁰⁸ Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 623-624.

¹⁰⁹ Mitchell, *Jimmy Carter in Africa*, 166-168; Smith, *Morality, Reason, and Power*, 148-149.

Fearful for his own position, Mobutu blamed the Soviet Union and Cuba for instigating the attacks and appealed for help from the West and the United States.¹¹⁰ This was, according to some within the State Department, a typical attempt to entice their support by turning a local conflict into an East-West Cold War struggle between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.¹¹¹ Nevertheless, pressure mounted on the administration from allies, particularly France, as well as sections of the American press to support Mobutu. Publicly, the administration decided to keep its distance, refraining from placing the conflict into an East-West Cold War narrative, underscoring the importance of ‘African solutions, to African problems’ and encouraging the Organization for African Unity (OAU) to mediate in the dispute. Privately, despite their grave misgivings of Mobutu and uneasiness at the brutality of his regime, they recognised the economic benefits his regime provided them and their allies. Furthermore, its geographic and political importance to the U.S. given its proximity to South Africa, Rhodesia and Namibia where the administration was trying to make diplomatic progress towards majority rule, increased the need for a solution to stabilise the region.¹¹²

The administration decided to encourage its allies to help Mobutu repel any attacks. He duly received support from Belgium, France and Morocco while the United States continued to provide limited non-lethal aid. The conflict, although a short one, earned Carter a fair amount of praise from Congress and the press as Zaire forced the Katangans out of the Shaba. The administration also prevented the conflict from escalating into an East-West battle, when Carter publicly stated that that Cubans had not been involved in the invasion. To the disappointment of Vance and Young however, the president decided not to proceed with normalising relations with Angola in the wake of Shaba I. While the administration did not blame the Cubans for the incursions into the province, they pointed the finger at Angola and accused them of encouraging the Katangans in response to Mobutu’s support for the

¹¹⁰ Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 39.

¹¹¹ McHenry, Interview with the author.

¹¹² Mitchell, *Jimmy Carter in Africa*, 166-171.

FNLA and UNITA. Moreover, the administration decided to focus its attention on other African issues, primarily Rhodesia, South Africa and Namibia, which required more immediate concern.¹¹³

In the aftermath of Shaba I, Neto requested Cuban support to quash any threats to his regime. Ironically, while the United States cited the Cuban military presence as a factor preventing increased co-operation between them, Castro had already begun the process of withdrawing Cuban troops from Angola. But citing Neto's request, as well expressing concern regarding the international military support for Mobutu and Zaire, Castro ordered the suspension of the troop withdrawal and increased Cuban support for Angola.¹¹⁴

This came at the same time as their support for Ethiopia was increasing and when Brzezinski briefed the press on their activities in the Horn, *Christian Science Monitor* quoted him as saying the possibility of normalising relations with Cuba was effectively impossible given their involvement in Africa. This drew a furious response from officials in the State Department who accused Brzezinski of using the press to affect policy.¹¹⁵ Coupled with events in the Horn, attitudes hardened regarding the role of the Cubans and the Soviets in Africa. Policy struggles continued within the administration when fighting, for the second time in a year, erupted in Shaba province.

On 11 May, 1978, the Katangans once again invaded the Shaba making considerable gains, as they took the city of Kolwezi. Like Shaba I, the invasion threatened the regime of Mobutu as well as the interests of the United States and their allies. Mobutu once again blamed the incursions on the Cuban influence in Angola but in the aftermath of the Ogaden War and the controversy that surround the role of the Soviet Union, his accusations, despite the lack of evidence, received greater credence than before.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 624; Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 39-43.

¹¹⁴ Gleijeses, "Moscow's Proxy?," 106.

¹¹⁵ LeoGrande and Kornbluh, *Back Channel to Cuba*, 169.

¹¹⁶ Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 625-626.

Initially, the administration adopted a similar position to what it had done during Shaba I the previous year. It provided Mobutu with ‘non-lethal’ military aid, albeit increased to \$17.5m, as well as a C-141 aircraft to airlift French and Belgian troops into Kolwezi. Their actions helped repel the Katangan’s advance and drove them out of Kolwezi, safeguarding Mobutu and his regime, again earning the administration considerable praise for their restrained yet effective response.¹¹⁷ But while they denied any Cuban or Soviet involvement during Shaba I, they did not do the same this time. Instead, they pointed the finger of blame directly at Cuba.

As soon as he became aware of the invasion, Castro immediately summoned the Chief of U.S. Interests Section Lyle Lane to deny any involvement or knowledge of the Katangan’s attack. Vance accepted Castro’s version of events however the next day Brzezinski’s deputy David Aaron, citing CIA evidence, instructed press spokespersons within the administration to blame Cuba for the insurgency in the Shaba.¹¹⁸ ‘Shaba II was a godsend for the Cold War warriors’ recalled Donald McHenry, ‘they seized on it to urge a more hard line foreign policy on Carter.’¹¹⁹ Brzezinski pressed Carter, as he had done during the crisis in the Horn of Africa, citing public opinion polls that favoured taking a tougher stance.¹²⁰ He also argued that African leaders wanted the U.S. to get involved, again suggesting that the credibility of the administration was under threat. Like with the Horn of Africa, Brzezinski succeeded in persuading the president to adopt a hard-line approach.¹²¹

On 25 May, Carter criticised Cuba for Shaba II and accused them of having prior knowledge of the Katangans plans to invade as well as providing them with equipment and training.¹²² Vance, who had not been briefed by Brzezinski and unaware of Carter’s

¹¹⁷ Mitchell, *Jimmy Carter in Africa*, 434.

¹¹⁸ LeoGrande and Kornbluh, *Back Channel to Cuba*, 172-173.

¹¹⁹ Donald McHenry quoted in Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 158-159.

¹²⁰ “Memo, Brzezinski to Carter: ‘Information Items,’” 12 May, 1978, 5/11/78-5/19/78 Folder - Box 6, National Security Affairs, Zbigniew Brzezinski Material - President’s Daily Report Files, JCPL.

¹²¹ “Memo, Brzezinski to Carter: ‘Information Items,’” 22 May, 1978, 5/20/78-5/31/78 Folder - Box 6, National Security Affairs, Zbigniew Brzezinski Material - President’s Daily Report Files, JCPL.

¹²² Jimmy Carter, “The President’s News Conference,” 25 May, 1978, The American Presidency Project.

comments, met with a visibly angry Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, Cuba's Vice-President. When Rodriguez informed Vance of what Carter had said, the bemused secretary of state asked Andrew Young, also present at the meeting, if this was indeed the case.¹²³ A day later, before a closed session of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Vance received questions on CIA evidence that showed Cuba had instigated Shaba II. The secretary of state urged them to ask the agency, as he had no evidence of Cuban involvement.¹²⁴ That same day he met with Gromyko where the foreign minister insisted that the Soviets had played no role in Shaba II. 'The Soviet Union did not have a single soldier or rifle in that area, and had no intention of sending any there' he reminded Vance.¹²⁵

Carter did not believe him. At a meeting on 27 May during Gromyko's visit to the United States, the president chastised the Soviet foreign minister saying that he believed that the Katangan invasion could not have been possible without Cuba's involvement and that the Soviets had either approved or encouraged the escalation of their involvement. Furthermore, Carter noted, 'the elimination of Soviet-Cuban involvement in Africa would be a contributing factor to the improvement of Soviet-American relations.' Gromyko fired back, 'not a single Cuban had been caught or even seen in that invasion. Yet, for some reason people had started to blame first the Soviet Union and then the Cubans.' The foreign minister reiterated that the Soviets held 'no designs on Africa at all. The president could rest assured that the Soviets did not want to lay their hands on Africa.'¹²⁶ Gromyko's assurances failed to convince Carter who remarked in his diary, 'as we sat across the table from each other, Gromyko continuously made false statements. I knew he was lying, and he knew that I knew he was lying.'¹²⁷

¹²³ LeoGrande and Kornbluh, *Back Channel to Cuba*, 173.

¹²⁴ Wright, *The Destruction of a Nation*, 86.

¹²⁵ "Memorandum of Conversation," 25 May, 1978, Volume VI, Soviet Union, January-June 1978, Document 109, FRUS, 1977-1980.

¹²⁶ "Memorandum of Conversation," 27 May, 1978, Volume VI, Soviet Union, January-June 1978, Document 115, FRUS, 1977-1980.

¹²⁷ Jimmy Carter, *White House Diary* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), 197.

Having successfully encouraged a hard-line approach towards Shaba II, Brzezinski then gave an interview on *Meet the Press*. After echoing Carter's statement about evidence relating to Cuba's involvement in the Shaba invasion, he criticised Soviet and Cuban 'intrusion' in Africa, which he described as not 'compatible with what was once called the code of détente.' He also said, in an obvious threat, that their behaviour damaged détente. 'I do not believe that this kind of Soviet and Cuban involvement should be cost free' he remarked, 'in fact it carries with it consequences, which may be inimical to them.'¹²⁸

Even Carter believed his national security advisor had gone too far. 'I chastised him about it. He was quite upset. I don't want to create sympathy for the Soviets amongst the European allies or to drive them away from continued negotiations with us on SALT' he noted in his diary.¹²⁹ Vance, also upset, wrote to the president to complain. In a letter to Carter, reproduced in Brzezinski's memoir, he wrote, 'sharp and fundamental differences exist within the administration and are now public knowledge' but he also noted that he had written the letter before Brzezinski's comments on *Meet the Press*. Evidently, the divisions had become an increasing concern for Vance even before Brzezinski publicised his views.¹³⁰

Nevertheless, the national security advisor's remarks as well as his increasing influence over Carter convinced those abroad that he was behind the administration's shift in approach. Fidel Castro, furious at Carter's accusation that Cuba instigated Shaba II, accused the president of being persuaded by lies 'manufactured in Brzezinski's office.'¹³¹ The Soviets also blamed Brzezinski for whipping up anti-Soviet sentiment during Shaba II. Gromyko remarked to Vance that, 'Mr. Brzezinski had surpassed himself in this respect.'¹³²

¹²⁸ Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, "Interview: National Security Advisor Brzezinski on 'Meet the Press', 28 May, 1978," *Department of State Bulletin* 78, no. 2016 (July 1978): 26-27.

¹²⁹ Carter, *White House Diary*, 197.

¹³⁰ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 221.

¹³¹ Karen DeYoung, "Castro Takes His Case to U.S. Public," *The Washington Post*, 14 June, 1978, A1.

¹³² "Memorandum of Conversation," 31 May, 1978, Volume VI, Soviet Union, January-June 1978, Document 120, FRUS, 1977-1980.

Julius Nyerere, the President of Tanzania and one of the founders of the OAU, also criticised Brzezinski's influence over Carter as well as the potentially detrimental effect on its strategy in Africa. 'If President Carter is to turn around and listen to the new Kissinger in his administration, he should not be surprised if we change our views because then he's saying he does not care about one-man, one-vote in Africa. He only cares about confrontation with the Soviet Union' he said.¹³³ British Prime Minister James Callaghan, in an obvious jibe to Brzezinski, remarked, 'there seems to be a number of new Christopher Columbuses setting out from the United States to discover Africa for the first time.'¹³⁴

The disagreements within the administration over the Horn of Africa and the Shaba highlighted the tensions between the State Department and the NSC. The State Department continued to underscore the local nature of the conflicts while many believed no clear proof of Cuban involvement existed. As Anthony Lake noted, 'instead of emphasising our role in helping meet the Shaba crisis in Zaire, we got bogged down by our own claims that the Cubans were behind it all when we couldn't prove it.'¹³⁵ The NSC however frequently highlighted what it perceived as Soviet and Cuban misdemeanours. As Robert Gates, Brzezinski's special assistant, recalled, 'coming after Vietnam, Vance's approach signalled weakness and invited Soviet aggressiveness in the third world – and that's what we got.' To Gates, Vance and the State Department's view of clashes in the Ogaden and the Shaba as local conflicts and should be treated as such was 'idealistic and naïve.'¹³⁶

The effect of the pressure on Carter from Brzezinski and the NSC resulted in a noticeable shift towards a more hard-line position vis-à-vis the Soviets. At Wake Forest University on 17 March, 1978, the president adopted a noticeably harsher tone when discussing the Soviets. He noted that, 'there also has been an ominous inclination on the part of the Soviet Union to use its military power—to intervene in local conflicts, with advisers,

¹³³ Julius Nyerere quoted in Wright, *The Destruction of a Nation*, 88.

¹³⁴ Mitchell, *Jimmy Carter in Africa*, 439; Bernard Gwertzman, "Mixed Signals: U.S. Remains Of Two Minds (At Least) On Africa At Cross Purposes," *The New York Times*, 4 June, 1978, E1.

¹³⁵ Lake, "Carter's Foreign Policy: Success Abroad, Failure at Home," 152.

¹³⁶ Gates, *From the Shadows*, 77-78.

with equipment, and with full logistical support and encouragement for mercenaries from other communist countries, as we can observe today in Africa.’¹³⁷ The speech, drafted by Samuel Huntington, head of national security planning on the NSC staff and described as ‘the last of the hawks’ received minimal input from either Vance or Brown. ‘There were a lot of raised eyebrows’ within the State Department to the speech, according to sources quoted in *The Washington Post*.¹³⁸

A speech in Annapolis in June, also contained harsh criticisms of the Soviets with Carter observing that, ‘the Soviet Union apparently sees military power and military assistance as the best means of expanding their influence abroad.’¹³⁹ As Vance noted in his memoirs, the Soviets reacted badly to the speech as he feared for SALT negotiations. ‘Although Carter refused to slow down the negotiations, some of his advisors were less concerned about the progress in SALT than in sending signals to the Soviets that their international activities were damaging U.S.-Soviet relations and that the administration was responding firmly’ he reflected.¹⁴⁰ Brzezinski meanwhile commented in his journal ‘SALT lies buried in the sands of the Ogaden.’¹⁴¹

Carter’s speeches at Wake Forest and Annapolis also exposed the differences between Vance and Brzezinski and fuelled the speculation regarding their battle to influence policy. As noted in previous chapters, Carter was heavily reliant on the policy debates between Vance and Brzezinski due to his inexperience when it came to foreign affairs. But the tug-of-war between his advisors over U.S.-Soviet policy in Africa was precipitated by Carter’s inability to find a common ground between the two. While Brzezinski had contributed to the president’s growing scepticism and harsher tone towards the Soviets, he

¹³⁷ Jimmy Carter, “Address at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina,” 17 March, 1978, The American Presidency Project.

¹³⁸ Murrey Marder, “U.S., Soviets Seen At Vital Juncture In Policy Conflict,” *The Washington Post*, 26 March, 1978, A1.

¹³⁹ Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 652; Jimmy Carter, “United States Naval Academy Address at the Commencement Exercises,” 7 June, 1978, The American Presidency Project.

¹⁴⁰ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 99.

¹⁴¹ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 189.

was not prepared to embrace his doctrine and still sympathised with Vance's approach towards détente, particularly in relation to SALT.¹⁴² 'It was good to have it argued out' Assistant Secretary of State Leslie Gelb recalled 'but Carter didn't have the capacity to combine them, to make them mesh in a sensible way.'¹⁴³

This was reflected in Carter's two key foreign policy speeches that year at Wake Forest and Annapolis. In both speeches, he attacked Soviet actions in Africa but also spoke of the hope for increased collaboration between them and the United States.¹⁴⁴ For example, Carter spoke at Wake Forest about co-operation with the Soviets in various areas in various areas, particularly around arms control. That was Vance. However, he also noted 'if they fail to demonstrate restraint in missile programs and other force levels or in the projection of Soviet or proxy forces into other lands and continents, then popular support in the United States for such co-operation with the Soviets will certainly erode.' That was Brzezinski.¹⁴⁵ The speech he then delivered at Annapolis in June contained glaring ambiguities. While complimenting the progress on SALT as well co-operating on issues such as human rights, he then reverted to a harsher tone. 'The persistent and increasing military involvement of the Soviet Union and Cuba in Africa could deny this hopeful vision' he declared.¹⁴⁶

The differences within the speeches only resulted in confusion, as Gelb recalled 'you could see one paragraph of a Carter speech was from Brzezinski and a paragraph from Vance and never meshed together. Just there as an obvious contradiction.' This led *The Washington Post* to refer to his address at Annapolis as 'two different speeches' while also noting, 'it can be argued that the president merely gathered all the bits and pieces into one speech and proclaimed the results to be his policy. Certainly, there were identifiable traces of Zbigniew Brzezinski's conceptual view of great-power relationships and Secretary of

¹⁴² Aronoff, "In Like a Lamb, Out Like a Lion," 442.

¹⁴³ Gelb, Interview with the author.

¹⁴⁴ Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 128-129; This is what Kaufman called 'paper clipping', a combination of the advice of both Vance and Brzezinski containing both tough and conciliatory language.

¹⁴⁵ Carter, "Address at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina."

¹⁴⁶ Carter, "United States Naval Academy Address at the Commencement Exercises."; Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 128-129.

State Cyrus Vance's tactical approach, and that lent the speech a certain on-the-one-hand-on-the-other quality.'¹⁴⁷ To Vance, the lack of unity was a concern. As he recalled in his memoirs:

I was concerned about administration disunity during the previous year. In the face of adverse conditions, our policies in the Horn and in the Shaba had been remarkably successful. Yet a large segment of Congress and the public saw confusion and weakness, not only regarding Africa, but more significantly, in our ability to manage our relations with the Soviet Union... Good policies would not ensure public support and understanding if we tolerated diverse and discordant voices who made us appear to be the loser.¹⁴⁸

Normalisation of Relations with China

The crises in Africa in early 1978 fuelled Brzezinski's distrust of the Soviet Union. He had actively challenged the course of action as advocated by Vance and as 1978 progressed, he continued to assert his own views. When Carter entered office, he inherited stalled negotiations with the People's Republic of China (PRC) to normalise relations between the two countries. After the Chinese revolution, the United States severed its diplomatic ties with the PRC who aligned themselves with the Soviet Union but disagreements throughout the 1950s and 1960s resulted in the breakdown of their relationship culminating in violent border skirmishes in 1969.¹⁴⁹ At this point Mao and Nixon began to look closely at an alliance between their two countries as a means of countering Soviet influence across the world. In 1972, Nixon made his famous trip to China signalling a rapprochement in relations between the PRC and the U.S. with both signing the Shanghai communiqué affirming their commitment to normalisation. However, talks stalled on the issue of Taiwan. The island off the coast of China was the home to the government of the Republic of China (ROC) who lost power to Mao in 1949 but were considered the legitimate rulers of China by the U.S. who had provided them with military and humanitarian aid. The Chinese demanded the U.S.

¹⁴⁷ Edward Walsh and Don Oberdorfer, "Soviets Told to Choose Cooperation or Confrontation," *The Washington Post*, 8 June, 1978 A1; "Mr. Carter on the Russians," *The Washington Post*, 8 June, 1978 A22.

¹⁴⁸ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 92.

¹⁴⁹ Zanchetta, *The Transformation of American International Power in the 1970s*, 39-42.

renounce its diplomatic and military relationship with the ROC but while Nixon was prepared to end the United States' association with Taiwan, public and congressional opinion was a significant obstacle to his hopes of establishing full diplomatic relations. The Watergate scandal, Mao's death and electoral politics put normalisation on hold until the Carter administration entered office in 1977.¹⁵⁰

During the election campaign, Carter vowed to proceed with normalisation but did not enter into any specifics except to confirm that a promise of non-intervention in Taiwan on the part of the PRC would be critical before proceeding.¹⁵¹ When the administration entered the White House, China was not an immediate priority given their emphasis on SALT, which they knew the Chinese would not look favourably on.¹⁵² In the build-up to Carter's first meeting with a representative of the PRC, Ambassador Huang Chen, Vance urged the president to reaffirm that normalisation was of 'mutual interest' and that the Shanghai Communiqué would guide them. But the cautious Vance told Carter to 'avoid being drawn into substantive areas we are not yet prepared to address.'¹⁵³ Vance's warning not to get in specifics was indicative of the fact that the administration had not formulated a clear strategy towards normalisation.

Following the election Vance recommended pursuing normalisation but told Carter, 'in the long run I feel we clearly should move toward total normalisation, but I do not think we need to rush.'¹⁵⁴ He viewed normalisation as a historic as well as politically, economically and culturally significant act but crucially he was not keen on pursuing negotiations at the expense of U.S.-Soviet relations and SALT.¹⁵⁵ Nor did Vance wish to compromise American links to the ROC. The Shanghai Communiqué called for the U.S. to

¹⁵⁰ Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 129-130.

¹⁵¹ "Memo, Eizenstat and Rubenstein to Carter: Campaign Promises," 30 November, 1976, Cyrus Vance and Grace Sloane Vance Papers, Yale University. Series No. II. Box No. 8. Folder 6.

¹⁵² Walker, "'Friends, But Not Allies'," 580.

¹⁵³ "Memo, Vance to Carter 'Your Meeting with Huang Chen,'" n.d., China (People's Republic of) 1/77-2/77 - Box 8, National Security Affairs, Zbigniew Brzezinski Material, Country File, JCPL.

¹⁵⁴ "Memo, Vance to Carter 'Overview of Foreign Policy Issues and Positions.'"

¹⁵⁵ McLellan, *Cyrus Vance*, 117.

sever its diplomatic ties to Taiwan, abrogate their mutual defence treaty and withdraw all military personnel. Vance believed turning their backs on Taiwan was unacceptable, as he wrote to Carter, 'I do not believe we should feel so compelled to establish diplomatic relations with Peking that we jeopardise the well-being and security of the people of Taiwan.'¹⁵⁶

However, he did offer a compromise. If the U.S. terminated the defence treaty, they had a year to honour the agreement, which meant they could respect their military obligations to Taiwan. Thereafter, Vance believed the administration could provide 'carefully selected defensive arms.'¹⁵⁷ Moreover, the secretary of state wanted to maintain some form of diplomatic relationship and keep an official U.S. consulate on the island.¹⁵⁸ Despite advocating these terms, he suggested to Carter that the Chinese would find any deviation unacceptable and they could face an 'indefinite postponement of diplomatic relations.'¹⁵⁹

Despite Vance's lack of enthusiasm, Brzezinski, upon entering his post, immediately instructed his China specialist on the NSC, Michel Oksenberg, to provide him with a report on how to 'restore momentum to our relationship with the PRC.' Oksenberg argued in favour of normalisation as soon as possible. 'I fear that the president has done nothing so far to express his personal interest in this issue' he confided to Brzezinski.¹⁶⁰ Although Brzezinski had once viewed the dispute between China and the Soviet Union as a mere 'family quarrel' he viewed normalisation as an important instrument in the same way Nixon and Kissinger had. Given the breakdown in Sino-Soviet relations, Brzezinski believed the U.S. should forge a strategic-military relationship with China to discourage Soviet

¹⁵⁶ "Memo, Vance to Carter 'Normalization of Relations with the People's Republic of China'," 15 April, 1977, China (People's Republic of) 3/77-6/77 - Box 8, National Security Affairs, Brzezinski Material, Country File, JCPL.

¹⁵⁷ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 77.

¹⁵⁸ Mann, *About Face*, 83.

¹⁵⁹ "Memo, Vance to Carter 'Normalization of Relations with the People's Republic of China'."

¹⁶⁰ "Memo, Oksenberg to Brzezinski 'Initiatives Towards PRC,'" 25 January, 1977, China (People's Republic of) 1/77-2/77 - Box 8, National Security Affairs, Brzezinski Material, Country File, JCPL.

expansionism.¹⁶¹ ‘U.S.-Chinese collaboration could be valuable in helping Moscow understand the value of restraint and reciprocity’ he noted.¹⁶²

But Carter wanted to focus on resolving unsettled issues rather than appealing to their anti-Sovietism. He told Brzezinski Nixon and Kissinger’s criticism of the Soviets during their negotiations had nauseated him and he did not want to ‘ass kiss’ the Chinese.¹⁶³ Unlike Vance, Brzezinski was prepared to accept Chinese demands to cut American diplomatic and military ties with Taiwan, if it resulted in an agreement on normalisation.¹⁶⁴ To some in the State Department, like Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia, Richard Holbrooke, the national security advisor ‘didn’t give a goddamn about Taiwan.’¹⁶⁵

Brzezinski admitted his position made him a lone voice within the administration and at a Policy Review Committee meeting on 27 June, 1977, he lost the argument.¹⁶⁶ While they still favoured normalisation, no appetite to make major concessions on Taiwan existed and no timetable for normalisation was outlined.¹⁶⁷ Carter did flirt with the idea of pursuing full normalisation but feared talks may adversely affect SALT and the Panama Canal Treaties, which faced intense scrutiny in Congress. He authorised Vance to visit China on an ‘exploratory mission’ only.¹⁶⁸ The position Carter adopted reflected Vance’s initial proposal – normalisation but with diplomatic representation in Taiwan and continued arms sales. Both knew the Chinese would reject their position but they wanted to open dialogue for normalisation further down the line, thus not interfering with SALT negotiations with the Soviets.¹⁶⁹

On 20 August, Vance arrived in Peking and informed the Chinese of their position. As the secretary and his team had predicted the Chinese were unwilling to negotiate on any

¹⁶¹ Tyler, *A Great Wall*, 233.

¹⁶² Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 196.

¹⁶³ Tucker, *Strait Talk*, 93.

¹⁶⁴ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 200.

¹⁶⁵ Richard Holbrooke quoted in Tucker, *Strait Talk*, 92.

¹⁶⁶ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 200.

¹⁶⁷ Ross, *Negotiating Cooperation*, 104-106.

¹⁶⁸ Walker, “‘Friends, But Not Allies’,” 584.

¹⁶⁹ Ross, *Negotiating Cooperation*, 105-106; Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 201.

U.S. presence in Taiwan. The PRC leadership rejected the U.S. suggestions while Vice-Chairman and de facto Premier, Deng Xiaoping, referred to their proposals regarding a diplomatic presence in Taiwan as akin to a ‘flagless embassy.’¹⁷⁰ The Chinese believed the administration would respect the Shanghai Communiqué but were taken aback by their position. Deng told Vance, ‘in my opinion, this formula is not a step forward from the original process of normalisation. It is, on the contrary, a retreat from it.’¹⁷¹ Although they expected a rejection, the vehemence of their dismissal surprised Vance, who did not offer any alternative positions to the Chinese. In preparation for the visit, a draft proposal for normalisation had been prepared that accepted the Shanghai Communiqué but Vance kept it in his pocket. Brzezinski, aware that talks were not going well, intervened and attempted to get Carter to instruct Vance to compromise and pursue full normalisation. But the president rejected Brzezinski’s overtures and the communiqué remained in Vance’s pocket and he prepared to return home.¹⁷²

The Chinese, clearly disappointed, showed no hostility to Vance or his party. However, as they left their stopover in Japan, a leak to the press, from NSC staffer Samuel Huntington, indicated that the administration was pleased with the progress made and that the Chinese had shown a fair amount of flexibility on the issue of Taiwan. Vance and his travelling party angrily pointed the finger at Brzezinski.¹⁷³ The story, ‘made us look like fools’ William Gleysteen, the Deputy Assistant Secretary in the East Asia bureau, remarked. An incensed Vance attempted to have Leonard Woodcock, the head of the U.S. Liaison office, discredit the leak but he was unable to reach the Chinese before they read the story. The leak only served to irritate the Chinese. Deng, giving interviews to the American press following Vance’s visit, criticised the administration’s proposals and branded them as a significant setback in the normalisation process.¹⁷⁴ Gleysteen later reflected, ‘I half

¹⁷⁰ Hanhimäki, *The Rise and Fall of Détente*, 118.

¹⁷¹ “Memorandum of Conversation,” 24 August, 1977, Volume XIII, China, Document 50, FRUS, 1977-1980.

¹⁷² Tyler, *A Great Wall*, 245.

¹⁷³ Ross, *Negotiating Cooperation*, 110.

¹⁷⁴ Glad, *An Outsider in the White House*, 123.

convinced myself that Brzezinski must have been the source and deliberately set Vance up for a fall. Although this was probably unfair of me, it was symptomatic of the uncomfortable relationship that had already developed by this time between the NSC and ourselves.¹⁷⁵

The leak embarrassed the administration and had a detrimental impact on their efforts to normalise relations. When Chinese Foreign Minister Huang Hua visited the United Nations a month later, Vance told him the U.S. would review its position and Woodcock would submit new proposals in due course. Five weeks then passed and only when Woodcock threatened to go directly to the president unless he received new instructions, did the secretary of state agree to provide them.¹⁷⁶ Woodcock bemoaned to Oksenberg the delay in receiving the new instructions as ‘most unpleasant.’¹⁷⁷ When he finally received instructions from the State Department, there was no significant deviation in their position, nor did he have the authority to proceed any further with negotiations. When Woodcock relayed them to Hua upon his return to China, the Foreign Minister expressed his disappointment at the lack of progress.¹⁷⁸

The lack of guidance from the State Department reflected their ambivalence. Vance wrote to Carter, prior to Woodcock’s return, that the administration should not proceed with any substantive proposals aimed at normalisation. Any major concessions, on Taiwan, would come later.¹⁷⁹ Moreover, in a meeting with Gromyko in September, the Soviet foreign minister warned him that ‘playing the China card’ was a ‘dirty game’ and could have serious ramifications on U.S.-Soviet relations and SALT.¹⁸⁰ Carter concurred and put normalisation on the ‘backer burner’ while they addressed other issues.¹⁸¹ For Vance and the State

¹⁷⁵ William H. Gleysteen Jr., “Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection: Interview with Ambassador William H. Gleysteen, Jr.,” interview by Thomas Stern, 10 June, 1997, ADST.

¹⁷⁶ Ross, *Negotiating Cooperation*, 112.

¹⁷⁷ “Memo, Oksenberg to Brzezinski: ‘Instructions for Leonard Woodcock,’” 25 October, 1977, China (People’s Republic of) 10/77-1/78 - Box 8, National Security Affairs, Zbigniew Brzezinski Material, Country File, JCPL.

¹⁷⁸ Ross, *Negotiating Cooperation*, 112-113.

¹⁷⁹ “Memo, Vance to Carter: ‘China Policy: Next Steps,’” n.d., China (People’s Republic of) 10/77-1/78 - Box 8, National Security Affairs, Zbigniew Brzezinski Material, Country File, JCPL.

¹⁸⁰ Smith, *Morality, Reason, and Power*, 89.

¹⁸¹ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 192.

Department, negotiating SALT, as well as peace talks in the Middle East, took precedence over China but Brzezinski and the NSC considered normalisation a high priority.

On 25 October, Oksenberg wrote to Brzezinski that, ‘the longer we postpone making our presentation to the Chinese, the more likely it becomes that the Chinese will conclude not that we are patient about normalisation but that we don’t give a damn.’¹⁸² Events dramatically changed within the space of two weeks. A few days after he wrote the memo, Oksenberg and Brzezinski dined with Lee Kuan Yew, the Prime Minister of Singapore, who enquired as to the state of Sino-American relations and asked why they were not pursuing normalisation. This struck a chord with Brzezinski and afterwards he asked Oksenberg about the possibility of receiving an invitation to visit China. He had become frustrated with the lack of progress on normalisation and with the supposedly increasing Soviet presence in Africa troubling him, he wondered whether it was not time to ‘play the China card.’ Through Oksenberg’s connections, Brzezinski elicited an invitation to visit China.¹⁸³

On 3 November, 1977, Ambassador Huang Chen, in front of a stunned Vance, Holbrooke and Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Phillip Habib, extended an invitation to Brzezinski to visit China. ‘It’s a date’ the national security advisor gleefully replied.¹⁸⁴ The horrified trio immediately registered their unhappiness. Habib protested with Brzezinski directly from Vance’s car phone on their way back to the State Department while Holbrooke called Oksenberg and asked, ‘have you been playing games?’¹⁸⁵ Vance ‘in considerable agitation’ accused Brzezinski of deliberately trying to undercut him and the administration’s negotiations with the Chinese.¹⁸⁶ For the secretary of state, Brzezinski’s trip was premature given the administration had not agreed a new position or indicated a

¹⁸² “Memo, Oksenberg to Brzezinski: ‘Instructions for Leonard Woodcock.’”

¹⁸³ Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, 422.

¹⁸⁴ “Memorandum of Conversation,” 3 November, 1977, Volume XIII, China, Document 66, FRUS, 1977-1980.

¹⁸⁵ Tyler, *A Great Wall*, 249.

¹⁸⁶ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 209.

willingness to restart negotiations. He also construed the invitation as blurring the lines of who acted as the administration's foreign policy spokesperson.¹⁸⁷

Cater sided with his secretary of state and denied Brzezinski permission to visit China, and explored, on Vance's advice, the possibility of sending Vice-President Walter Mondale instead.¹⁸⁸ He told Brzezinski 'I don't want to be seen as jumping all over Cy given that he has such strong feelings on the subject.'¹⁸⁹ Undeterred he continued to lobby the president and others within the administration to support his position, enlisting the support of both Secretary of Defense Harold Brown as well as Mondale. Soviet and Cuban activity in the Horn of Africa meanwhile provided Brzezinski with the opportunity to press more forcefully to be allowed to go to China.¹⁹⁰

On 27 February, he wrote to Carter saying, 'bearing in mind developments on the Horn and the related need to send a sensitive signal to the Soviets, the time is ripe for your decision on this subject.'¹⁹¹ On 16 March the president relented and decided to send Brzezinski to China with the instruction that he had 'made up his mind' on normalisation.¹⁹² Soviet activities in Africa contributed to the shift in the Carter's mind and his decision to link it to arms control indicated his willingness to pressure the Soviets to curb their behaviour and make concessions on arms control. 'Playing the China card' would only add further pressure to the Soviets. Moreover, it could also appease the more anti-Soviet elements within Congress and thus benefit SALT when it came to the floor.¹⁹³ Although Vance remained opposed to sending Brzezinski, he sympathised with Carter's position. Normalisation may negate any criticism from detractors of SALT but he conceded that it was the president's decision.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁷ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 114-115.

¹⁸⁸ Glad, *An Outsider in the White House*, 125.

¹⁸⁹ Jimmy Carter quoted in Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 205.

¹⁹⁰ Mann, *About Face*, 85.

¹⁹¹ "Memo, Brzezinski to Carter: 'Trip to the Far East,'" 27 February, 1978, Volume XIII, China, Document 79, FRUS, 1977-1980.

¹⁹² Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 702.

¹⁹³ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 194; Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 134.

¹⁹⁴ Walker, "'Friends, But Not Allies,'" 589.

To Brzezinski, Vance and the State Department's resistance and opposition to his trip was symptomatic of being the most 'turf-conscious' agency in Washington but any semblance of bureaucratic harmony quickly evaporated.¹⁹⁵ Prior to working together, Holbrooke and Oksenberg agreed to work co-operatively with one another to help shape the administration's policy towards China.¹⁹⁶ Paul Kreisberg, the Deputy Director of the State Department Policy Planning Committee, recalled, 'although Holbrooke and Oksenberg detested one another...there was an agreement that we ought to go for the deal that would be easiest to work with the Chinese.'¹⁹⁷ That collegiality fractured as Brzezinski and Oksenberg attempted to fashion a new approach without consulting the State Department. 'Oftentimes not all the cards were on the table' recalled desk officer Harry Thayer, 'it took quite a lot of extra effort to keep track of what Mike Oksenberg, on his own or on Zbig's behalf, was up to at any given time.'¹⁹⁸

Holbrooke's determination to regain control of negotiations led him into direct confrontation with Brzezinski, who he disliked. Holbrooke had been an advisor to Carter during his campaign and when the president-elect was selecting his cabinet, he asked for his opinion on prospective appointments. When it came to Brzezinski, Holbrooke 'tried to stick the knife in as delicately as possible' telling him that he was not a good pick and would undoubtedly clash with Vance.¹⁹⁹ Brzezinski disliked Holbrooke in equal measure, believing him to be part of a group of 'left wing nuts' and a prolific leaker. Keen to maintain secrecy and maintain control over the development of the administration's position, Brzezinski and Oksenberg wanted to keep Holbrooke and the State Department out of the loop.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁵ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 203.

¹⁹⁶ Tyler, "The (Ab)normalization of U.S.-Chinese Relations," 95-97.

¹⁹⁷ Paul H. Kreisberg, "Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection: Interview with Paul Kreisberg," 8 April, 1989, ADST.

¹⁹⁸ Harry E.T. Thayer, "Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection: Interview with Ambassador Harry E.T. Thayer," interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, 19 November, 1990, ADST.

¹⁹⁹ Tyler, "The (Ab)normalization of U.S.-Chinese Relations," 95.

²⁰⁰ Richard Bernstein, "Restoring America's Role in Asia," in *The Unquiet American: Richard Holbrooke in the World*, ed. Derek H. Chollet and Samantha Power (New York: Public Affairs, 2011), 127.

In March 1978, Oksenberg informed Brzezinski, ‘Holbrooke said that in his lunch with you, you agreed planning for your trip would proceed as for a Vance trip. This would mean papers would be prepared at State, primarily in the EA (East Asia) Bureau, and that Holbrooke would take the lead bureaucratically.’ He then requested, ‘assuming your trip takes place, planning for it will occur here.’²⁰¹ Brzezinski approved Oksenberg’s appeal. In retaliation, Holbrooke attempted to fill the party travelling to China with State Department officials but when Brzezinski learned of this, he telephoned the assistant secretary and threatened to ‘throw him off the airplane’ if he persisted.²⁰²

Carter felt the State Department’s sensitivity to Brzezinski’s role in the normalisation process was a result of being bypassed by Kissinger during the initial negotiations with China in the early 1970s.²⁰³ However, such was the seriousness of the negotiations and the secrecy required, he sided with his national security advisor. He also viewed Holbrooke and the State Department as a potential obstacle believing that if they did not support his proposals they may leak them to the press. ‘In the State Department, nothing is secret. There is a pipeline between *The Washington Post* and the State Department’ Carter later claimed.²⁰⁴

On 20 May, 1978, Brzezinski and his travelling party arrived in China and the national security advisor told the PRC leadership, the United States had ‘made up its mind’ on normalisation. The basis would be the Shanghai Communiqué but during his initial talks, Brzezinski did not venture into any great specifics, leaving them for when negotiations reached an advanced stage. Instead, he appealed to a common interest, the Soviet Union. During his visit, Brzezinski exulted in his anti-Sovietism. In private meetings, he stressed the importance of an alliance between the U.S. and the PRC to counter Soviet expansionism

²⁰¹ “Memo, Oksenberg to Brzezinski: ‘Holbrooke—Your Trip,’” 27 March, 1978, Volume XIII, China, Document 88, FRUS, 1977-1980.

²⁰² Lubowski, *Zbig*, 110.

²⁰³ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 193.

²⁰⁴ Jimmy Carter quoted in Rothkopf, *Running The World*, 195.

in Africa, Asia and the Middle East.²⁰⁵ He also promised to provide them with American technology that the Soviets were unable to obtain and, while they remained opposed to selling arms or weapons systems directly to the Chinese, Brzezinski confirmed that they would not object to European allies providing them with arms or any transfers of advanced technology.²⁰⁶

Within the travelling delegation, hardliner Samuel Huntington, along with Ben Huberman of the NSC and Morton Abramowitz from Defense, briefed the Chinese on the Soviets military capabilities and shared intelligence while Oksenberg provided a presentation on SALT negotiations.²⁰⁷ Outside of the meetings, Brzezinski's comments amounted to, 'schoolboy-like, almost appealing, naive enthusiasm for sticking it to the Russians' State Department Director for Chinese Affairs Charles W. Freeman remembered.²⁰⁸ When they visited the Great Wall, Brzezinski joked to the Chinese, 'if we get to the top first, you go in and oppose the Russians in Ethiopia.'²⁰⁹

The PRC leadership developed a personal rapport with the national security advisor whereas the secretary of state's commitment to détente and SALT had not gone down favourably. One official later said, 'we know where Brzezinski stands on the Soviet Union, China and Japan. With Vance, we never knew.'²¹⁰ Vance, who viewed normalisation as a separate foreign policy objective rather than placing it within the framework of the Cold War, was left horrified by the anti-Soviet rhetoric Brzezinski projected during his visit. 'He allowed his trip to be characterised as a deliberate countermove by the U.S. at a time of worsening relations with Moscow,' he recalled but it was indicative of the shift in focus within the administration.²¹¹ In the beginning, Carter embraced the Vance school of thought

²⁰⁵ Andrianaopoulos, *Kissinger and Brzezinski*, 206-207.

²⁰⁶ Mann, *About Face*, 87.

²⁰⁷ Ross, *Negotiating Cooperation*, 131.

²⁰⁸ Charles W. Freeman, "Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection: Interview with Ambassador Charles W. Freeman, Jr.," interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, 14 April 14, 1995, ADST.

²⁰⁹ Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 134-135.

²¹⁰ Cohen and Tucker, "Beijing's Friend, Moscow's Foe," 92; Tyler, *A Great Wall*, 244.

²¹¹ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 116.

on pursuing arms control as a means of strengthening détente but switched to developing a military relationship with China in an atmosphere of hostility towards the Soviets.²¹²

The tension between Holbrooke, Brzezinski and Oksenberg increased during the China visit. Prior to their departure, Holbrooke learnt he would not sit in Brzezinski's meetings with Deng at the national security advisor's request. After Woodcock unsuccessfully lobbied on his behalf, Gleysteen, Holbrooke's deputy, then pleaded with Brzezinski to allow his boss to attend the meetings but the national security advisor snapped back, 'screw you. I'm not going to.'²¹³ 'Other members of the delegation accepted this restriction, except for Holbrooke, who made a great issue of personal privilege out of his exclusion' Brzezinski recalled, attributing his omission to Carter's desire to keep the talks secret and confidential.²¹⁴ In his quest to maintain secrecy, Brzezinski also instructed Oksenberg to prevent Holbrooke from seeing the memorandum of the conversations (MEMCONS) with Deng.

On the flight back from China, when Oksenberg denied Holbrooke permission to view the MEMCONS, the assistant secretary's frustration boiled over. A physical confrontation ensued between the two with Holbrooke apparently grabbing Oksenberg by the collar demanding access to the materials yelling, 'if you don't give me those MEMCONS after we get back, I will destroy you!' Oksenberg retorted 'if I give you those MEMCONS after we get back and you violate our trust, I will destroy you!'²¹⁵ 'It was awful, probably the nadir of my bureaucratic experience' remembered Gleysteen who, believing Brzezinski had taken a great deal of pleasure out of humiliating Holbrooke, labelled him 'a national disgrace.'²¹⁶ Brzezinski continued to voice his belief that Holbrooke and the State Department were a potential obstacle to progress on normalisation. It was his, and the president's wish, to limit their role in the talks but many in the agency considered the

²¹² Garrison, "Explaining Change in the Carter Administration's China Policy," 83.

²¹³ Mann, *About Face*, 87; Tyler, "The (Ab)normalization of U.S.-Chinese Relations," 107.

²¹⁴ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 213.

²¹⁵ Tyler, "The (Ab)normalization of U.S.-Chinese Relations," 110.

²¹⁶ Gleysteen Jr., "Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection."

assistant secretary's treatment outrageous and a clear sign of their exclusion from the process.²¹⁷

In a further blow to Vance and Holbrooke, on 11 October, Carter decided to drop talks aimed at restoring relations with Vietnam. Both embraced normalisation to increase economic development and regional co-operation in Southeast Asia and repair old wounds. Although they believed the administration should not view foreign policy objectives through the Cold War lens, they considered normalised relations with Vietnam as an opportunity to offset Soviet influence and loosen Hanoi's dependence on Moscow.²¹⁸ Carter viewed normalisation as a means to repair war wounds and build friendships in the third world, rather than any strategic gains or losses the United States may or may not make against the Soviet Union.²¹⁹ Brzezinski however, characterised the attempts of Vance and Holbrooke to normalise relations as essentially 'pro-Soviet, anti-Chinese.' He did not share their optimistic view that Hanoi would cut ties with Moscow, essentially seeing Vietnam as part of an 'East-West geopolitical struggle' where the Vietnamese were essentially Soviet proxies exploiting the region for its own gain.²²⁰

Moreover, after a series of border skirmishes, the prospect of Vietnam, with the support of the Soviet Union, invading neighbours Cambodia looked increasingly likely.²²¹ The United States had no interest in defending the Cambodian regime of Pol Pot and in April 1978, Carter labelled the Khmer Rouge as the 'worst violator of human rights in the world.' But China had supported the Khmer Rouge for many years and provided them with vast sums of military aid. Therefore, Brzezinski did not want the issue of Cambodia to jeopardise improved relations with China.²²²

²¹⁷ Tucker, *Strait Talk*, 91.

²¹⁸ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 122.

²¹⁹ Steven Hurst, *The Carter Administration and Vietnam* (London: MacMillan Press Ltd, 1996), 28.

²²⁰ Andrinaopoulos, *Kissinger and Brzezinski*, 208; Hurst, *The Carter Administration and Vietnam*, 73-74.

²²¹ Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 142-143.

²²² Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 699-701; Kenton Clymer, *The United States and Cambodia, 1969-2000: A Troubled Relationship* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2004), 117-118.

Although Brzezinski had called for tough action against the Khmer Rouge and Pol Pot when the administration fashioned its approach to human rights, he believed that pushing the Chinese to exert pressure on Cambodia would be detrimental to normalisation.²²³ When quizzed about the border skirmishes in January 1978, he blamed the Vietnamese and referred to them as a ‘Soviet proxy’ in effect granting tacit backing to Chinese support for Cambodia.²²⁴ When Brzezinski visited in May, the PRC affirmed their support for Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge and blamed the Vietnamese for the border skirmishes. In the first round of talks, Foreign Minister Huang Hua told the American delegation that Vietnam, in collaboration with the Soviet Union, had militaristic designs on Cambodia with the intent on forming an ‘Indochinese federation.’ Brzezinski responded by affirming that the administration’s concern was primarily for human rights in Cambodia. ‘We feel that we cannot entirely ignore the internal circumstances in Cambodia. These circumstances offend our moral concerns’ he noted. But he also stated that the U.S. did not support Vietnam’s desire to oust Pol Pot, which he intimated was ‘inspired not only in the area immediately contiguous to Cambodia but from farther north.’²²⁵

Brzezinski viewed the Vietnamese-Cambodia border skirmishes, in the same way he interpreted the crises in Africa, as a proxy war with the Vietnamese fighting on behalf of the Soviets. Attempts to normalise relations with Vietnam only harmed their negotiations with the PRC.²²⁶ Vance and Holbrooke meanwhile believed that normalisation could run concurrently with talks with the Chinese. They felt that if talks with Vietnam concluded first, it gave the PRC sufficient time to accept their rapprochement. Nor did they agree with Brzezinski assessment of Vietnam as a Soviet proxy and continued to argue that improved

²²³ Kenton Clymer, “Jimmy Carter, Human Rights, and Cambodia,” *Diplomatic History* 27, no. 2 (April 2003): 251-254.

²²⁴ Smith, *Morality, Reason, and Power*, 97.

²²⁵ “Memorandum of Conversation,” 21 May, 1978, Volume XIII, China, Document 109, FRUS, 1977-1980.

²²⁶ Hurst, *The Carter Administration and Vietnam*, 90-91; “Memo, Brzezinski to Carter: ‘Report on My China Visit (May 20-23),’” 25 May, 1978, Volume XIII, China, Document 113, FRUS, 1977-1980.

relations may tempt Hanoi away Moscow.²²⁷ Encouraged by the noises they received from the Vietnamese, who agreed to drop their demand for aid from the U.S., they pressed ahead with normalisation. Oksenberg dismissed them as not being serious, telling Holbrooke, ‘Dick, they are teasing you; they are mocking you.’²²⁸ Nevertheless, Holbrooke made significant progress with the Vietnamese and on 29 September, Vance informed Carter they had reached an agreement to normalise relations but he told the president to hold off on announcement until after the November midterm elections.

The delay gave Brzezinski the opportunity to dissuade Carter from restoring diplomatic ties with Vietnam. He wrote to the president on 13 October, stating his belief that negotiations with Vietnam adversely effected talks with the Chinese and gave the impression they were ‘pro-Soviet.’ He described the efforts of Vance and Holbrooke as tantamount to ‘war guilt’ and urged the president to give priority to talks with the Chinese and delay any announcements on Vietnam until after the conclusion of negotiations with the PRC. On the memo Carter wrote, ‘I want to move re VNam’ but agreed to the delay.²²⁹ Brzezinski had scuppered another foreign policy objective of Vance and the State Department as talks with the Chinese proceeded towards a successful conclusion, while hopes of improving relations with Vietnam dissipated.

The national security advisor provided fresh momentum to normalisation talks with the Chinese and made significant progress. The U.S. agreed to sever its diplomatic ties with Taiwan and remove all military personnel from the island but still unofficially sell defensive arms. They promised to make a statement confirming that its future be resolved peacefully, while the Chinese agreed not contradict the American position.²³⁰ As negotiations progressed, Vance continued with SALT talks. Although no breakthrough had been reached

²²⁷ Hurst, *The Carter Administration and Vietnam*, 91-93.

²²⁸ Robert D. Schulzinger, *A Time for Peace: The Legacy of the Vietnam War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 12-14.

²²⁹ “Memo, Brzezinski to Carter: ‘NSC Weekly Report #75,’” 14 October, 1978, Volume XIII, China, Document 143, FRUS, 1977-1980.

²³⁰ Walker, “‘Friends, But Not Allies’,” 590.

with the Soviets, he received an assurance that an announcement on normalisation would follow the arms control agreement.²³¹

By 13 December however, an agreement between the United States and China to normalise relations was in place. With Vance on a diplomatic trip to the Middle East, Brzezinski decided to move quickly and bring forward the announcement of normalisation to 15 December, scuppering any chance of an agreement on SALT in December or a possible U.S.-Soviet summit in January. For him, a new relationship with China was more desirable than one with the Soviets and he did not want any interference from the State Department.²³² China specialist Roger Sullivan, whom Oksenberg asked to call in sick so as not to arouse Holbrooke's suspicions, was the only member of the department to help in their endeavours.²³³

Holbrooke became suspicious after his attempts to contact Oksenberg throughout the day were continuously brushed off. He protested to Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher, who made his way to the White House. On arrival, Brzezinski told him of the development. Christopher believed it inconceivable that the assistant secretary be cut out of the loop and he summoned Holbrooke against Brzezinski's wishes.²³⁴ To Christopher, Brzezinski had deliberately 'blacked them out' for six hours while he attempted to complete normalisation. Brzezinski's motivation, he argued, was not to avoid leaks as he claimed but rather finalise normalisation before the State Department could raise any objections thus putting it ahead of U.S.-Soviet relations and SALT as a priority. Even Oksenberg argued this to be the case.²³⁵

On 15 December, President Carter formally announced that the United States and China had agreed to normalise relations with one another. In a joint communiqué, which

²³¹ Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 136-138.

²³² Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 708-709.

²³³ Bernkopf Tucker, *Strait Talk*, 91.

²³⁴ Tyler, "The (Ab)normalization of U.S.-Chinese Relations," 117.

²³⁵ Warren Christopher, *Chances of a Lifetime* (New York: Scribner, 2001), 90; Walker, "'Friends, But Not Allies,'" 592.

outlined the terms of the agreement, the U.S., by cutting its diplomatic ties with Taiwan and the ROC, recognised the PRC as the sole government of China. The U.S. vowed to maintain commercial and cultural links with Taiwan and sell defensive arms but terminate the defence treaty and withdraw American military personnel from the island. The two nations also pledged to work co-operatively with one another to reduce the danger of international military conflict and oppose attempts by others to enforce 'hegemony' on another.²³⁶

Brzezinski certainly appeared to revel in telling Dobrynin the news. 'His face turned grey and his jaw dropped' he recalled.²³⁷ Although Vance referred to normalisation as a historic and enduring achievement for the administration, he also expressed regret at the impact it had on his own agenda, specifically SALT. Whilst he did not believe that normalisation had directly damaged an agreement, the announcement, on the eve of talks in Geneva, had a negative effect. When Vance met with Gromyko following the announcement, the Soviet foreign minister was 'testy and showed none of his customary sardonic wit.' He criticised the remark in the communiqué that the U.S. and China were both opposed to any nation's attempts to establish 'hegemony' in the Asia-Pacific region or across the world, which he interpreted as a direct reference to the Soviet Union. There was a general feeling they had been upstaged and that normalisation was directed at them.²³⁸ Vance sympathised with the Soviets position. He later noted, 'I don't see any usefulness in using words like "hegemony" which just raise red flags.'²³⁹

While they continued to voice their commitment to SALT, the Soviets quibbled over numerous issues during the talks but to Vance, his delegation, and even Brzezinski, they sought excuses to delay finalising an agreement. China undoubtedly complicated the matter. It created a feeling within the Soviet delegation that the administration was trying to

²³⁶ Jimmy Carter, "Address to the Nation on Diplomatic Relations Between the United States and the People's Republic of China," 15 December, 1978, The American Presidency Project.

²³⁷ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 232.

²³⁸ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 110-119.

²³⁹ Cyrus R. Vance, "War and Peace in the Nuclear Age; Haves and Have-Nots; Interview with Cyrus Vance," 29 January, 1987, WGBH Media Library & Archives.

embarrass them to force concessions. Normalisation certainly hindered a potential agreement on SALT in December 1978 as Vance had hoped. It would take a further six months before they finalised a deal on arms control.²⁴⁰ Annoyed that normalisation delayed SALT, he later reflected, ‘if you're asking the question, should we have done it? I would have said we should have deferred it, and announced the Chinese things after the negotiations with the Soviet Union in Geneva.’²⁴¹ However, Brzezinski’s intervention had detrimentally affected a key foreign policy objective of the secretary of state.

Hopes of the U.S. normalising relations with Vietnam deteriorated following the signing of the joint communiqué with the PRC on 1 January, 1979. When Deng visited the United States, he informed Carter that China intended to retaliate against Vietnam for toppling the Khmer Rouge and Pol Pot in Cambodia. Carter attempted to dissuade Deng, but responded that the U.S. would not publicly condemn such action when it occurred.²⁴² To Vance, this pushed Vietnam closer into the Soviets hands. Meanwhile, the Khmer Rouge began a fight to retain Cambodia’s seat at the United Nations.²⁴³ As Vance noted in his memoirs, ‘we were being asked to vote for the continued seating in the UN of one of history’s most barbaric regimes.’ The Human Rights Bureau led by Patricia Derian wanted them unseated, as did the USUN delegation however, ‘strategic interests’ prevailed.²⁴⁴ Brzezinski and the NSC countered their opposition, arguing that a vote to unseat Cambodia meant siding with Vietnam, the Soviets and Cuba against their new ally in China. Carter agreed, while Vance, torn by the decision, told the USUN mission to vote against unseating Cambodia.²⁴⁵

At the end of the day on 13 December, Christopher and Holbrooke retreated to a bar where the deputy secretary remarked that Brzezinski was ‘running rampant over the

²⁴⁰ Talbott, *Endgame*, 247-248.

²⁴¹ Vance, “War and Peace in the Nuclear Age.”

²⁴² Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, 271-272.

²⁴³ Smith, *Morality, Reason, and Power*, 98.

²⁴⁴ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 126-127.

²⁴⁵ Glad, *An Outsider in the White House*, 238-239.

department.²⁴⁶ On the back of the trip to China, Holbrooke's deputy Gleysteen requested reassignment but not without giving the secretary of state a word of advice. To Gleysteen, Brzezinski deliberately undermined Vance and the State Department as the driver of foreign policy and he urged him to reassert his authority. 'I was emboldened to do what I did by the power of my feelings' Gleysteen recalled. 'I am sure Vance got the same advice from many others. He listened to me in obvious pain, made no comment, and changed the subject.'²⁴⁷

To many in the department, their role and influence diminished amid concerted efforts by Brzezinski and his staff. As they lost significant policy battles in respect to the administration's approach to the Soviet Union, Vance's more accommodating and co-operative strategy towards détente was gradually eroded in favour of a more assertive hard-line approach advocated by Brzezinski. Even Fidel Castro publicly noted the administration's policies reflected the shift from Vance, commenting, 'Brzezinski has a policy of international intervention, the policy of using China against the Soviet Union, the policy of mixing SALT negotiations with the problems of Africa...And you, the Americans, know this perfectly well.'²⁴⁸ Brzezinski succeeded in hardening U.S. policy towards the Soviet Union and in turn wrestled control of the foreign policy agenda to do so, outflanking Vance at numerous intervals. He was now not only influencing elements of U.S. foreign policy but was also the driving force behind it at the expense of Vance and the State Department.

Conclusion

At the same time as the policy wars between Vance and Brzezinski heightened, there was a rare moment of co-operation at Camp David in September 1978. As outlined in Chapter Three, the Middle East had been an area of close collaboration between the secretary of state, the national security advisor and their departments as they orchestrated the signing of

²⁴⁶ Tyler, "The (Ab)normalization of U.S.-Chinese Relations," 118.

²⁴⁷ Gleysteen Jr., "Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection."

²⁴⁸ Fidel Castro quoted in Wright, *The Destruction of a Nation*, 87.

the Camp David Accords and later the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty in 1979. After the Camp David talks, Brzezinski travelled via helicopter with Assistant Secretary of State Harold Saunders. As Saunders recalls, ‘he (Brzezinski) turned to me and with a certain amount of surprise in his voice said: “You know, the State Department and the White House worked quite well together!”...I don’t remember what I responded, but the thought came to mind that Zbig should not have been surprised; that is the way good government functions.’²⁴⁹

The Camp David negotiations represented a rare period of co-operation between the two departments in a year fraught with disagreements that became public and damaged their credibility. The national security advisor’s desire to see a hardening of the administration’s approach succeeded and at the same time undermined the efforts of Vance and the State Department throughout 1978. After the initial setback from the ‘deep cuts’ rejection, Vance effectively moderated the administration’s approach but events in Africa led Brzezinski to persuade the president to change course. He succeeded in pursuing tougher rhetoric in respect to Soviet activities in Africa and normalising relations with China. Moreover, Brzezinski used the bureaucracy to his advantage throughout the year, to the detriment of Vance and the State Department.

1978 illustrated the extent to which bureaucratic politics had manifested itself within the administration as the formation of policy increasingly created tensions between the NSC and the State Department. The administration’s attempts to co-ordinate talks with the PRC over normalisation and develop an appropriate response to Soviet and Cuban intervention in the Horn of Africa and the Shaba, were undermined by disagreements between the president’s advisors and their departments. Moreover, the animosity between Oksenberg and Holbrooke with respect to normalisation, demonstrated how personal rivalry between individuals within the respective bureaucracies permeated the policy process.

²⁴⁹ Saunders, “Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection.”

The harmony from the Camp David talks was short lived. While the administration focused on negotiations, other events occurring at the time had serious ramifications for the administration's foreign policy agenda as the Shah of Iran's grip on power began to weaken. The situation in Iran proved to be a significant blow for the administration over the coming year but it also divided Vance and Brzezinski once again as the bureaucratic rivalry escalated.

Chapter Five

1979

‘Acquiescence vs. Assertiveness’

As 1978 came to an end the United States faced the prospect of losing a key ally in a strategically vital area of the world: The Shah of Iran. The Carter administration sought to save the Shah and prevent Iran falling into the hands of a radicalised anti-Western revolutionary movement hostile to American interests in the country. However, their response to the crisis was beset by internal disagreements between Vance and Brzezinski and officials from the State Department and the NSC. Differences also emerged on Nicaragua as Anastasio Somoza’s grip on power loosened and a leftist revolutionary insurgency threatened a takeover in Latin America. The loss of two Cold War allies within six months had a detrimental effect on U.S. foreign policy and fuelled the bureaucratic rivalry within the administration. Moreover, a bitter row over the discovery of a brigade of Soviet troops in Cuba following the signing of SALT II in July 1979, threatened to derail the treaty’s ratification and led to a conflict over the nature of U.S.-Soviet policy as well as the administration’s overall approach to foreign policy.

This chapter examines the debates Vance and Brzezinski had on Iran and Nicaragua, and how those international circumstances divided the two departments. The impact of the SALT II fallout resulted in an inconsistent and at times contradictory series of measures, which contributed to the divisions within the administration and led to a permanent rift between the president’s two principal advisors and their departments. Despite attempts to work collegially with one another when they first entered the administration, the previous year tested relations between Vance, Brzezinski and their departments in response to crises in Africa and attempts to normalise relations with China. As Vance and Brzezinski, supported by their staff, competed to influence policy, tensions gradually escalated. Events in 1979, in Iran, Nicaragua and Cuba provoked further conflict as both attempted to

influence the administration's strategy. As this chapter will illustrate, the policy wars in the Carter administration came to a head as Brzezinski consolidated his position as the president's chief foreign policy advisor.

Iranian Revolution

On 31 December, 1977, President Carter spent the New Year in Tehran and declared 'Iran, because of the great leadership of the Shah, is an island of stability in one of the more troubled areas of the world.'¹ However, within a year the Shah's regime faced the threat of being swept away by a revolution gathering momentum. After he ascended the Peacock throne in 1941, Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, forged a lasting political and military alliance between Iran and the United States. His nation's proximity to the Soviet Union, coupled with the Shah's own anti-communist sentiment, allowed the U.S. to monitor and gather intelligence on Soviet activities while Iran's booming oil sector also made them one of the biggest single exporters of petroleum to the West. When the leftist regime of Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh threatened his rule in 1953, as well as Western interests in Iran, the CIA engineered a coup to oust Mossadegh from power. The Shah sought to use that relationship to develop his nation's infrastructure and their military capabilities to protect Iran from internal and external threats. To keep him happy, the U.S. acquiesced to his various requests.² Under the Nixon and Ford administrations, military sales proliferated as the Shah squandered oil profits on amassing a huge arsenal of weapons, a decision which one former under secretary of state described as 'giving the keys to the world's largest liquor store to a confirmed alcoholic.'³ Pahlavi's opponents meanwhile dubbed him 'the American Shah.'⁴

¹ Jimmy Carter, "Tehran, Iran Toasts of the President and the Shah at a State Dinner.," 31 December, 1977, The American Presidency Project.

² Hanhimäki, *The Rise and Fall of Détente*, 131.

³ Dumbrell, *The Carter Presidency*, 161-164; George W. Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern: Memoirs* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1982), 455.

⁴ Harris, *The Crisis*, 42-44.

Throughout those years, the nation's oil wealth led to high levels of corruption while economic inequality resulted in increased poverty levels across the country and the secret intelligence service, the SAVAK, repressed any opposition. The Shah's 'White Revolution' of the early 1960s, an attempt to modernise Iran through economic and social reforms, offended a religiously conservative section of Iranian society.⁵ Inspired by the Islamic cleric Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, widespread demonstrations against the regime ensued. When the SAVAK cracked down, Khomeini denounced the Shah's Iran as a 'regime of tyranny' prompting his arrest in 1964 and expulsion to neighbouring Iraq. This did not silence the cleric however, as a network of supporters smuggled recordings of his sermons encouraging further dissent against the Shah into Iran. The cleric also attacked the United States for its continued support of Pahlavi, who he cited as the source of Iran's woes believing their influence and military alliance corrupted Iranian society.⁶

The U.S. ignored the excesses of the Shah and the SAVAK but Carter's election in 1977 gave opponents of the regime hope that he would condemn the repression exerted by the Shah and encourage reform. The new administration, however, embraced the approach of its predecessors. Carter made personal appeals to the Shah in private when he visited Washington in November 1977, and urged him to recognise human rights and avoid violations, but these pleas fell on deaf ears while the military goods continued to be sold to Iran unabated.⁷ After his 1977 New Year's Eve toast, opposition groups lined up to denounce the president while from exile Khomeini accused Carter of using the 'logic of bandits' stating that as long as the U.S. held a military presence in Iran, they would not disassociate themselves from the Shah.⁸ Given the hostility directed towards the administration by the opposition, the position of the United States became increasingly dependent on the survival of the Shah's regime.

⁵ Sneh, *The Future Almost Arrived*, 172-173.

⁶ Harris, *The Crisis* 38-40; Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, 259.

⁷ Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 152-154.

⁸ Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion*, 234.

In January 1978, an article, authorised by the Shah, criticising Khomeini, appeared in a state newspaper provoking a furious reaction from supporters of the Ayatollah in his hometown of Qom. In the protests that followed, police fired on the demonstrators, killing five. The massacre set off a wave of protests across the country that called for the fall of the Shah's regime and ignited the revolution.⁹ Although some alarm at events developed in Washington, the situation in Iran did not appear on the radar of the administration. The American embassy in Tehran, for example, reported all the uprisings and demonstrations that occurred but never gave any indication that the regime faced any imminent overthrow.¹⁰

Despite this confidence in the Shah, those who followed events in Iran more closely, within the NSC and the State Department, began to express concern about the seriousness of the unfolding events. Gary Sick, an NSC staffer, and Henry Precht, the State Department's desk officer for Iran, first met when they served at the American consular office in Alexandria in the 1960s. Precht then transferred to the U.S. embassy in Tehran while Sick entered the Pentagon before joining the NSC. After Precht returned to Washington and was appointment desk officer in 1978, he and Sick renewed their acquaintance as the situation in Iran began to unfold.¹¹

Both became concerned about the challenge the Shah faced but convincing their superiors of its severity proved challenging. Precht needed to negotiate with the State Department bureaucracy at a time when the attention of his boss, Assistant Secretary of State Harold Saunders, was focused on the Middle East and the Camp David negotiations. To approach Vance directly and side step those above him would be a bureaucratic sin and potentially end Precht's career. As such his ability to influence policy remained limited.¹² Sick however enjoyed a direct link to Brzezinski and did not need to navigate through a bureaucratic hierarchy. As events in Iran escalated, he decided to voice his opinion that the

⁹ Kurzman, *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran*, 33-37.

¹⁰ Ofira Seliktar, *Failing the Crystal Ball Test: The Carter Administration and The Fundamentalist Revolution in Iran* (Westport: Praeger, 2000), 83-84.

¹¹ Sick, *All Fall Down*, 69.

¹² Precht, Interview with the author.

continued disturbances weakened the Shah's position as the opposition grew in confidence. This observation proved to be prescient over the coming months but the president's principal advisors remained unmoved.¹³

While Vance dedicated his time and energy on the Middle East and SALT negotiations, Brzezinski focused his efforts on normalising relations with China but both expressed confidence in the Shah to successfully manage the difficulties he faced. When Precht and Sick attempted to affect policy, and attract the attention of their superiors, their efforts were rebuffed. As the crisis progressed and their worries increased, Professor Richard Cottam, an Iranian specialist, who held links to Ebrahim Yazdi, an associate of Khomeini's who studied in the U.S., approached Sick with a proposal. Cottam suggested they meet with Yazdi to initiate dialogue between the administration and Khomeini's camp. Viewing it as a useful means to acquire greater knowledge on the motivations and goals of the opposition movement, Sick agreed to set up a meeting between Precht and Yazdi.¹⁴ Harold Saunders agreed but as the idea progressed up the State Department hierarchy, Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher vetoed the idea.¹⁵ Saunders later alleged that Brzezinski, in addition Christopher, called it off but the decision reflected the administration's continued loyalty towards the Shah while viewing attempts to reach out to the opposition as unfaithful to a loyal ally.¹⁶

Furthermore, the concerns felt by Precht and Sick did not resonate with the American embassy in Tehran. Charles Naas, the Deputy Chief Mission, confirmed a feeling of 'uncomfortableness, nervousness, but not a great sense of urgency... we certainly did not foresee the collapse of the Shah.'¹⁷ When the U.S. Ambassador to Iran, William H. Sullivan, encountered Brzezinski and Sick after returning on home leave in July 1978, he voiced his

¹³ Trenta, *Risk and Presidential Decision-Making*, 129; Sick, *All Fall Down* 43.

¹⁴ Sick, *All Fall Down* 54-55.

¹⁵ Precht, Interview with the author.

¹⁶ Harold H. Saunders, "Oral History of Iran Collection of the Foundation of Iranian Studies," interview by William Burr, 8 April, 1987, Foundation for Iranian Studies (FIS), Bethesda, Maryland.

¹⁷ Charles Naas, "Oral History of Iran Collection of the Foundation of Iranian Studies," interview by William Burr, 26 July, 1988, FIS.

own confidence in the Shah to overcome the challenges he faced. 'I sat there in amazement' remembered Sick, as he exchanged quizzical glances with Brzezinski, while Sullivan contradicted his analysis of the situation.¹⁸

When the ambassador met with Precht, he told him that the Shah had paid off influential clerics, the mullahs, to subdue the more vocal religious opposition. Precht believed this unlikely to succeed but the upper echelons of the State Department accepted Sullivan's assessment.¹⁹ As Assistant Secretary Harold Saunders noted, if Sullivan had relayed a different message then Vance would almost certainly have taken notice and addressed the issue but further reports indicated that the situation in Iran was not serious enough to cause alarm.²⁰ In August the CIA produced a National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) that concluded, 'Iran is not in a revolutionary or even a 'pre-revolutionary' situation.'²¹

However, protests continued throughout August, each time met with forceful repression by the SAVAK. Tensions escalated when a fire, started deliberately, broke out at the Rex Theatre in Abadan killing 430. The SAVAK accused Islamic fundamentalists of setting the cinema ablaze but in an increasingly tense environment, the anti- Shah forces blamed the regime and protests intensified.²² In the aftermath of the Rex Theatre fire, the Shah, in addition to his pledge to hold free and fair parliamentary elections in 1979, decided to implement new reforms. He appointed Jafar Sharif-Emami as prime minister who quickly oversaw the closing of casinos, relaxation of press regulations and the return to the traditional Islamic calendar. The Shah hoped Sharif-Emami's close links to key religious figures would appease dissent and find some form of accommodation. But it failed to suppress the opposition and the protests continued.²³ When Ambassador Sullivan returned to Tehran, he found the Shah in a depressed state of mind. After he relayed his concerns, he

¹⁸ Sick, Interview with the author.

¹⁹ Precht, Interview with the author.

²⁰ Saunders, "Oral History of Iran Collection of the Foundation of Iranian Studies."

²¹ Rubin, *Paved with Good Intentions*, 209.

²² John D. Stempel, *Inside the Iranian Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 108-111.

²³ Rubin, *Paved with Good Intentions*, 210-213; Kurzman, *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran*, 110.

drafted a message of support, intended to encourage and reassure the Shah of the administration's continued support. 'The letter was so filled with flattering references' Sick remembered, 'it might have been written by one of the Shah's courtiers...Some of us considered its tone embarrassingly obsequious.'²⁴ However, the administration's preoccupation with the Camp David summit meant that the message went undelivered as the situation in Iran deteriorated.²⁵

The holy month of Ramadan ended with protests planned in Tehran. Troubled by the large-scale anti-Shah gatherings congregating throughout Iran, the Shah's advisors persuaded him to take a hard-line approach and introduce martial law.²⁶ On 8 September, as demonstrators gathered in Jaleh Square outside the Iranian parliament, the police prepared to disperse the crowds by force. When the protestors did not adhere to their threats, the police opened fire. Although estimates vary as to how many died, 'Black Friday' as it came to be known, proved to be a momentous event as the Shah's support amongst the more moderate elements of Iranian society began to dwindle.²⁷

From Camp David, Carter telephoned the Shah to express his support and confidence in him in to overcome the issues he faced while encouraging further steps towards liberalising Iran. Despite the vote of confidence from the president, the situation continued to worsen for the King of Kings.²⁸ Demonstrations continued after a forty-day period of mourning with a wave of industrial strikes that hit key industries. Oil production plummeted and the Iranian economy stagnated.²⁹ Khomeini's presence in Europe meanwhile added to the Shah's woes. After his expulsion from Iraq, the Ayatollah settled in the suburbs of Paris under the curious gaze of the international media where he encouraged further

²⁴ Sick, *All Fall Down*, 48.

²⁵ Murray, *US Foreign Policy and Iran*, 23.

²⁶ Javier Gil Guerrero, *The Carter Administration and the Fall of Iran's Pahlavi Dynasty: US-Iran Relations on the Brink of the 1979 Revolution* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 101-102.

²⁷ Smith, *Morality, Reason, and Power*, 187.

²⁸ Brotons, *U.S. Officials and the Fall of the Shah*, 55.

²⁹ Sick, *All Fall Down*, 58.

resistance to the Shah's regime as his network of supporters circulated his messages around Iran.³⁰

The day after the Jaleh Square massacre, Henry Precht concluded that the uprisings amounted to a revolution and the Shah stood little chance of surviving. 'This was a war between him and his people and he could not prevail in such a war' he recalled. To prevent a bloody civil conflict, and preserve U.S. interests in Iran, the administration, he argued, should facilitate a peaceful transfer of power to the moderate elements of the opposition. Harold Saunders, joined him in that assessment, as this approach gathered support within the State Department but their counterparts at the NSC did not share their position.³¹ In contrast to Precht, Gary Sick believed in continued loyalty to the Shah to protect U.S. interests. The pair clashed as a result. Sick later wrote 'a telephone call to Henry Precht, even on the most mundane issue, inevitably turned into an extended lecture.'³² 'I think it had something to do with my big mouth' Precht recalled but their split had serious ramifications for co-ordinating a consistent policy on Iran. As Precht noted, 'effectively the two people on the working level were not working together.'³³

Moreover, their disagreements came at a time when Brzezinski took more of an interest in events in Iran. Sick's warnings eventually caught his attention around the time of the Jaleh Square massacre. Unbeknown to Vance and the State Department, Brzezinski initiated contact with the Iranian Ambassador to the United States, and the Shah's former son-in-law, Ardeshir Zahedi. The pair dined at the ambassador's residence where Zahedi provided a frank and honest assessment of the situation. He acknowledged that the anger directed at the Shah emanated from systemic problems throughout Iranian society and posed a serious threat to the regime. 'This dinner convinced me, if I needed further proof, that the

³⁰ Harris, *The Crisis*, 90; Sneh, *The Future Almost Arrived*, 173.

³¹ Henry Precht, "Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection: Interview with Henry Precht," interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, March 8, 2000, ADST; Saunders, "Oral History of Iran Collection of the Foundation of Iranian Studies."

³² Sick, *All Fall Down*, 69-70.

³³ Precht, Interview with the author.

Shah was in trouble' Brzezinski later wrote. Due to their dependence on Iran to serve American interests in the region, the national security advisor considered the Shah to be an indispensable ally and his potential fall would have negative consequences for the administration and the U.S. Pointing to examples from European history, Brzezinski believed that to successfully counter revolutionary movements and re-establish law and order, tough action was required. He encouraged Zahedi to return to Iran to help 'stiffen the Shah's spine' and implement stronger decisive action against the opposition and use an 'iron fist' to crackdown.³⁴

When Sullivan met with Zahedi on his return to Tehran and learned of the advice the Shah had received, the Iranian ambassador told him, 'Brzezinski has taken over Iran policy.' After querying how he should proceed, Sullivan was told that the U.S. supported the Shah unreservedly and accept his judgement if he chose to install a military government. The response confirmed Sullivan's suspicions regarding Brzezinski's influence in co-ordinating the administration's approach to Iran but when the ambassador met with the Shah several days later, he did not relay the advice he received. Instead, he urged the Shah to persevere with reforms reflecting the views of the State Department. A memo, that originated in the Near East Bureau, circulated to Vance and the embassy, called for the continued process of liberalisation and rejected the idea of a military government.³⁵

'To my knowledge, this important judgement was not approved by the White House' Brzezinski complained in his memoirs but it highlighted the bureaucratic rivalry between the State Department, in conjunction with the embassy, and the NSC to affect Iran policy that had developed.³⁶ As Gary Sick noted, 'the State Department paper was intended to focus attention on Iran and to stimulate a policy debate to clear the air. Instead, each side

³⁴ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 359-360; Sick, Interview with the author.

³⁵ William H. Sullivan, *Mission to Iran* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1981), 170-172; "Cable, Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs to U.S. Embassy in Tehran: 'Iranian Options,'" 27 October, 1978, Wikileaks.

³⁶ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 362.

in the emerging battle continued to muster arguments and allies almost in clandestine fashion, waiting for events to force the issue.’³⁷

In the wake of more disturbances, and after he received inconsistent advice, the Shah confided to Sullivan that he was thinking of abdicating and installing a military government. This triggered the first high level meeting on the crisis in Iran and saw the battle lines drawn between the State Department and the NSC. As the issue fell under the auspices of the SCC, Brzezinski was able to influence proceedings as its chair. Warren Christopher deputised for Vance, pre-occupied with Middle East issues.³⁸ The deputy secretary challenged the view of the NSC that the Shah needed to install a military government and assert ‘decisive action’ to restore order, an approach he derided as short-termism at best. Alternatively, a coalition government allowed the Shah to build bridges between himself and his people to avoid bloodshed and mass disorder.³⁹ The other attendees agreed and said they should advise the Shah to proceed appropriately but Brzezinski refused to accept that proposal. After obtaining Carter’s approval, he proposed a compromise message that stressed the importance of forming a coalition government but if order could not be restored, a military government should be established.⁴⁰

To some in the administration, the contradictory message offered no clear guidance to the Shah. Assistant Secretary Harold Saunders regarded it as an example of Carter sewing together two contradictory policies. ‘Crackdown but liberalise...Carter, instead of coming down on side or the other side, ended up as I say brokering the difference between them.’⁴¹ Brzezinski too remained dissatisfied with the message and decided, with Carter’s approval, to telephone the Shah the next day and use it as an opportunity to ‘subtly tilt the American

³⁷ Sick, *All Fall Down*, 60.

³⁸ Moens, “President Carter’s Advisers and the Fall of the Shah,” 219.

³⁹ “Record of a Special Coordination Committee Meeting,” 2 November, 1978, RAC Project Number NLC-25-95-6-11-2, JCPL.

⁴⁰ Moens, “President Carter’s Advisers and the Fall of the Shah,” 219-220; Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 364.

⁴¹ Saunders, “Oral History of Iran Collection of the Foundation of Iranian Studies.”

position towards support for military action.’⁴² He told the Shah, ‘you in effect, it seems to me, have the problem of combining some gestures which would be appealing in a general sense with a need for some specific actions which would demonstrate effective authority ...concessions alone are likely to produce a more explosive situation.’ He discredited the notion that reforms could appease dissent, as he encouraged the Shah to adopt a direct and authoritative course of action.⁴³

The Shah accepted Brzezinski’s guidance but, perhaps reflecting the conflicting advice he received from various voices within the administration, he went on television to announce the formation of a military government but only as a temporary measure and he promised reforms after restoring law and order. During the address, he praised the revolutionaries for justifiably revolting against ‘oppression and corruption’ while he offered an apology for the indiscretions of previous governments.⁴⁴ ‘The apologetic tone of the speech and it’s almost pathetic attempt to align the Shah to the revolution was not the tough message of a sovereign who had just appointed a military government’ Sick recalled.⁴⁵ The anger and discontent continued to reverberate within Iran as the country spiralled into chaos. On 9 November, Charles Naas spoke with Ambassador Sullivan and reviewed the situation. ‘I said, “this is not going to work.” He said, “I know.” And he threw me, on the yellow-lined paper in his handwriting, the famous telegram.’⁴⁶

Sullivan’s memo, entitled ‘Thinking the Unthinkable’ concluded that the Shah’s support had dissipated to the extent that his authority was irreparably damaged. His refusal to crackdown sufficiently had given protestors the confidence to demonstrate freely without fear of recriminations, paving the way for the collapse of the monarchy with Khomeini’s forces taking over. Faced with that possibility, he argued that the U.S. should undertake ‘a careful evaluation of its consequences for our position.’ He noted that Khomeini held

⁴² Moens, “President Carter’s Advisers and the Fall of the Shah,” 220.

⁴³ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 365.

⁴⁴ Guerrero, *The Carter Administration and the Fall of Iran’s Pahlavi Dynasty*, 131.

⁴⁵ Sick, *All Fall Down*, 76.

⁴⁶ Naas, “Oral History of Iran Collection of the Foundation of Iranian Studies.”

strongly anti-communist and anti-Soviet beliefs that neutralised any strategic threat posed by the Shah's fall. Moreover, holding a 'Gandhi-like position' within the political system, he would likely leave the day-to-day running of government to a moderate figure acceptable to him and the military. In surmising, the administration needed to 'think the unthinkable' and consider the consequences of a post-Shah Iran and a Khomeini takeover. Sullivan portrayed the scenario as not having as detrimental an effect on American interests as first suspected. 'U.S. involvement would be less intimate than with the Shah, it could be an essentially satisfactory one' he noted.⁴⁷

The suggestion the United States disassociate themselves from a loyal Cold War ally provoked dismay in Washington. Labelled 'as a veiled attack on existing policy' it did not trigger a reassessment of policy as Sullivan hoped.⁴⁸ Carter, Brzezinski and Vance all backed the Shah and dismissed Sullivan's insinuations. They viewed the Shah as a 'major force of stability' and recognised the strategic importance of their relationship in the Persian Gulf particularly at a time when Soviet activities in neighbouring Afghanistan concerned them. Strategically and economically, Iran remained an indispensable ally and none of them believed they should abandon the Shah to facilitate a transfer of power as Sullivan intimated.⁴⁹ The cable failed to generate a re-evaluation of policy at the top of the administration but it did escalate the bureaucratic conflict between the State Department and the NSC.

Brzezinski believed the cable represented 'the views of those in the State Department who were generally inclined to argue that the fall of the Shah would have benign consequences for American interests' while 'lower echelons at State, notably the head of the Iran desk, Henry Precht, were motivated by a doctrinal dislike of the Shah and simply wanted him out of power altogether.'⁵⁰ As events progressed, Precht recalled a

⁴⁷ "Cable, U.S. Embassy in Tehran to Secretary of State: 'Thinking the Unthinkable,'" 9 November, 1978, Wikileaks.

⁴⁸ Sick, *All Fall Down*, 87.

⁴⁹ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 356; Vance, *Hard Choices*, 326-330.

⁵⁰ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 368; Ibid, 356.

chance meeting with Hamilton Jordan where the White House Chief of Staff exclaimed ““Ah Henry Precht, you’re the guy that Brzezinski used to say was fighting our policy in the State Department.””⁵¹ This view was shared by others within the NSC. George Griffin, from the State Department’s Bureau of Intelligence and Research, recalled Gary Sick frequently calling him and saying ““this is wrong, you guys don’t know what you’re talking about”.”⁵² The continued dismissal of the advice of Precht and others led Brzezinski to ban them from strategy meetings on Iran, which according to Under Secretary David Newsom was motivated purely by his desire to exclude any opinions that went against his own.⁵³

The mistrust of the State Department also extended to the embassy in Tehran. Sick, recalling his meeting with Sullivan in June, expressed irritation at him for allowing the situation to drift without warning the administration. To Sick, the ambassador deliberately misled them about the Shah’s predicament. ‘Sullivan didn’t want Washington messing around in his business...I think he felt that if he let people in Washington know just how serious the problem was they would be all over him and pushing him this way and that way and he didn’t want any of that’ he alleged.⁵⁴ A few days after the ‘Thinking the Unthinkable’ telegram, Arthur Callahan, a businessman and former CIA officer who previously worked in Tehran, arrived at the embassy on Brzezinski’s behalf to assess the situation. When Sullivan queried Brzezinski’s decision, the national security advisor replied angrily that it was none of the ambassador’s business. ‘I was aware from the tenor of this reply that my views were no longer held in much regard at the White House’ Sullivan remembered.⁵⁵ ‘Frankly we were annoyed’ Charles Naas recalled ‘it was the first sign that somehow we weren’t getting our messages across.’⁵⁶

⁵¹ Precht, Interview with the author.

⁵² George G.B. Griffin, “Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection: Interview with George G.B. Griffin,” interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, 30 April, 2002, ADST.

⁵³ David D. Newsom, “Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection: Interview with Ambassador David D. Newsom,” interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, 17 June, 1991, ADST.

⁵⁴ Sick, Interview with the author.

⁵⁵ Sullivan, *Mission to Iran*, 194.

⁵⁶ Naas, “Oral History of Iran Collection of the Foundation of Iranian Studies.”

Following Callahan's visit, Treasury Secretary Michael Blumenthal and Senate Majority Leader Robert C. Byrd all made trips to Iran and returned portraying the Shah as a demoralised and dispirited figure, paralysed by indecision and overwhelmed by the situation. When Blumenthal relayed his judgement to the administration he recommended they ask former Under Secretary of State and UN Ambassador George Ball to undertake a review of the situation and compile an independent report with recommendations on how to proceed.⁵⁷ Brzezinski agreed, but he later expressed regret at doing so. 'I violated a basic rule of bureaucratic tactics' he recalled, 'one should never obtain the services of an 'impartial' outside consulting regarding an issue one feels strong about without first making certain in advance that one knows the likely contents of his advice.'⁵⁸

When Ball arrived in Washington in November 1978 to undertake his review, he took an immediate dislike to Brzezinski and expressed concern for what he described as the 'distorted role of the National Security Council.' Ball became aware of the significant differences between the two departments as well as Brzezinski's attempts to control the administration's approach by excluding the State Department. When the national security advisor told Ball not to contact Henry Precht, he 'immediately disregarded' the instruction. Ball not only criticised Brzezinski and his department, he also sided with the State Department in their assessment of the situation in Iran. Irreparably damaged by events, the Shah stood little chance of surviving while U.S. interests rested on a peaceful transfer of power. Ball proposed that the Shah remain as a constitutional monarch but cede power to a 'council of notables' comprised of members of the moderate opposition who would preside over the transfer of powers, previously controlled by Pahlavi, to a new government. Ball also proposed reaching out to Khomeini as without his 'implied acquiescence' the proposal would be difficult to implement.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Sick, *All Fall Down*, 96-100.

⁵⁸ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 367-371.

⁵⁹ Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern*, 457-460.

Forwarded to senior figures in the administration, Ball's plan encountered strong resistance. Only Warren Christopher, on behalf of the State Department, backed the suggestion while Brzezinski emphatically rejected it. When Ball met with the president he found, much to his surprise, the national security advisor in attendance. Reviewing the report, the president told Ball he wished to support Pahlavi, 'so long as the Shah wished to remain in Iran.' He also told Ball he intended to send Brzezinski to Iran to meet with the Shah as he lacked confidence in Ambassador Sullivan and the State Department to reliably relay instructions to the Shah. Ball, flabbergasted at the idea, told the president '(this) is the worst idea I ever heard.' He rationalised that Brzezinski's presence would only antagonise anti-American sentiment and convince discontented Iranians that the Shah operated directly on the advice of Washington. 'Anything he does after that will be regarded...as an action taken on your instruction' he told the president.⁶⁰

Carter backed away from the idea but as he reflected on the conversation, Ball concluded that Brzezinski clearly exerted considerable influence and sway over the president's decisions and his strategy towards handling the revolution.⁶¹ Several days later, Ball relayed his concerns to Vance. He later wrote, 'I advised him, as an old friend, that I had found a shockingly unhealthy situation in the National Security Council, with Brzezinski doing everything possible to exclude the State Department from participation in, or even, knowledge of our developing relations in Iran.' Ball noted that 'Vance was obviously upset' by what he told him.⁶²

Up until that point Vance, distracted by the Middle East and SALT negotiations, watched events in Iran unfold from afar but following his conversation with Ball he took a more assertive role. This coincided with the Shah's decision to appoint Shapour Bakhtiar, a Western educated member of the National Front opposition party, as Prime Minister in mid-

⁶⁰ George Ball quoted in Guerrero, *The Carter Administration and the Fall of Iran's Pahlavi Dynasty*, 148-149.

⁶¹ Bill, *George Ball*, 91.

⁶² Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern*, 461-662.

December 1978. Bakhtiar accepted the invitation to form a government but insisted that, as part of a series of reforms, the Shah leave Iran in order to disassociate himself from the former regime and give his initiatives a chance of succeeding.⁶³ The Shah reluctantly agreed and began to make plans for his departure but he still harboured significant doubts about Bakhtiar's ability to appease the chorus of dissent in Iran. He returned to the idea of forming a military government to restore order and asked Sullivan, if he could guarantee the support of the U.S. in the event of a crackdown. 'The policy issue had been reduced to a single question' Gary Sick noted, 'would the United States support or reject an 'iron fist' policy in Iran?'⁶⁴

The question divided the president's two principal advisors. Vance advocated a political solution and supported the idea that the Shah cede power, and revert to a constitutional monarchy, but with Pahlavi looking increasingly unstable, he concluded that he needed to leave Iran and transfer power to a moderate opposition group. He rejected the idea of a military crackdown, a counterproductive move resulting in further bloodshed. As Sick noted, 'he had seen riots and he had been involved in peace making processes and had seen people take extreme positions and push things too far and the end result was that people just got killed and it didn't solve the problem.'⁶⁵ Moreover, the 'iron fist' he noted would be 'antithetical' to what he believed the Carter administration stood for.⁶⁶ Brzezinski meanwhile continued to voice his view that the initiation of a crackdown remained the only way to preserve U.S. interests in Iran. A military government without the Shah remained the only viable option.⁶⁷

On 28 December, 1978, the principals met at an SCC meeting to draft a message to advise the Shah on how to proceed. Vance and Brzezinski both represented the two contrasting schools of thought on the matter but with the latter in control of proceedings, he

⁶³ Rubin, *Paved with Good Intentions*, 237-238.

⁶⁴ Sick, *All Fall Down*, 125.

⁶⁵ Sick, Interview with the author.

⁶⁶ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 331-332.

⁶⁷ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 371.

succeeded in titling the tone of the message to support his view. The message urged the Shah to form a coalition government but if impractical, he needed to install a ‘firm military government.’ Both Vance and Brzezinski believed that ‘firm military government’ translated into the ‘iron fist’ policy.⁶⁸

Whereas previously he passively accepted the conclusions of meetings and did not exert pressure on the president, aware of the potential consequences of such an instruction, Vance took it upon himself to outflank Brzezinski and travelled to Camp David to meet with the president. Vance appealed to Carter’s concern for safeguarding human rights and requested that the reference to a ‘firm military government’ be removed from the message. Carter agreed and gave his approval for it to state that a military government should be formed only to ‘end disorder, violence and bloodshed’ as a final alternative. ‘The Shah could not fail to see from this message’ Vance later wrote, ‘that we would support a military government only to end bloodshed, but not apply the ‘iron fist.’⁶⁹

After he extracted a significant concession from Carter, Vance also encouraged the president to authorise an attempt to reach out to Khomeini in Paris by sending the Farsi speaking diplomat Theodore Eliot, to meet with the Ayatollah. Brzezinski would inevitably veto the proposal but emboldened by his policy victory in respect to the message, Vance persuade Carter of the merits of the Eliot mission. He argued that its purpose would be to negotiate an accommodation between Khomeini’s supporters and the military and discourage an imminent return to Iran to give Bakhtiar sufficient time to initiate reforms. Carter agreed and gave the mission his approval, a second significant policy victory for Vance and the State Department.⁷⁰

After he became aware of the president’s compromises to Vance, Brzezinski fought back at an NSC meeting held on 4 January, 1979, and once again called for the installation

⁶⁸ Moens, “President Carter’s Advisers and the Fall of the Shah,” 227-228.

⁶⁹ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 333.

⁷⁰ Dumbrell, *The Carter Presidency*, 166-167.

of a military government. A 'rather irritated' Carter however sided with Vance and rejected his suggestion.⁷¹ Undeterred, the national security advisor developed another avenue to affect policy. Instead of installing a military government, Brzezinski successfully persuaded Carter to send the Deputy Commander in Chief of the U.S. European Command, General Robert E. Huyser to Iran. He believed if General Huyser unified and reconciled the armed forces effectively, he could persuade them to launch a coup and a military takeover if the Bakhtiar government fragmented. Vance supported sending Huyser believing that it gave Bakhtiar extra confidence and help support his efforts to reform Iran.⁷² Their divergent interpretations of Huyser's role in Iran led the general to describe his brief as 'ambiguous.' 'I began to wonder if this rather crucial issue had been thrashed out in Washington' Huyser recalled.⁷³

Brzezinski also scuppered Vance's plan to sending Theodore Eliot to meet Khomeini in Paris. He argued to Carter that that such a move would undermine Bakhtiar and embolden the Ayatollah's supporters. The discussion 'raged back and forth' between himself and Vance when they discussed the Eliot mission as tempers frayed. Carter, in an attempt to find a balance between his warring advisors, agreed to cancel the Eliot mission but initiate contact with the Khomeini camp through the French and lower-level officials in the U.S. embassy.⁷⁴ While Carter thought, he had brokered the difference between his two advisors, those in the State Department and the embassy believed he had sided with Brzezinski once again. A furious Sullivan, cabled Washington calling the cancellation of the Eliot mission 'a gross and irretrievable mistake...I cannot, repeat, cannot understand the rationale for this unfortunate decision.'⁷⁵ A furious Carter wanted Sullivan fired for insubordination and only

⁷¹ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 378.

⁷² Smith, *Morality, Reason, and Power*, 193.

⁷³ Robert E. Huyser, *Mission to Tehran* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 18.

⁷⁴ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 380-381.

⁷⁵ "Cable, U.S. Embassy in Tehran to Department of State 'USG Policy Guidance,'" 10 January, 1979, Wikileaks.

Vance's intervention prevented his dismissal but the ambassador's future as the administration's man in Tehran became *fait accompli*.⁷⁶

The appointment of Huyser and the cancellation of the Eliot mission served to heighten tensions between the president's principal advisors. 'Personal relations between Vance and Brzezinski were bad enough so that contributed to the distortion of the process' Harold Brown remembered.⁷⁷ At the same time, Brzezinski's connection to Ardeshir Zahedi became an increasing source of agitation to Vance. When Ball told Vance of their interactions, the secretary immediately asked Brzezinski to close this channel. Although he denied contacting Zahedi, Vance's threat to take the matter to Carter motivated him to acquiesce to the secretary's demand.⁷⁸ It proved to be a temporary reprieve. Unaware of what had taken place previously, Precht discovered recent communications between Brzezinski and Zahedi and casually mentioned it to Harold Saunders. The assistant secretary then dragged Precht up to the seventh floor of the State Department to tell Vance what he had discovered. 'I started relaying what I heard and I noticed that none of them looked me in the eye' Precht noted, 'they were quite embarrassed by this problem in the White House.'⁷⁹ Evidently the pendulum in the policy wars had swung back towards Brzezinski away from Vance and the State Department.

On 16 January, 1979, the Iranian parliament approved Bakhtiar's government and the Shah left Iran later that day. He elected not to take up the administration's offer to reside in the U.S. but instead headed to Morocco after a brief stay in Egypt, which increased suspicion that the Shah may return to Iran as he had done in 1953 after the overthrow of Mossadegh.⁸⁰ This, Vance asserted, left Iranians dubious of Bakhtiar's independence from the Shah. In Paris meanwhile, Khomeini hailed his departure as a preface to their victory and

⁷⁶ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 454.

⁷⁷ Harold Brown quoted in Moens, "President Carter's Advisers and the Fall of the Shah," 230.

⁷⁸ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 328.

⁷⁹ Precht, Interview with the author.

⁸⁰ William Shawcross, *The Shah's Last Ride: The Fate of An Ally* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 35; *Ibid*, 89.

urged his supporters to help bring down the Bakhtiar government through non-violent protests and civil disobedience.⁸¹ With the new prime minister under pressure, losing support for his reforms and struggling to exert his authority, Iran slid towards a showdown between the military and the Ayatollah's forces.⁸²

At this point, the administration threw its full weight of support behind Bakhtiar but many, particularly within the State Department, remained unconvinced the new prime minister could succeed. 'I did not think he had much of a future' Precht recalled, 'I don't know of anyone in State or the embassy who disagreed with me.'⁸³ Harold Saunders meanwhile speculated, 'it was more of a question of how long he could last' while Ambassador Sullivan referred to the new prime minister as a 'fig leaf' and pondered 'just how unrealistic the White House had become.'⁸⁴ Vance meanwhile considered Bakhtiar's collapse inevitable. 'We were tying ourselves to the Bakhtiar experiment beyond the point where there was any chance of his participating in a new regime' he wrote in his memoirs. To protect their interests in Iran, he again argued for dialogue with Khomeini and his supporters. He noted, 'by early February, our only sensible course of action was to attempt to come to terms with the revolution' but the administration 'could not overcome its internal policy divisions.'⁸⁵

Khomeini returned to a rapturous reception in Tehran, on 1 February, 1979, and immediately set about consolidating the revolution by appointing Mehdi Bazargan as prime minister of the provisional government.⁸⁶ 'We found ourselves in the extraordinary situation of attempting to deal with two governments' Vance recalled, 'Bakhtiar's constitutional disintegrating government, and Bazargan's, representative of the real political power in the

⁸¹ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 338; Stempel, *Inside the Iranian Revolution*, 163-165.

⁸² Sick, *All Fall Down*, 146.

⁸³ Precht, Interview with the author.

⁸⁴ Saunders, "Oral History of Iran Collection of the Foundation of Iranian Studies"; Sullivan, *Mission to Iran*, 235-236.

⁸⁵ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 340-341; Ibid, 347.

⁸⁶ Sneh, *The Future Almost Arrived*, 177

country.⁸⁷ But while Vance and his department believed that facilitating a transfer to Khomeini's forces remained the only alternative, Brzezinski returned to the idea of launching a military takeover. On 11 February, the military command informed Bakhtiar that they would not defend his government in a showdown. At a crisis meeting held that day, Brzezinski proposed that the military launch a coup to prevent a Khomeini takeover and restore law and order rather than negotiate an accommodation with Bazargan as Warren Christopher and others at the meeting advocated.⁸⁸

Brzezinski disregarded the advice of the other departments and persisted with the idea of launching a military coup, and instructed Under Secretary David Newsom to put his plan to Sullivan. When the ambassador heard Brzezinski's proposal, he responded with what he later described as a 'scurrilous suggestion' for what the national security advisor could do with his idea. When Newsom replied that his reply did not help, Sullivan asked if Brzezinski wanted it translated into Polish.⁸⁹ As a last resort, Brzezinski turned to Huyser, who had left Iran the previous month, and enquired about the possibility of a takeover. But the general replied that such an operation had arrived too late and would be impracticable. He noted in his memoirs that the national security advisor remained the only principal figure advocating this position and no consensus existed that supported a coup.⁹⁰ The national security advisor lost the argument and the administration unanimously rejected idea of a military takeover. As Bakhtiar fled, Khomeini took charge, dismantled the remnants of the Shah's regime, and installed a new Islamic republic in Iran.⁹¹

The administration's inability to develop a consistent approach to the crisis resulted from differences between the NSC and the State Department with both departments using different avenues to affect policy. While Vance and his department prevented a forceful crackdown by the Shah and averted a military takeover as Brzezinski advocated, their

⁸⁷ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 341.

⁸⁸ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 390-392.

⁸⁹ Sullivan, *Mission to Iran*, 253.

⁹⁰ Huyser, *Mission to Tehran*, 284.

⁹¹ Stempel, *Inside the Iranian Revolution*, 393.

position weakened as a result of the competition with the NSC. The press reported on the conflict, fuelled by leaks by sources within both departments. The president became exasperated by the constant press coverage of their struggles and the leaks that he believed undermined his administration. In the weeks prior to Bakhtiar's fall, CBS ran a story with a State Department source quoted as saying that Bakhtiar stood little chance of surviving. Carter's frustration at the leak led to a showdown at the White House.

Carter summoned Vance and officials from his department, and accused them of deliberately leaking stories to undermine the administration's policy towards Iran. He vowed to fire the person responsible and hold Vance personally responsible, much to the secretary's own irritation.⁹² 'Vance's face was turning redder and redder at Carter saying the leaks are coming from people in this room' Leslie Gelb recalled. The president finished and left the room, giving nobody the opportunity to respond.⁹³ Those who remained voiced their anger at Carter's accusations with Gelb and Anthony Lake particularly vocal. Vance cut them off and stated that he did not tolerate leaks of this nature either but many in the department felt aggrieved at their treatment.⁹⁴

After the meeting, Gelb, walking with State Department press spokesperson Hodding Carter III, decided to resign from the administration. 'Here I was going to testify on our Iran policy and why was I going to go leak that what I was testifying was bullshit?'⁹⁵ 'I'm thinking wow, if Les can't stand this why should anybody else?' Hodding Carter observed as displeasure within the department mounted.⁹⁶ Vance meanwhile expressed frustration at the situation between himself and the national security advisor over Iran. His wife Grace later recalled that he became dispirited with the tussles with Brzezinski, whom she called 'that awful man.'⁹⁷ Remembering the events of that day, Gelb and Lake later

⁹² John W. Finney, "Carter Said To Tell Aides To Curb Talk," *The New York Times*, 9 February, 1979, A13; Daadler and Destler, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 114.

⁹³ Gelb, Interview with the author.

⁹⁴ Precht, Interview with the author.

⁹⁵ Gelb, Interview with the author.

⁹⁶ Carter III, Interview with the author.

⁹⁷ Grace Sloane Vance quoted in Sexton, "The Wages of Principle and Power," 127.

wrote that the president ‘had assembled, and then, humiliated those people in the State Department most loyal to him and whose allegiance he most needed.’ This, coupled with events through the previous year, led them to conclude that the president had shifted towards Brzezinski and the NSC staff at the expense of the State Department. Brzezinski had outmanoeuvred Vance as the president’s chief foreign policy advisor. As they noted ‘it was his courtier Brzezinski, not his baron Vance, to whom he now looked for primary support.’⁹⁸

Nicaraguan Revolution

While the Shah’s regime crumbled, disturbances in Nicaragua escalated as opposition to President Anastasio Somoza grew. Like Pahlavi, Somoza was an anti-communist ally that enjoyed lucrative economic aid packages from the United States over the years. Following the 1972 earthquake near Managua, however, corruption spiralled as Somoza and his cronies abused the international humanitarian assistance provided. Living conditions for many Nicaraguans worsened. Coupled with the repressiveness of Somoza’s leadership, discontent rose as moderate and radical opponents mobilised against him.⁹⁹ A series of insurgent strikes by the socialist guerrilla fighters of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) in October 1977, ‘shattered the myth of Somoza’s invulnerability’ and threatened to destabilise the regime. Meanwhile the assassination of newspaper editor and Somoza critic Pedro Joaquin Chomorro on 10 January, 1978 sparked fury across the country as the business community rebelled and called a general strike. Despite the increased pressure on him to step down, Somoza retaliated forcefully. Twelve months of violence and bloodshed ensued as the Sandinistas grew in confidence and Somoza teetered on the brink of falling. Once again, the administration faced the possibility of ‘losing’ a second anti-communist ally to an unfamiliar and potentially hostile opposition group.¹⁰⁰ Like Iran, divisions between Vance, Brzezinski and their respective departments adversely effected their approach.

⁹⁸ Destler, Gelb, and Lake, *Our Own Worst Enemy*, 222.

⁹⁹ Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 168-169.

¹⁰⁰ LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, 17-18.

When the administration entered office, disagreements over human rights policies caused consternation within the State Department Bureau of Inter-American Affairs. Assistant Secretary Terence Todman poured scorn on efforts to implement human rights policies in Latin American arguing that such an approach could destabilise the region and pave the way for Soviet and Cuban intervention. After Todman went public with his criticisms in February 1978, Vance replaced him with career diplomat Viron P. Vaky.¹⁰¹ As a former ambassador to several Latin America nations, Vaky witnessed events unfold in Nicaragua and viewed the situation as potentially fatal for Somoza but also damaging to U.S. interests in the region. Whereas Todman warned against action that might destabilise allies in the region, Vaky took the dramatic step of advocating that the U.S. facilitate his departure to avoid a Sandinista takeover. Either the administration replaced Somoza with ‘pro-American moderates or pro-Cuban revolutionaries.’¹⁰²

Support for Vaky existed within the Latin American and human rights bureaus but others did not believe that the U.S. should orchestrate Somoza’s departure. Robert Pastor, the assistant secretary’s opposite number at the NSC, was one of them. While Vaky drew upon a wealth of experience, Pastor was somewhat of a novice when he entered the administration, aged just twenty-nine. Like others, he endured a difficult relationship with Todman but Vaky’s appointment re-energised Pastor.¹⁰³ Vaky, conscious of the bureaucratic turf wars within the administration, as well as his own experiences during his time on Kissinger’s NSC staff, determined to work cohesively with his counterpart. Pastor valued his input and wrote in his journal following Vaky’s appointment, ‘procedurally and substantively my relations with State have changed 98%, all attributable to Vaky.’¹⁰⁴

Despite harbouring good relations however, Pastor disagreed with Vaky on Somoza. Although unsympathetic to the dictator’s predicament, he did not endorse U.S. intervention

¹⁰¹ Dumbrell, *The Carter Presidency*, 153.

¹⁰² Kagan, *A Twilight Struggle*, 60.

¹⁰³ Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, 416.

¹⁰⁴ Robert Pastor quoted in Lake, *Somoza Falling*, 123-124.

to overthrow another government no matter how well intentioned. Given the American experience in Latin America over the years, such action would adversely affect U.S. interests as well as the administration's commitment to non-intervention. He wrote to Brzezinski, 'I am certain U.S. intervention to encourage the departure of Somoza may gain us some points...in the short term, but in the long term, I believe it will compromise the president's moral stature.'¹⁰⁵ Whereas previous disagreements divided individuals within the administration, Pastor and Vaky maintained a respectful relationship with one another and did not initiate a bureaucratic conflict. As Anthony Lake observed, 'they argued and competed, but fairly and without personal malice' and unlike other State-NSC relationships at that time 'neither tried to freeze the other out of the action.'¹⁰⁶

Vaky also found few voices from the upper echelons of the State Department willing to support his view. Vance delegated much of the responsibility for Latin America to Lake and Warren Christopher who both agreed that forcing Somoza out, no matter how desirable, would not be in the United States' interests.¹⁰⁷ The murder of Chomorro in January 1978 and the demonstrations that followed failed to lead to a re-examination of the department's position. The U.S. embassy in Managua was told, 'some opposition groups are trying to convince the embassy that Somoza must go and U.S. should somehow manage departure. You should make clear to Nicaraguans that this issue is one of a purely Nicaraguan internal political character and one in which the U.S. will play no role.'¹⁰⁸ Brzezinski too exhibited little enthusiasm to involve the administration in the situation and did not endorse a full-scale review of their approach.¹⁰⁹

Domestic politics also motivated the administration's policy toward Nicaragua. Their efforts to affect human rights in Nicaragua upon entering office attracted strong

¹⁰⁵ "Memo, Pastor to Brzezinski 'Nicaragua,'" 29 August, 1978, Meetings SCC - 105, 9/78 - Subject File, Box 29, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, JCPL.

¹⁰⁶ Lake, *Somoza Falling*, 123.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 42; Kagan, *A Twilight Struggle*, 61-62.

¹⁰⁸ "Cable, Department of State to U.S. Embassy in Managua 'Role of U.S. Embassy in Nicaragua,'" 16 February, 1978, Wikileaks.

¹⁰⁹ Pastor, *Condemned to Repetition*, 62.

resistance from an influential pro-Somoza lobby in Congress headed by Democrat Senators Charles Wilson and John Murphy. When the Panama Canal Treaties underwent considerable scrutiny in the Senate, the support of Wilson, Murphy and others became essential to its ratification. Carter submitted to their pressure to 'lay off Somoza' by appropriating \$10.5million worth of humanitarian aid to Nicaragua, in return for the lobby's support for the treaties.¹¹⁰ The decision encountered resistance from human rights advocates both inside and outside the administration. They were further antagonised when Carter decided to send a letter to Somoza in June 1978 praising his decision to release political prisoners and co-operate with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.¹¹¹

Both Pastor and Vaky opposed the sending of the letter but neither Brzezinski nor Vance thought the issue warranted a debate or require the president's invaluable time, energy and effort. Pastor and Vaky relented and the letter was sent.¹¹² On 1 August, 1978, *The Washington Post* reported the delivery of the letter, leaked via a disgruntled source within the State Department, which they believed damaged the credibility of the administration's human rights agenda. The source also falsely blamed the NSC for encouraging the letter.¹¹³ A furious Carter 'came down on the State Department like a ton of bricks' reported Pastor but the source of the leak remained undetected. As a result, feelings of distrust between the two departments that plagued the administration previously, arose in respect to Nicaragua. As Anthony Lake, noted 'the effect of the incident was to deepen the divide between the NSC and State. As always happens after leaks, the circle of decision-making was narrowed.'¹¹⁴

In the months that followed, the situation deteriorated for Somoza. A moderate opposition group formed by Nicaraguan business leaders, the Broad Opposition Front

¹¹⁰ Morley, *Washington, Somoza and the Sandinistas*, 114.

¹¹¹ Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 169.

¹¹² Strong, *Working in the World*, 87-89.

¹¹³ John M. Goshko, "Carter Letter to Somoza Stirs Human-Rights Row," *The Washington Post*, 1 August, 1978, A1.

¹¹⁴ Pastor, *Condemned to Repetition*, 69-70; Lake, *Somoza Falling*, 89.

(FAO), instigated a series of industrial strikes that damaged the economy. The Sandinistas meanwhile launched a military offensive against Somoza, taking control of the National Palace in Managua and holding 1,500 hostages. Although Somoza gave into the Sandinista's demands, he retaliated violently.¹¹⁵ The crackdown did not silence the voices of discontent and only served to convince many that the only way to resist Somoza's rule was through armed insurrection. A growing number of Nicaraguans turned to the Sandinistas as an avenue to bring down Somoza as opposed to the moderate FAO.¹¹⁶

Troubled by events the State Department, the NSC and their heads began to address the situation but the bureaucratic rivalry developed once again. On 4 September, 1978, Brzezinski intervened to switch a meeting reserved for the PRC, to be headed by Vaky, to the mini-SCC chaired by David Aaron. 'From then' Pastor later wrote 'U.S. policy toward Nicaragua would be hammered out in the National Security Council.' Despite the bureaucratic tussle for control of proceedings, the mini-SCC decided to back an idea advocated by Under Secretary of State David Newsom and support a Central American mediation effort.¹¹⁷ Although reluctant to involve themselves, pressure from allies in the region, most notably Costa Rica, Venezuela and Panama, encouraged the administration to take an assertive role in addressing Nicaragua's future. Costa Rican President Rodrigo Carazo's offer to act as a mediator, although he later retracted his proposal, between the Somoza regime and opposition groups presented the U.S. with an ideal opportunity to affect events without evoking the perception of direct intervention or interference.¹¹⁸ As Warren Christopher noted, the proposal 'was preferable because it is consistent with our commitment to non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries.' Both the State

¹¹⁵ LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, 20-21.

¹¹⁶ Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 170-171.

¹¹⁷ Pastor, *Condemned to Repetition*, 79-82.

¹¹⁸ Schmidli, "'The Most Sophisticated Intervention We Have Seen,'" 70; Morley, *Washington, Somoza and the Sandinistas*, 127-129.

Department and the NSC backed the mediation effort led by the Organisation of American States (OAS).¹¹⁹

Headed by former U.S. Ambassador William Bowlder with representatives of the Dominican Republic and Guatemala, the OAS mediation team, keen to prevent a Sandinista takeover, sought to facilitate Somoza's transfer of power to a united opposition but preserve the National Guard, the government forces, to support a new government.¹²⁰ Bowlder succeed in persuading the FAO to accept the idea but the more hostile elements of the group, which contained those sympathetic to the Sandinistas, rejected it, labelling the proposal 'Somocismo without Somoza.' Somoza then intervened with a suggestion of his own - a national plebiscite on a future government with the other parties involved. The FAO gave its tacit approval but Somoza's refusal to accept an international monitoring body led him to remark, 'I can lose that kind of election.'¹²¹

The mediation effort collapsed in January 1979. Its failure made a peaceful transition from Somoza's regime to a new democratic government increasingly unlikely as hostilities between the military and the FSLN continued. By June, after successfully fighting off Somoza's forces, a Sandinista takeover appeared likely. During this time, public and congressional opinion turned against Somoza after the murder of ABC reporter Bill Stewart by members of the National Guard on 20 June. Calls intensified for U.S. intervention to force Somoza's resignation to prevent further bloodshed.¹²² The situation required the administration to face the issue directly. All agreed that Somoza's departure was desirable but they also wanted to prevent the Sandinistas from taking power. How they achieved that objective divided both Vance and Brzezinski.

¹¹⁹ "Record of a Special Coordination Committee Meeting," 12 September, 1978, Nicaragua 1/77-11/78 - Box 56, National Security Affairs, Brzezinski Material, Country File, JCPL.

¹²⁰ Dumbrell, *The Carter Presidency*, 156.

¹²¹ Lake, *Somoza Falling*, 157-158; Morley, *Washington, Somoza and the Sandinistas*, 139-144.

¹²² Kagan, *A Twilight Struggle*, 79-85, *Ibid*, 96-97.

Brzezinski, evoking the domino theory, envisaged further insurrections in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, if they unsuccessfully prevented 'communist guerrillas' sweeping into power in Nicaragua. The U.S. had a duty to their allies to prevent 'another Cuba.' He also linked the growth of the Sandinistas to the Soviet Union by accusing them of sponsoring their activities through Cuba.¹²³ He submitted a draft proposal that formed the basis of a speech Vance was due to give at meeting of the OAS. The U.S. would support a multilateral peacekeeping force in Nicaragua that oversaw Somoza's departure and the installation of a 'Government of National Reconciliation' but crucially, the National Guard, Somoza's gendarmerie, remaining in place. Coupled with a ceasefire agreement with the Sandinistas and the cessation of arms sales to both sides, the draft speech also contained direct links to Soviet and Cuban adventurism in Latin America.¹²⁴

Vance predictably disagreed. As U.S. Ambassador to Nicaragua, Lawrence Pezzullo noted, such a proposal represented direct American intervention and carried negative consequences from the past. Vance had been part of the negotiating team that unsuccessfully attempted to form an anti-communist government in the Dominican Republic in 1964. The controversial U.S. presence and the Pan-American peace force attracted significant criticism from Latin American leaders and the experience motivated Vance and his department to consider a different course of action.¹²⁵ Brzezinski however believed that the vacuum needed to be filled by the National Guard or an international peacekeeping force to prevent a Sandinista takeover. A stalemate ensued with neither able to agree but Vance and the State Department attempted to seize control of the issue by removing all references to the peacekeeping force and Soviet and Cuban activities in the region from the secretary's speech to the OAS.¹²⁶

¹²³ Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind*, 319-321; Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, 419.

¹²⁴ Pastor, *Condemned to Repetition*, 134-142.

¹²⁵ Lawrence Pezzullo and Ralph Pezzullo, *At the Fall of Somoza* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1994), 77.

¹²⁶ Lake, *Somoza Falling*, 220-223.

When Carter read the speech, he immediately consulted with Brzezinski and queried why the speech made no mention of the peacekeeping force or Soviet and Cuban interference. The national security advisor immediately advised Pastor to insert both references into the speech without consulting either Vance or anyone from the State Department, much to their consternation.¹²⁷ Addressing the OAS on 21 June, 1979, Vance called on Somoza to step aside and urged members to accept their recommendation of a ceasefire, an arms embargo and the formation of multilateral peacekeeping force. Against his better judgement, he also cited the ‘mounting evidence of involvement by Cuba and others’ as having a detrimental impact on Nicaragua’s future.¹²⁸

As he predicted, the OAS reacted negatively to the speech, condemning the peacekeeping force idea as well as their overt references to Cuban interference. In a humiliating blow for the administration, their proposal failed to attract any supporters when put to a vote. The OAS backed a counterproposal, which called on Somoza to leave immediately to facilitate the transition to authentic democracy with free and fair elections.¹²⁹ Disillusionment at Brzezinski’s actions within the State Department boiled over as the story about the drafting of the speech leaked to the press. Although both issued a firm denial, the story highlighted the growing antagonism felt by the department towards their rivals at the NSC.¹³⁰

Despite the OAS rejection, Brzezinski continued to explore ways and means of preventing the Sandinistas from taking power. Pastor recalled returning from the OAS meeting to find Brzezinski, ‘in a very different world, contemplating military intervention.’¹³¹ ‘Vance, at the time, got furious’ remembered Pezzullo, ‘he said, “I don’t want to hear that. That’s something the United States is not going to do. That situation does

¹²⁷ Pastor, *Condemned to Repetition*, 144-145.

¹²⁸ Graham Hovey, “Vance Proposes Replacement of Somoza Rule in Nicaragua,” *The New York Times*, 22 June, 1979, A1.

¹²⁹ Solaún, *U.S. Intervention and Regime Change in Nicaragua*, 288.

¹³⁰ Jack Anderson, “Brzezinski-Vance Feud Bubbles,” *The Washington Post*, 25 July, 1979, B15.

¹³¹ Lake, *Somoza Falling*, 226

not warrant it.’¹³² Despite the secretary’s objections, Brzezinski persevered and offered another suggestion. He proposed forming an executive committee of prominent but moderate Nicaraguans to form an interim government following Somoza’s departure and negotiate a ceasefire with the Sandinistas.¹³³

Like his previous idea, a reformed National Guard would support the executive committee, but additionally he recommended that the U.S. provide military assistance to maintain order and prevent a Sandinista takeover. Vance and his department unanimously opposed Brzezinski’s suggestion, noting that few moderates remained in Nicaragua to support the initiative. They also balked at the idea that a reconstituted National Guard could command the support of the people after forty years of bloodshed and oppression. To preserve American interests in Nicaragua and the region, the administration needed to negotiate with the Sandinistas as part of a provisional government, and provide economic assistance as a good will gesture to establish favourable relations. The NSC met the suggestion with scepticism as they sought to discredit the State Department’s approach on the eve of Somoza’s fall from power.¹³⁴

A dubious David Aaron relayed his thoughts to Brzezinski. ‘State believes we have a small window of a few days in which we might critically affect the future junta...a few generous gestures at the end of the game are not going fundamentally alter the hostility we must expect’ he wrote. ‘This is why it is important to maintain a military force that can come to the support of the moderates who continue to be favourable disposed towards the United States’ he concluded.¹³⁵ Brzezinski then composed his thoughts to Carter. ‘Unless we establish an executive committee resting on the reconstituted National Guard, Somoza’s departure will create a vacuum which will be filled only by the Sandinistas’ he wrote. The

¹³² Lawrence E. Pezzullo, “Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection: Interview with Ambassador Lawrence E. Pezzullo,” interview by Arthur R. Day, 24 February, 1989, ADST.

¹³³ LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, 25-26

¹³⁴ Pastor, *Condemned to Repetition*, 160; Pezzullo and Pezzullo, *At the Fall of Somoza*, 122; Ibid, 152.

¹³⁵ “Memo, Aaron to Brzezinski,” 30 June, 1979, Nicaragua 12/78-6/78 - Box 56, National Security Affairs, Zbigniew Brzezinski Material, Country File, JCPL.

consequences of not doing so would be significant in respect to U.S.-Soviet relations as well American foreign policy more generally. He labelled Vance and his department's idea of negotiating with the Sandinistas as based on a 'fallacious premise' that would attract considerable criticism similar to that directed at the administration following the fall of the Shah. 'I am also concerned that the State Department strategy would have us embrace the FSLN junta so openly that we will become politically responsible for whatever course of action that revolution takes...and it is likely to be more bloody and radical than the revolution in Iran.'¹³⁶

When the principals met to discuss how to proceed, Brzezinski's arguments failed to earn Carter's support who became annoyed by the suggestion that the administration's actions could lead to further Cuban and Soviet interventions in Central America. Brzezinski bitterly recalled in his diary, 'the State Department types were absolutely delighted by this exchange. One of them even grinned openly.'¹³⁷ The administration embraced the approach of the State Department to negotiate with the Sandinistas, as part of a wider strategy to moderate the FSLN, and facilitate the peaceful transition to a provisional government upon Somoza's departure. Over the coming weeks, they implemented that approach. On 17 July, 1979, Somoza left Nicaragua and two days later, the revolution was complete as Sandinista forces entered Managua and swept away the final remnants of the regime.¹³⁸

The revolutions in Iran and Nicaragua highlighted the potential for conflict between the president's two key advisors, which increasingly influenced the administration's inability to co-ordinate a clear and consistent strategy as the bureaucratic warfare continued. During both revolutions Carter struggled to find a consensus between the two, backing Brzezinski in some instances and Vance in others. Several days after the fall of Somoza, *The Washington Post* reporter Jack Anderson wrote that the president's indecision had fuelled competition

¹³⁶ "Memo, Brzezinski to Carter: 'Next Steps on Nicaragua,'" n.d., Nicaragua 12/78-6/78 - Box 56, National Security Affairs, Zbigniew Brzezinski Material, Country File, JCPL.

¹³⁷ Pastor, *Condemned to Repetition*, 160-162.

¹³⁸ Kagan, *A Twilight Struggle*, 108-111.

within the administration. Warning that the situation was untenable and harmful to U.S. foreign policy, he concluded ‘it seems doubtful that Carter can succeed with a zigzag foreign policy – zigging with Ziggy one day and zagging with Cyrus the next.’¹³⁹

Vance and Carter

Carter’s indecision was compounded by domestic problems throughout 1979 as the president increasingly resembled an ineffective and beleaguered leader. As Paul D. Hart wrote, ‘many professionals are writing the president’s political obituary.’¹⁴⁰ His popularity ratings plummeted as the stagnated economy, unemployment and inflation rose while the on-going energy crisis saw oil prices increase further. In July 1979, Carter retreated to Camp David as he prepared for a major speech on the energy crisis placed within the wider context of a ‘crisis of confidence.’¹⁴¹ Meanwhile, rumours of a challenge for the Democratic Party nomination for president from rival Senator Edward ‘Ted’ Kennedy circulated, as Carter faced a serious fight for his political future.¹⁴²

To rejuvenate his presidency, he concluded that he no longer trusted certain members of his cabinet and took the bizarre step of asking every member to submit a letter of resignation before he decided which ones to accept. Both Vance and Harold Brown believed it was a mistake and told the president ‘fire who you want, but asking for everybody’s resignation is more likely to be taken as a reflection on you rather than on them. It says you’re not sure that your judgement in picking people was right.’ Carter ignored their advice and five members of his cabinet left the administration.¹⁴³ Vance meanwhile had already confirmed to the press in May that he intended to step down as secretary of state

¹³⁹ Anderson, “Brzezinski-Vance Feud Bubbles,” B15.

¹⁴⁰ Peter D. Hart, “Carter Has a Strength Not Shown in the Polls,” *The Chicago Tribune*, 12 August, 1979, A1.

¹⁴¹ Morris, *Jimmy Carter*, 1-5.

¹⁴² Glad, *Jimmy Carter*, 451-457; Kennedy announced his candidacy in November 1979.

¹⁴³ Brown, *Star Spangled Security*, 149; Richard M. Pious, *Why Presidents Fail: White House Decision Making from Eisenhower to Bush II* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2008), 105-106; Secretary of Energy James Schlesinger, Secretary of the Treasury Michael Blumenthal, Secretary of Health Joseph Califano, Secretary of Transportation Brock Adams and Attorney General Griffin Bell all resigned. Vice-President Walter Mondale also threatened to resign during the talks at Camp David.

after the 1980 presidential election. He dismissed the idea that he was essentially a lame duck unable to influence policy sufficiently as ‘poppycock.’¹⁴⁴ But Carter’s decision to accept the resignations of five members of his cabinet adversely affected Vance’s position and enhanced Brzezinski’s. As *The New York Times* reported that the reshuffle brought ‘no tremors of Brzezinski.’ ‘After two years of public controversy and private jostling...the energetic and feisty Columbia University professor is said by his admirers and critics alike to have become the dominant force within the foreign policy apparatus’ the article noted.¹⁴⁵

Brzezinski’s role within the administration was aided by the narrowing of Carter’s inner circle of advisors, which included Press Secretary Jody Powell and newly appointed Chief of Staff Hamilton Jordan, dubbed ‘the Georgia mafia’ by the press. Having initially resisted appointing a chief of staff, he handed the position to his close advisor Hamilton Jordan in July 1979. Jordan’s promotion reflected the growing centralisation of decision-making within the White House and an abandonment of the ‘spokes of the wheel’ concept Carter adopted on becoming president. Moreover, it undoubtedly benefited Brzezinski given that Powell and Jordan emphasised with the national security advisor’s approach to foreign policy and they became important allies in the policy wars with Vance and the State Department.¹⁴⁶ ‘Zbig initially was a little sceptical about my involvement in the foreign policy process’ Jordan remembered ‘but I think ultimately he saw me as someone that could sometimes help him with his point of view.’¹⁴⁷ ‘The boys of course saw Brzezinski as a yapping dog but their dog’ recalled Hodding Carter III, ‘they saw Vance as Mr Vance, grey

¹⁴⁴ Bernard Gwertzman, “Vance Makes It Clear He Won’t Stay On After 1980,” *The New York Times*, 29 May, 1979, A2.

¹⁴⁵ Richard Burt, “In the Washington Shake-Up, No Tremors for Brzezinski,” *The New York Times*, 20 July, 1979, A2.

¹⁴⁶ Anthony Holden, “Long Knives at the White House,” *The Observer*, 22 July, 1979, 11; Bourne, *Jimmy Carter*, 446-447.

¹⁴⁷ Hamilton Jordan, “Jimmy Carter Presidential Oral History Project: Interview with Hamilton Jordan with Landon Butler and Thomas Donilon,” interview by Charles O. Jones et al., 6 November, 1981, The Miller Center.

and faithful but presiding over a bureaucracy that, as all president's eventually decide, is unresponsive to the current policies of the inhabitants of the White House.¹⁴⁸

In addition to the 'Georgia mafia' First Lady Rosalynn Carter took on a more assertive role within the administration. Initially, she embarked on diplomatic trips on her husband's behalf to Latin America and Southeast Asia to promote various aspects of his foreign policy agenda but she also increased her presence within the administration attending cabinet meetings as well as Brzezinski's daily brief.¹⁴⁹ Considered somewhat of a hawk, she naturally gravitated to the national security advisor ideologically. She later remarked that she wished her husband had been more 'demagogic' and tougher in respect to foreign policy. She also bonded with the national security advisor during informal gatherings with his wife at the White House¹⁵⁰ 'She liked me' Brzezinski later remarked, adding that her support gave him extra confidence in policy disputes.¹⁵¹ Although the Carters socialised with Cyrus and Grace Vance, the first lady did not foster a similar relationship with the secretary of state. She considered him 'staid' as opposed to the 'exciting' national security advisor.¹⁵² She later wrote of Vance that although he was 'sound in judgement' he was also 'cautious, reluctant to "rock the boat", jealous of bureaucratic prerogatives' and as such the pair did not cultivate the same kind of relationship that the first lady and national security advisor shared.¹⁵³

The increased influence of the 'Georgia mafia' tilted the balance of power in the policy wars between Vance and Brzezinski in favour of the national security advisor as they encouraged the president to embrace a more forceful foreign policy. Moreover, viewed unfavourably by the president's inner circle, Vance's relationship with the president

¹⁴⁸ Carter III, Interview with the author.

¹⁴⁹ Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 25.

¹⁵⁰ Scott Kaufman, *Rosalynn Carter: Equal Partner in the White House* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 82.

¹⁵¹ Brzezinski, "Jimmy Carter Presidential Oral History Project."

¹⁵² Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 51; Kaufman, *Rosalynn Carter*, 196.

¹⁵³ Rosalynn Carter, *First Lady from Plains* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984), 327-328; In Vance, *Hard Choices*; Vance makes only a fleeting reference to Rosalyn Carter indicating a lack of a relationship between the pair.

declined throughout 1979. Tensions became frayed after the signing the Israel-Egypt peace treaty in March 1979, when Carter decided, with domestic political considerations in mind, to scale back the administration's involvement in the peace process and he appointed U.S. Trade Representative Robert Strauss, as a special envoy to the region.¹⁵⁴ The move displeased Vance, still keen to continue their efforts to achieve an accommodation regarding Palestine. He reluctantly acquiesced to the president's wishes but added that if Strauss bypassed him in any way he would resign.¹⁵⁵

Vance's relationship with Strauss quickly became fraught with disagreements, as the secretary's unease at his appointment increased. In August, after Carter assigned full responsibility of Middle East issues to Strauss, Vance immediately expressed his disappointment and irritation at the decision. As Brzezinski recalled, Vance 'raised his voice in speaking to the president...he then paused, lowered his voice, leaned back in his chair, and added, "Mr President, I am not going to be figurehead for you. If you don't want me to do this, I am going to resign as secretary of state.' Vance eventually relented after talks with Carter but his displeasure at the president's decision-making was evident.¹⁵⁶

Ten days later, controversy arose when *Newsweek* reported that UN Ambassador Andrew Young had met with representatives of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) in contradiction of the agreed upon policy with Israel that the U.S. not engage directly with the group. Young sought an agreement with the PLO to accept a delay in the publication of a report by the UN Committee on Palestinian Rights that called for diplomatic recognition of Israel's right to exist in addition to the creation of a Palestinian state. Young believed the administration's attention to other foreign policy and domestic issues at that

¹⁵⁴ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 491.

¹⁵⁵ Carter, *White House Diary*, 314.

¹⁵⁶ Cyrus Vance quoted in Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 438-439.

time would lead them to veto any resolution that arose from the report, something he found undesirable. The PLO agreed to the delay but the meeting leaked to the press.¹⁵⁷

Vance, furious at Young for bringing unnecessary controversy on the administration by scheduling an unauthorised meeting, demanded his sacking when he met with Carter. If he did not dismiss Young, he would resign. The president concurred with his secretary of state and fired the UN Ambassador.¹⁵⁸ Although he sided with Vance, Carter later expressed regret at doing so. Politically, he and Young shared many of the same goals regarding human rights and democratic advancement in Africa and he enjoyed the ambassador's presence in his administration. Reflecting on the episode, Carter criticised the reaction of Vance in forcing him to fire Young, 'Cy Vance threw down his gauntlet...and said, in effect, it was Andy or him...I wish I had let Cy resign.'¹⁵⁹ The two episodes demonstrated the irritation that both felt with each other as their relationship waned. Coupled with his declining authority within the administration, Vance's distress with the president and the direction of the administration's foreign policy agenda made his future as secretary of state increasingly untenable.

SALT II and the Soviet Brigade in Cuba

On 18 June, 1979, Jimmy Carter and Soviet Premier Leonid Brezhnev signed the SALT II agreement in Vienna. The negotiations had suffered numerous setbacks since the 'deep cuts' proposal of March 1977 as talks were hampered by the Soviet intervention in the Horn of Africa and normalisation of relations with China. The agreement committed both sides to a maximum of 2,400 strategic delivery vehicles, lowered to 2,250 by the end of 1981. The MIRV ballistic missiles were limited to 1,320 to each side with a sub-ceiling of 1,200 to MIRVed ICBMs and SLBM launchers. The Soviets agreed to limit the strategic capability of its backfire missile, while the U.S. agreed not to deploy cruise missiles with a range of

¹⁵⁷ Andrew J. De Roche, *Andrew Young: Civil Rights Ambassador* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 2003), 110-111.

¹⁵⁸ Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 375.

¹⁵⁹ Jimmy Carter quoted in Mitchell, *Jimmy Carter in Africa*, 1; Ibid, 666-668.

600km.¹⁶⁰ The conclusion of negotiations represented a personal triumph for Vance, who spent considerable time and energy resurrecting the negotiations after each delay and ironing out unresolved differences with the Soviets. Moreover, the final terms reflected the conservative position he took in March 1977, based on the limits negotiated at Vladivostok by the Ford administration in 1974, rather than the ‘deep cuts’ proposal Brzezinski advocated (see figure 4).

Figure 4: Arms Control Negotiating Positions

	<i>Vladivostok 1974</i>	<i>Moscow 1977</i>	<i>Vienna 1979</i>
<i>Strategic Delivery Vehicles</i>	2,400	1,800-2,000	2,400 reducing to 2,250
<i>MIRVs</i>	1,320	1,100-1,200	1,320
<i>MIRVed ICBMs & SLBMS</i>	No limits	550	1,200
<i>Cruise Missile Range</i>	No agreement	2,500km	600km

Public angst in the preceding years however, resulted in a rightward shift against SALT, détente and closer relations with the Soviets. Senate ratification became a difficult proposition as critics lined up to denounce the treaty and its significance.¹⁶¹ The ‘discovery’ of a brigade of troops in Cuba in August 1979 contributed to the public scepticism of Soviet intentions and threatened the SALT treaty. Moreover, it generated further bureaucratic tussles between Vance and Brzezinski as the latter used the issue to once again encourage Carter to embrace a more assertive foreign policy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. Such an approach proved to be detrimental to SALT and U.S.-Soviet relations and further eroded Vance’s position within the administration.

¹⁶⁰ Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 181-182.

¹⁶¹ Maga, *The World of Jimmy Carter*, 140.

Since the crisis in the Horn of Africa and the Shaba, Brzezinski had voiced his concerns about Cuban interference in the third world on behalf of the Soviet Union more vocally and argued that greater attention be placed on their collaboration. Intelligence gathered in 1978, which appeared to show a shipment of Soviet military equipment on route to Cuba fuelled his suspicions. On the advice of military assistant William Odom, in March 1979, Brzezinski ordered the CIA to conduct an intelligence review and during a reconnaissance mission, evidence emerged of a Soviet unit headquarters based in Cuba. Its purpose and function remained unknown. DCIA Stansfield Turner denigrated its significance and allowed the report to be published in an internal intelligence report. Senator Richard Stone, a member of the Foreign Relations Committee and SALT critic, learned of the report and the intelligence gathered prior to a closed hearing with Turner and Harold Brown on 17 July, 1979. Both attached little importance to the unit and stated that it more likely resembled a training regimen. Vance meanwhile wrote to Stone and told him the unit did not resemble ‘any substantial increase of the Soviet military presence in Cuba.’¹⁶²

Brzezinski refused to believe the interpretations of Vance, Brown and Turner and requested a further investigation. In August, additional intelligence revealed the unit was a brigade of 2,600 armed troops with tanks, artillery and armoured personnel carriers. The purpose of the brigade remained unknown but the administration failed to realise that it had been based in Cuba since 1962, or violated any prior agreements.¹⁶³ The ‘discovery’ of the brigade evoked memories of the Cuban Missile Crisis and created a frenzied atmosphere of fear and suspicion within Congress and the wider public. It also set off a chain of events that pitted Vance, Brzezinski and their departments as both sides to attempted to enforce their desired approach to U.S.-Soviet relations, and the administration’s foreign policy.

¹⁶² Gloria Duffy, “Crisis Mangling and the Cuban Brigade,” *International Security* 8, no. 1 (Summer 1983), 72-74.

¹⁶³ Lars Schoultz, *National Security and United States Policy Toward Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 237.

At the end of August 1979, the intelligence on the brigade leaked to the magazine *Aviation Week and Science Technology* who immediately asked the administration for a comment. With Brzezinski out of town, a mini-SCC was convened to deal with the issue but Vance and the State Department recognised the report's potential damage to SALT. As such, they used the national security advisor's absence to implement their own strategy to mitigate any fallout from the brigade's discovery.¹⁶⁴ At a meeting on 29 August, Under Secretary of State David Newsom proposed the department send demarches to both the Soviets and the Cubans to warn them of the potential implications of the brigade. The NSC staffers present, as well as those represented by representatives from Defense, resisted the plan. They agreed to delay any further action until Vance telephoned Brzezinski to discuss the issue but the secretary of state never placed the call.¹⁶⁵

Instead, Vance and his department proceeded with the demarches despite the objections. Furthermore, to dampen the story, Vance instructed Newsom to call congressional leaders, in recess at the time, to make them aware of the story before publication and note that they had expressed their concerns to both the Soviets and the Cubans. Neither Vance nor Newsom feared the information being leaked to the press but Senator Frank Church, the chair of the Foreign Relations Committee, decided to call a press conference and announce the discovery of a brigade. Church faced a tough fight to retain his seat and the story gave him the opportunity to dispel the perception that he was 'too soft' on communism. He told reports the administration needed to act decisively to force the Soviets to remove the brigade from Cuba, otherwise SALT would not be considered on the floor of the Senate. Following Church's revelation, other senators joined him to link the brigade issue to SALT ratification.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Glad, *An Outsider in the White House*, 189.

¹⁶⁵ "Summary of Conclusions of a Mini-Special Coordination Committee Meeting," 29 August, 1979, FRUS, 1977-1980. Volume VI, Soviet Union, July - December 1979, Document 216; Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 347.

¹⁶⁶ Strong, *Working in the World*, 214-215.

In the frenetic environment generated by the brigade, Carter, Vance and Brzezinski handled the situation badly and ultimately stoked the fires of discontent. Firstly, Vance, on 5 September, told the press, ‘the maintenance of the status quo’ would be unsatisfactory. ‘My reply was stronger than I intended’ he recalled.¹⁶⁷ The press recorded the secretary as saying that the brigade was ‘unacceptable’ although he never uttered the word. Secondly, as Carter attempted to diffuse the situation several days later, he urged reporters to maintain ‘a sense of proportion’ but also reiterated Vance’s comment that the ‘status quo is not acceptable.’ He then linked the presence of the brigade to their wider relationship with the Soviet Union, suggesting that relations could be ‘adversely affected’ if a compromise was not found. Finally, Brzezinski made inflammatory comments of his own, referring to Cuba and Fidel Castro as a ‘puppet’ and paid ‘surrogate’ of the Soviet Union.¹⁶⁸

A bureaucratic struggle erupted as both the NSC and the State Department attempted to find a solution to the crisis and save SALT. Brzezinski, scathing of Vance’s handling of the affair, labelled the secretary’s decision to tell Church as ‘disastrous.’ Incensed at his decision to ignore the findings of the mini-SCC he concluded, by excluding himself and the NSC, the State Department wanted control of the issue to advance its own views. After he returned to Washington, Brzezinski attended a PRC meeting on the issue chaired by Vance. ‘It was evident that State wished to assert itself on the subject, perhaps bearing mind the large space of publicity (generated by both China and by our tougher line on the Soviets) alleging that I was dominant in foreign policy’ he later wrote.¹⁶⁹ Vance meanwhile believed the issue did not amount to a ‘crisis’ but admitted the flare up damaged SALT and U.S.-Soviet relations. He sought to separate the two issues under the direction of his own department, not Brzezinski’s.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 362.

¹⁶⁸ Glad, *An Outsider in the White House*, 190.

¹⁶⁹ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 348.

¹⁷⁰ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 361.

After sending demarches to both the Soviets and the Cubans, Vance believed the Soviets could be persuaded, through private channels, to make a ‘face saving gesture.’ Either they removed the brigade completely or made alterations to its structure to placate SALT detractors in Congress.¹⁷¹ But Vance’s personal appeals to Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin and Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko failed. Both told Vance the brigade had been in Cuba since 1962 and neither violated any prior agreements or posed a military threat. As such, they held no obligation to remove the troops.¹⁷² In desperation, Vance pleaded with Dobrynin to make modest changes to the brigade. He asked the ambassador, ‘can’t you get them to move some ships around – to move some troops a bit – so that we could say that it was now acceptable.’ The ambassador remained unmoved.¹⁷³

When the secretary met with Gromyko, he warned him the issue would adversely affect votes in the Senate if not handled effectively and ‘kill SALT.’ An adamant Gromyko told Vance, the deal ‘could not be held hostage’ and argued that U.S. ‘propaganda’ damaged the treaty rather than the brigade.¹⁷⁴ Vance’s determination to find an accommodation with the Soviets, although unsuccessful, represented his growing anxiety as the situation developed. Not only did it harm SALT’s chances of ratification, his approach to foreign policy fell under siege as Brzezinski seized on the issue to forward his own views and encourage Carter to adopt a tougher approach towards the Soviets as well as foreign policy more generally.

While Vance thought the link between the brigade and U.S.-Soviet relations needed untangling, Brzezinski viewed the issue as part of a wider campaign of Soviet and Cuban hostility toward the United States, which threatened national security. At a PRC meeting he declared that the administration should not ‘give the Soviets a clean bill of health’ on the

¹⁷¹ Robert A. Pastor, “The Carter Administration and Latin America: A Test of Principle” The Carter Center, July 1992. Accessed 16 February 2017. <http://research.policyarchive.org/5130.pdf>.

¹⁷² Strong, *Working in the World*, 218-219.

¹⁷³ Cyrus Vance quoted in Glad, *An Outsider in the White House*, 190-191.

¹⁷⁴ “Memorandum of Conversation,” 24 September, 1979, Volume VI, Soviet Union, July - December 1979, Document 226, FRUS, 1977-1980; “Memorandum of Conversation,” 27 September, 1979, Volume VI, Soviet Union, July - December 1979, Document 227, FRUS, 1977-1980.

brigade, which posed a direct threat to U.S. credibility at home and abroad. Still portrayed as weak, the administration needed to stand up to the Soviet and Cuban threat, demonstrate their strength and deal with their Cold War adversaries thereby reinforcing the case for SALT.¹⁷⁵ Throughout September 1979, Brzezinski attempted to influence the administration's approach to the crisis and undercut Vance. When the PRC gathered on 4 September, he invited Carter to attend, elevating its status to an NSC meeting. This excluded lower-level officials, or 'dovish State Department associates' as he dubbed them, and provided him with more allies in discussions. Furthermore, he also utilised his direct line to the president to persuade him to follow his course of action, rather than Vance's.¹⁷⁶

On 13 September, Brzezinski penned a memo to Carter entitled 'Acquiescence vs. Assertiveness.' Similar to the one he sent Carter at the end of 1977, he demanded a tougher foreign policy particularly in relation toward the Soviet Union. He wrote, 'I believe that both for international reasons as well as for domestic political reasons you ought to *deliberately toughen both the tone and substance of our foreign policy.*' To save SALT, the president needed to introduce measures that relayed to the Soviets and the Cubans the consequences of their behaviour. A tough approach strengthened the administration's case for the arms limitation treaty he argued, if they demonstrated their ability to stand up to the Soviets when they threatened U.S. national security. The French had a saying, he wrote, "'c'est le ton qui fait la chanson (it's the tone that makes the song).' He continued, 'I know that the above is going to trouble you, and perhaps he even irritate you...but failure to cope with it firmly can have the effect of vitiating your foreign accomplishments and conclusively stamping this administration as weak, and that is why I feel that in general the time has come to adopt a more assertive posture.' At the top of the memo, Carter wrote 'good.'¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ Andrinaopoulos, *Kissinger and Brzezinski*, 197; "Minutes of a Policy Review Committee Meeting," 4 September, 1979, Volume XXIII, Mexico, Cuba, and the Caribbean, 1977-1980, Document 67, FRUS, 1977-1980.

¹⁷⁶ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 349.

¹⁷⁷ "Memo, Brzezinski to Carter: 'NSC Weekly Report #109,'" 13 September, 1979, Volume I, Foundations of Foreign Policy, Document 126, FRUS, 1977-1980.

Brzezinski then compiled a list of practical policies to adopt in the wake of the brigade crisis to ‘demonstrate toughness.’ They included increased surveillance of Cuba, reinforcement of the U.S. base at Guantanamo Bay, and public condemnation of the island’s military ties to the Soviet Union. Key amongst them was the declaration of a ‘Carter doctrine’ for the Caribbean whereby the United States would take steps to oppose the deployment of Soviet and Cuban troops in the region by providing support to those who resisted their advances. The doctrine also committed the U.S. to expand its military presence in the Indian Ocean, increase the defence budget, ask Congress to reintroduce the military draft and approve new arms sales to China. Furthermore, Brzezinski advocated postponing a vote on SALT in the Senate.¹⁷⁸

‘In the next few days you will be under considerable pressure to adopt a cosmetic solution and consider the case closed’ Brzezinski told Carter, ‘in my judgement such an outcome would be domestically self-defeating, and it will undermine the only basis for getting SALT ratification, name public confidence in our firmness.’ Carter underlined the phrase ‘public confidence in our firmness.’¹⁷⁹ Vance vehemently opposed such measures. At a foreign policy breakfast on 21 September 21 ‘a major blow up’ erupted between himself and Brzezinski with the two divergent schools of thought represented by the two principals. One committed to ‘saving SALT and preserving some semblance of ‘détente’’ against the other who believed ‘that a more rigorous U.S. competitive stance against the Soviet Union be mounted (with SALT if possible, but without if necessary).’¹⁸⁰

However, the national security advisor underestimated Carter’s commitment to SALT, which Vance capitalised on to sway the president’s mind.¹⁸¹ Firstly, he arranged a meeting between the president and Senate Leader Robert Byrd, a supporter of SALT. Byrd

¹⁷⁸ “Summary of Conclusions of a National Security Council Meeting,” 17 September, 1979, Volume XXIII, Mexico, Cuba, and the Caribbean, 1977–1980, Document 74, FRUS, 1977-1980.

¹⁷⁹ “Memo, Brzezinski to Carter: ‘NSC Weekly Report #110,’” 21 September, 1979, Volume I, Foundations of Foreign Policy, Document 127, FRUS, 1977-1980.

¹⁸⁰ Gates, *From the Shadows*, 159.

¹⁸¹ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 352.

told Carter, the administration had badly misjudged the situation, given the unit arrived in Cuba in the early 1960s and did not violate prior understandings. But the continued public hysteria surrounding the brigade damaged the treaty's chances of ratification. Secondly, Vance, supported by White House Counsel Lloyd Cutler, urged the president to convene a committee of 'wise men' to evaluate the situation and provide advice on how to proceed.¹⁸² Brzezinski, who remembered George Ball's advice during the revolution in Iran, recognised the consequences for his own approach and objected but to no avail.¹⁸³

The 'wise men' consisted of Ball, McGeorge Bundy, Clark Clifford, Henry Kissinger, Dean Rusk and other former officials who met at the White House to consider the evidence. Of the group, only Kissinger denied any prior knowledge of a brigade stationed in Cuba. They concluded that the administration had unnecessarily inflated the brigade with Brzezinski singled out for criticism for his role. Some of the group accused him of deliberately manufacturing the issue to advance his own strategies that returned the U.S. to the more competitive days of the Cold War.¹⁸⁴ After the 'wise men' gave Carter their feedback, to limit the damage to SALT, Vance advised the president to draw a line under the fiasco and move on. Carter agreed and decided to address the nation on 1 October, 1979.¹⁸⁵

In a last ditch attempt to persuade the president to follow his advice, Brzezinski insisted the speech contain references to 'Soviet adventurism' in respect to their military presence in Cuba but Carter rejected his advice. Brzezinski wrote in his memoirs that he contemplated resigning as a result. 'I made what probably were the most disagreeable comments I ever made to the president' as he expressed his irritation. Carter 'looked quite furious' he remembered but given the closeness between them and his reliance on Brzezinski, the president respectfully disagreed. He recalled 'I strongly believed that my

¹⁸² Garrison, *Games Advisors Play*, 114.

¹⁸³ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 350.

¹⁸⁴ Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, 405; Glad, *An Outsider in the White House*, 193; Also included in the group were Roswell Gilpatrick, Averell Harriman, Nicholas Katzenbach, Sol Linowitz, John McCloy, John McCone, David Packard, William Rogers, James Schlesinger, William Scranton and Brent Scowcroft.

¹⁸⁵ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 364.

usefulness to him would come to an end at the moment at which I no longer spoke frankly...it is to the president's great credit that never during the four years did he discourage me from doing so.'¹⁸⁶

Carter faced the nation but whilst he sympathised with Vance's point of view, Brzezinski's advice won favour with him too. The speech, like others he delivered during his time in office, split the difference between the hard and soft approaches advanced by both, adopting a conciliatory and confrontational tone. On the one hand, Carter noted that the brigade, stationed in Cuba for some time, neither violated any prior agreements nor posed a military threat to the U.S. However, he then confirmed the establishment of a joint Caribbean military task force at Key West, Florida and a Rapid Deployment Force, the expansion of military manoeuvres in the region and economic aid packages to combat communism expansion in Latin America.¹⁸⁷ After he relayed the measures he wished to adopt, Carter retreated to a softer tone. 'I have concluded that the brigade issue is certainly no reason for a return to the Cold War...the greatest danger to American security tonight is certainly not the two or three thousand Soviet troops in Cuba' he noted, as he renewed his call for the U.S. Senate to ratify the SALT treaty. Echoing the advice given to him by Brzezinski, Carter observed that the measures taken, combined with their rhetoric, were to protect SALT II. 'The purpose of the SALT II treaty' he concluded, 'and the purpose of my actions in dealing with Soviet and Cuban military relationship are exactly the same – to keep our nation secure and to maintain a world at peace.'¹⁸⁸

Although Brzezinski complained bitterly that the speech ignored his advice, it was more reflective of his way of thinking vis-à-vis the Soviet Union than Vance's. Moreover, in the days that followed the speech, Presidential Directive/NSC-52 was unveiled. When the administration first entered office, the State Department proposed normalising relations with

¹⁸⁶ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 351-352.

¹⁸⁷ Garrison, *Games Advisors Play*, 116.

¹⁸⁸ Jimmy Carter, "Peace and National Security Address to the Nation on Soviet Combat Troops in Cuba and the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty.," 1 October, 1979, The American Presidency Project.

Cuba but that effort broke down due to their activity in Africa. PD/NSC-52 represented a reversal of that policy. The directive defined Cuba as ‘a source of violent revolutionary change’ whose adventurism in the third world needed to be combated by the U.S.¹⁸⁹ The directive outlined measures to restrict their influence such as preventing them from obtaining a seat on the UN Security Council by persuading the Non-Aligned Nations to resist giving its chair to Cuba, using the aid budget to encourage resistance to Cuban overtures and increasing the U.S. military presence in Latin America. The directive also instructed the State Department and Defense to make the Soviets aware that continued support for Cuba negatively affected U.S.-Soviet relations.¹⁹⁰ Brzezinski proved unable to persuade the president to embrace ‘the Carter doctrine’ however the measures outlined in the speech and through PD/NSC-52 reflected a significant proportion of the advice he provided.

Carter’s speech did not result in an upsurge in support for SALT as more senators came out against the treaty.¹⁹¹ While Vance remained confident Congress would ratify the treaty, others in his department did not share his optimism. His close aide and advisor Leslie Gelb believed the handling of the brigade crisis had adversely affect SALT’s passage through Congress. ‘We were pissing on our own project’ he recalled, noting that the treaty became an unattractive option for many senators facing re-election battles, ‘politically it was poison.’¹⁹² Not only was SALT damaged by events, U.S. relations with the Soviet Union suffered. Diplomat Georgy Korniyenko confided to ACDA negotiator Ralph Earle, his belief that the administration used the brigade issue to scupper SALT, which he believed, showed that Carter had not been serious about. When Earle told him the administration simply mishandled the issue, Korniyenko replied, ‘no government could be that stupid.’¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹ LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, 211.

¹⁹⁰ “Presidential Directive/NSC-52: US Policy to Cuba,” 4 October, 1979, JCPL.

¹⁹¹ Duffy, “Crisis Mangling and the Cuban Brigade,” 83.

¹⁹² Gelb, interview with the author.

¹⁹³ Ralph Earle II, “Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection: Interview with Ambassador Ralph Earle, II,” interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, 1 February, 1991, ADST.

As the administration's approach to the Soviets hardened and Vance's authority gradually disappeared, some within the State Department wondered whether the national security advisor deliberately manipulated and exaggerated the incident to advance his own position and adversely affect SALT. 'That's what some people in the department thought and I may have entertained that explanation' remembered Gelb, 'but without proof. I never had any proof to that effect.'¹⁹⁴ Although somewhat speculative, it nevertheless reflected the feelings of suspicion and hostility that emanated from the department towards Brzezinski and the NSC. The bureaucratic jostling between the president's two key advisors over the brigade was, what Robert Gates called, 'a chain reaction of blundering' which harmed SALT, détente and the administration's public image. Ultimately, 'it was a self-inflicted wound.'¹⁹⁵

Conclusion

Throughout the administration's time in office, Brzezinski attempted to persuade Carter to embrace a tougher, more assertive foreign policy agenda. During 1977, the president sided with Vance following the March 'deep cuts' debacle, however, tussles erupted between the pair over how to respond to events in the Horn of Africa, Angola and Vietnam while the national security advisor succeeded in coaxing the president to pursue normalised relations with China. By 1979, the two men and their departments were permanently engaged in a battle to influence the president and the administration's approach to foreign policy, as tensions between them intensified.

Events in Iran and Nicaragua precipitated further conflicts between Vance and Brzezinski and brought the bitter bureaucratic wars to the fore as they both attempted to influence Carter. Their divergent strategies had a significant impact on the administration's response, with the president unable to decisively choose between the policies of his national security advisor and secretary of state, which led to an inconsistent and contradictory

¹⁹⁴ Gelb, interview with the author.

¹⁹⁵ Gates, *From the Shadows*, 160.

reaction to both revolutions. Subsequently, the administration lost two key allies in strategically important areas of the world. The bureaucratic wars, undoubtedly contributed to the United States' inability to co-ordinate an effective response to both crises.

Vance's decision to leave the administration, in addition to his waning relationship with the president and his key advisors weakened his position. Moreover, his influence with respect to key foreign policy objectives of the administration diminished. A vocal advocate for increased co-operation with the Soviet Union, he worked tirelessly on a fresh arms control treaty. The SALT II agreement was a significant foreign policy victory for Vance but events in Cuba scuppered its chances of ratification. As a result, U.S. policy towards the Soviets hardened as Brzezinski's attempts to persuade the president to toughen his stance vis-à-vis the Soviet Union gradually succeeded. It also signalled the decline in Vance's ability to influence the president and policies as Brzezinski consolidated his position as the key architect of the administration's foreign policy agenda.

By 1979, the conflicts between Vance, Brzezinski and their department had developed into open bureaucratic warfare with both seeking to undermine and outdo the other. However, while Vance had finally reacted to Brzezinski's assertive influence within the administration, his own position had gradually weakened. Despite his best efforts, he became increasingly unable to adequately affect policy and counteract the national security advisor's advances. Events towards the end of the year and early 1980 resulted in more hostility between Vance and Brzezinski and ultimately triggered the final policy battles of the Carter administration.

Chapter Six

1980

Vance's Last Stand

As 1979 drew to a close, two seismic events in the Middle East proved to be critical in the bureaucratic wars between Vance and Brzezinski and had a significant impact on the presidency of Jimmy Carter. The decision to allow the deposed Shah into the United States elicited a furious response from Iran. The U.S. embassy was invaded by angry Iranians, and hostages taken. The crisis divided Vance and Brzezinski once again, as they clashed over how to respond and secure the release of the hostages. But with the secretary of state's influence evaporating, Vance faced a considerable battle to resist Brzezinski's manoeuvrings. Meanwhile events in neighbouring Afghanistan confirmed Brzezinski's suspicions surrounding Soviet involvement in the region. The national security advisor sought to, yet again, persuade Carter to embrace a hardened approach towards the Soviet Union.

This chapter examines how the Iranian hostage crisis and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan exacerbated the bureaucratic struggles between Vance and Brzezinski but also brought them to a close. Whereas previously, the secretary of state resisted Brzezinski's overtures, his influence in the administration had gradually weakened as the president relied more on his national security advisor. This chapter reveals how Vance desperately attempted to deter the president from accepting Brzezinski's advice and strategies for resolving the hostage crisis, which he believed endangered their lives. Furthermore, the chapter illustrates how Brzezinski successfully encouraged a tough response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan at the expense of SALT and effectively ended détente. While his previous attempts had failed to convince the president to fully adopt his approach, he persuaded him to embrace a 'Carter doctrine' to tackle Soviet expansionism in the Persian Gulf and afar. Ultimately, it scuppered the policies and approaches that Vance had dedicated considerable

time and energy too during his time as secretary of state. In sum, the chapter reveals how the secretary of state was side-lined as the greatest foreign policy battles of the Carter administration reached a crescendo.

The Iranian Hostage Crisis

Although he engaged in a furious battle to control policy in the final days and weeks of the Shah's regime, Brzezinski stepped back from Iranian issues after the revolution and the State Department assumed responsibility for dealing with the new government. Despite consistent warnings about the detrimental impact to U.S. interests in the region if the Shah fell, Brzezinski encouraged efforts to tap into the anti-communist sentiment of the revolution and court the provisional government.¹ Under the direction of desk officer Henry Precht, the State Department attempted to normalise relations with the revolutionary government in Iran and for a time the bureaucratic wrangling, which plagued the administration's response to the revolution, disappeared. 'The situation in Washington...from my standpoint improved enormously. I no longer felt the tension with the White House' Precht recalled, 'no voice from Brzezinski or Gary Sick came down. I pretty much had my own way.'²

Between February and November 1979, through Precht, the administration attempted to establish ties with Iran through moderate elements of the new government, chiefly Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan and Foreign Minister Ebrahim Yazdi.³ Precht believed the turmoil in post-revolutionary Iran strengthened the position of the moderates and would allow them to dominate the political scene. Despite their criticisms of the U.S., both Bazargan and Yazdi pragmatically believed that increased collaboration with the administration allowed both nations to put aside their differences and move forward.⁴ However, Bazargan's government played a secondary role to the revolutionary council that Khomeini established upon his return from exile, which wielded real political power in the

¹ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 470-471.

² Precht, "Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection."

³ Emery, "United States Iran Policy 1979-1980," 635.

⁴ Sick, *All Fall Down*, 187-188.

new Iranian state. The council, composed of radical clerics personally selected by Khomeini, became the central executive authority in Iran and, in essence, a 'shadow government' that controlled all the key institutions. They frequently interfered in the provisional government's activities as they sought to create a 'theocratic regime' as opposed to the liberal, democratic system advocated by Bazargan and the moderates.⁵

Coupled with the fragility of the Bazargan government, a potential rapprochement between the U.S. and Iran was undermined by the lingering presence of the Shah. Since his departure from Iran in January 1979, the deposed monarch travelled to Egypt, then Morocco and when the revolution's success became apparent he decided to take up the Carter administration's offer of asylum in the United States. However, when the request reached the president, he withdrew the invitation. Carter feared, in the tense post-revolutionary environment, violent reprisals against American citizens in Iran if they chose to admit the Shah, not to mention, the negative impact on the burgeoning relationship with Iran's new government.⁶

The administration placed the offer on hold until an appropriate time and offered to find Pahlavi temporary asylum elsewhere. The Shah sought various locations to settle before he travelled to the Bahamas and eventually based himself in Mexico.⁷ The decision by Carter not to allow the Shah into the U.S. attracted criticism. Throughout 1979, the president faced considerable pressure to admit Pahlavi into the U.S. from supporters and old friends. David Rockefeller and Henry Kissinger lobbied the administration on the monarch's behalf and their appeals found sympathy with Brzezinski and Vice-President Walter Mondale. All believed the president's failure to provide sanctuary to the Shah, sent a negative message to other allies and weakened the United States' credibility throughout the world.⁸ 'Zbig bugged

⁵ Bayram Sinkaya, *The Revolutionary Guards in Iranian Politics: Elites and Shifting Relations* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 80-82.

⁶ Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 543.

⁷ Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 194.

⁸ Michael J. Nojeim and David P. Kilroy, *Days of Decision: Turning Points in U.S. Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2011), 197.

me on it every day' Carter recalled but his pleas found no favour with the president.⁹ 'Fuck the Shah!' Carter exclaimed, after he became exasperated with the constant appeals to grant him asylum, 'he's just as well off playing tennis in Acapulco as he is in California.'¹⁰ Vance supported the president's resistance and his view was enforced by the cautions he received from the U.S. embassy in Iran.¹¹ In July 1979, Bruce Laingen, the chargé d'affaires in Tehran who replaced Ambassador Sullivan in June, told Vance that due to the weakness of the Bazargan government, a potentially volatile situation awaited if they chose to admit the Shah. A backlash against the embassy and Americans citizens remained a possibility with the U.S. considered a 'convenient scapegoat' for hard-line elements of the regime.¹²

By October the situation changed dramatically. Unbeknownst to the outside world and even those close to him, doctors diagnosed the Shah with cancer in 1974 but treated him throughout the final years of his reign. In the months after the revolution, the illness spread and his condition worsened. American doctors, who examined him in Mexico, informed Pahlavi that he required urgent treatment only available in the U.S.¹³ Aides to Rockefeller who assisted the Shah in exile informed the administration of his predicament. Several weeks later, on 18 October, 1979, Vance received a medical report, which confirmed his diagnosis and relayed the news to the president and his advisors.¹⁴

'We were faced squarely with a decision in which common decency and humanity had to be weighed against possible harm to our embassy personnel in Tehran' Vance recalled. Although he previously resisted the overtures of Brzezinski and others to admit the Shah, he reluctantly reversed his decision and argued that they allow Pahlavi into the U.S. on humanitarian grounds. To mitigate against any backlash from the Iranians, he proposed that Laingen inform Bazargan of their decision in advance but stress the 'humanitarian need

⁹ Jimmy Carter quoted in Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, 442.

¹⁰ Jimmy Carter quoted in Morris, *Jimmy Carter*, 276.

¹¹ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 370.

¹² "Cable, U.S. Embassy in Tehran to Secretary of State 'Shah's Desire to Reside in the U.S.," 28 July, 1979, Wikileaks.

¹³ Salinger, *America Held Hostage*, 12-16.

¹⁴ Sick, *All Fall Down*, 182-183.

for his hospitalisation in the United States.’ If they received an overwhelmingly negative reaction, the decision would be reconsidered.¹⁵

On 21 October, Laingen, accompanied by Precht, on a routine visit to Tehran, informed Bazargan and Yazdi of the administration’s decision and asked them to guarantee the security of the embassy. Both responded negatively and Yazdi warned them, ‘you are opening a Pandora’s box.’ When Laingen asked Bazargan about guarantees for the security of the embassy and its staff, the prime minister merely replied, ‘we will do our best.’¹⁶ The administration decided to proceed and allow the Shah into the U.S. but after the final discussion, a reluctant Carter, concerned about the safety of American citizens, prophetically asked his advisors, ‘what are you guys going to advise me to do if they overrun our embassy and take our own people hostage?’ Nobody replied and the room fell silent.¹⁷

Pahlavi arrived in New York for treatment on 22 October. The news initially received a subdued response in Iran but hostility towards the U.S. gradually increased with large-scale anti-American demonstrations held in Tehran.¹⁸ The discontent in Iran intensified when, on 2 November, Brzezinski met with Bazargan and Yazdi in Algiers for the Algerian Independence Day celebrations. Although a ‘surprisingly friendly’ encounter, Brzezinski rejected their request for the Shah to be extradited for trial but assured both men that the U.S. harboured no ill intentions towards Iran and spoke of fresh military sales and co-operation against a common threat, the Soviet Union.¹⁹ When a photograph appeared in the press of Brzezinski and Bazargan shaking hands, it suggested to many Iranians, coupled with the Shah’s presence in New York, that the U.S. planned to interfere in Iran’s affairs once again. The Iranian government knew of Brzezinski’s attempts to orchestrate a coup in the final days of the Bakhtiar government, which fanned their suspicions. Moreover, Barazgan

¹⁵ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 371-372.

¹⁶ L. Bruce Laingen, “Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection: Interview with Ambassador L. Bruce Laingen,” interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, 9 January, 1993, ADST; Mark Bowden, *Guests of the Ayatollah*, 70.

¹⁷ Jimmy Carter quoted in Jordan, *Crisis*, 31-32.

¹⁸ Seliktar, *Failing the Crystal Ball Test*, 168.

¹⁹ Gates, *From the Shadows*, 129-130.

did not seek Khomeini's permission to meet with Brzezinski, which enraged the hardliners. This led some who served in the U.S. embassy to suggest that the image of Bazargan and Brzezinski embracing one another infuriated Iranians just as much the decision to allow the Shah into the U.S.²⁰

A group of students, who believed the Shah's presence in New York to be part of a plot by the United States to reverse the revolution, met in secret and laid plans to storm and occupy the U.S. embassy for several hours in a peaceful protest. Although meant as a symbolic gesture, the students believed their attempts would be thwarted by the marines on guard and expected to be killed as they prepared for their attack.²¹ On the morning of 4 November, a demonstration on route to the University of Tehran passed the U.S. Embassy. Protesters stopped and chanted 'death to the Shah!...death to America!' During the demonstration, the students made their move and climbed over the walls of the embassy.²² The protestors quickly poured into the compound and the American marines on guard, under orders not to fire on the protestors, retreated into the chancery building and awaited help. As the diplomatic personnel destroyed confidential files, help did not arrive. Over the course of several hours, the students broke into the building and took the staff captive.²³

With sixty-six American hostages, the student revolutionaries felt empowered to demand the extradition of the Shah. The administration, although initially alarmed by the attack, remained confident of the embassy staff's swift release, unharmed. Several months earlier, on 14 February, 1979, armed militants overran the embassy and took American diplomats hostage, including Ambassador Sullivan. However, the provisional government reacted quickly and resolved the situation amicably. Khomeini even issued a personal apology to Sullivan for the incident.²⁴ The administration hoped for a repeat of the February

²⁰ Emery, *US Foreign Policy and the Iranian Revolution*, 138-140.

²¹ Farber, *Taken Hostage*, 129-131.

²² Houghton, *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Iran Hostage Crisis*, 51.

²³ James Buchan, *Days of God: The Revolution in Iran and Its Consequences* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013), 264.

²⁴ Smith, *Morality, Reason, and Power*, 194.

seizure. Bruce Laignan, who happened to be on a visit to the Iranian foreign ministry when the students seized the embassy, protested furiously to Yazdi. The foreign minister, surprised by Laignan's reaction given the events in February, promised to help resolve the situation.²⁵

When he spoke with Khomeini later that day, the Ayatollah told him to remove the students. However, after several hours he changed his mind. Khomeini sensed an opportunity to solidify the revolution by using the hostages to unite domestic forces around a common enemy and deter future American intervention in Iran.²⁶ He duly endorsed and praised the seizure of the U.S. embassy and the diplomats. The Ayatollah called the embassy a 'den of spies' where the United States, whom he dubbed the 'Great Satan' hatched plots against Iran and the revolution. Bazargan and Yazdi both tendered their resignations in protest. With their departures, any hope of a speedy resolution to the hostage crisis faded.²⁷

The hostage crisis immediately divided Vance, Brzezinski and their departments and led to a furious tussle over the administration's response to the crisis. Vance and the State Department believed the Ayatollah viewed the hostages as 'political pawns' to strengthen his grip on power in Iran and weaken the authority of the moderates. 'Probably, it was not until Khomeini saw the hysterical mob reaction and sensed the hostages' potential for uniting the warring factions against a hated enemy that he decided to use them as a rallying point for bringing about a new Iranian state' Vance recalled. The administration needed to react cautiously and not endanger the hostages' lives further by overreacting to events. Vance asserted that the hostages possessed more value alive to the regime than dead. The administration, he argued, needed to proceed patiently through diplomatic channels to

²⁵ Bowden, *Guests of the Ayatollah*, 70.

²⁶ Houghton, *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Iran Hostage Crisis*, 55-57.

²⁷ Michael Axworthy, *Revolutionary Iran: A History of the Islamic Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 168-169; Glad, *An Outsider in the White House*, 176.

negotiate the hostages' release.²⁸ Brzezinski and the NSC however interpreted the situation as a deliberate and calculated opportunity to embarrass the U.S.²⁹

To the national security advisor, the hostage crisis threatened American honour and presented a real test for the Carter presidency. To resolve the crisis, the president needed to utilise American force to bring the hostages home and send a message to the Iranians and U.S. allies across the world. At a foreign policy breakfast on 9 November, he warned the president that if the crisis continued, it presented fatal ramifications for his presidency. 'If they're still in captivity at thanksgiving, what will that say about your presidency and America's image in the world?' he argued. Brzezinski urged Carter to take decisive action, which he acknowledged placed the hostages in potential danger, and bring the crisis to a swift conclusion. 'Your greater responsibility is to protect the honour and dignity of our country and its foreign policy interests. At some point that great responsibility could become more important than the safety of our diplomats.' Vance vehemently rejected Brzezinski's interpretation of events, 'the hostages have been held only five days. We're dealing with a volatile, chaotic situation in Iran, and negotiation is the only way to free them. The president and this nation will ultimately be judged by our restraint in the face of provocation, and on the safe return of our hostages.'³⁰

After the foreign policy breakfast, Vance met with Chief of Staff Hamilton Jordan and Press Secretary Jody Powell and urged them to encourage the president not to act rashly under pressure from Brzezinski with an election on the horizon. Minutes after Vance left Jordan's office, Brzezinski entered and declared the hostage crisis an opportunity to demonstrate 'American resolve.' 'Cy's calm approach sounded good' Jordan remembered 'but Zbig's tough approach felt good.'³¹

²⁸ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 375-376.

²⁹ Russell Leigh Moses, *Freeing the Hostages: Reexamining the U.S.-Iranian Negotiations and Soviet Policy, 1979-1981* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995), 15-17.

³⁰ Jordan, *Crisis*, 44-45.

³¹ *Ibid*, 53.

The situation in Iran precipitated further bureaucratic tussles between himself and Brzezinski for control of the administration's approach. In the days that followed the seizure of the embassy, Carter agreed to follow two tracks in their attempts to secure the release of the hostages. The first emphasised the diplomatic route, the strategy Vance endorsed. The second, as advocated by Brzezinski, considered the feasibility of military alternatives and a rescue mission if possible.³² But Carter's inability to decisively decide between the two, triggered further struggles between his advisors.

Throughout his time as secretary of state, Vance had been forced to resist the advances of Brzezinski and the NSC, and the hostage crisis presented a new challenge. As with other encounters, he was forced to defend his position as he struggled to influence the administration's foreign policy and the president's decision-making. Initially, he held the upper hand. Firstly, Carter felt a deep sense of personal commitment to the hostages and their families, whom he met with, and vowed to bring them all home alive. Brzezinski meanwhile refused to meet with the families, as he did not want emotion to cloud his judgement.³³ Like Vance, he also recognised the hostages' value to the regime and although he did not rule out the idea of a rescue mission, he did not want to adopt any measures that endangered their lives. 'They have us by the balls' he told his advisors.³⁴ But the show of restraint demonstrated by the administration earned Carter a brief reprieve from the negative press that accompanied his floundering presidency. His approval ratings rose from 30% to 61% as Americans rallied behind their president, which served him well against the challenge from Ted Kennedy for the Democratic presidential nomination.³⁵

Secondly, and perhaps crucially, while Brzezinski encouraged a tough response to the crisis, a show of force seemed impracticable. Vance evoked his own experiences during the Johnson administration when North Korea captured the USS *Pueblo* in January 1968. In

³² Sick, *All Fall Down*, 216.

³³ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 481.

³⁴ Jimmy Carter quoted in David J. Rothkopf, "Setting the Stage for the Current Era," 79.

³⁵ Kaufman and Scott Kaufman, *The Presidency of James Earl Carter Jr.*, 194.

that instance, Vance dissuaded President Park of South Korea from ordering a retaliatory strike against the North and urged caution as any punitive action threatened the lives of the hostages and hindered a peaceful solution to the crisis. In the end, North Korea released the crew of the *Pueblo* after extensive diplomatic efforts by the Johnson administration.³⁶

Brzezinski scoffed at Vance's comparison between the *Pueblo* and the hostage crisis. 'That went on for a year!' he exclaimed and reminded Vance and Carter that President Johnson 'wasn't in the middle of a re-election campaign.'³⁷

He instead pointed to the case of the USS *Mayaguez*, a merchant ship seized off the coast of Cambodia, as a blueprint to launch a rescue mission. As Vance and General David Jones, Chair of the JCS, who opposed the mission at the time, pointed out, forty Americans died during the operation to free the crew of the *Mayaguez*. Vance even quipped during discussions 'the last thing we need is another *Mayaguez*.' Brzezinski also used an example from 1976 when Israeli rescue forces stormed a hijacked airplane at Entebbe Airport in Uganda but General Jones and Secretary of Defense Harold Brown rejected the comparison. They pointed out that the hostage takers at Entebbe held their captives on an open runway while the Iranians detained the American hostages in the middle of major urban city.³⁸

Brzezinski also proposed the mining of Iranian harbours as well as interrupting commerce, strikes on Iranian oil facilities and introducing economic sanctions. But when the president's advisors discussed the options those who perhaps leaned toward military action recognised the potential for retaliation by Khomeini against the hostages.³⁹ Administration officials ruled other displays of force meanwhile as inadequate. As Gary Sick recalled, 'we could make shows of force, we could sail ships up and down right off their coast, we could

³⁶ Houghton, *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Iran Hostage Crisis*, 94.

³⁷ Jordan, *Crisis*, 45.

³⁸ Houghton, *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Iran Hostage Crisis*, 81-86.

³⁹ Sick, *All Fall Down*, 235-237.

overfly them with aircraft but was that going to change their mind? It's not obvious that it would.'⁴⁰

Despite the desire on the part of some within the administration to be tough on Iran, the president's advisers considered all other options as either unworkable or likely to endanger the hostages. They turned to the diplomatic initiatives that Vance proposed but as Vice-President Mondale explained, 'if someone had proposed a way of using military power in a responsible way to get our hostages home, I think most of us would have supported it. But we never found it. It came down to this: Would it free the hostages or only increase the risk to them?' In the early days of the crisis, the mood of the principals tilted toward the latter, which gave Vance an advantage over Brzezinski.⁴¹

However, the diplomatic avenues yielded little success. The resignations of Bazargan and Yazdi presented a problem for negotiations as their departures left the administration with no direct channel to Khomeini. As a result, Vance proposed sending former Attorney General Ramsay Clark and William Miller, the staff director for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, to meet with Khomeini on the administration's behalf.⁴² The administration asked Miller and Clark, Farsi speakers and critics of the Shah's regime, to pass on a message from Carter to Khomeini, which stressed Iran's need to respect international law but also demonstrate compassion and release the hostages. However, when details of the mission leaked to the press, the Iranians refused to receive Miller and Clark.⁴³

The government of Iran meanwhile issued demands that included the extradition of the Shah to stand trial, his wealth to be transferred to the state, an American recognition of the harm to Iran in the past, and a commitment to non-interference in Iranian affairs.⁴⁴ The United States refused to return the Shah, his wealth or offer an apology. Instead, the

⁴⁰ Sick, Interview with the author.

⁴¹ Mondale, *The Good Fight*, 251.

⁴² Sick, *All Fall Down*, 207.

⁴³ Moses, *Freeing the Hostages*, 43-45.

⁴⁴ Salinger, *America Held Hostage*, 54.

administration initiated a series of sanctions against Iran for their actions, which included embargos on the transfer of spare parts and on oil imports. They also froze \$6 billion in Iranian assets held in the U.S. and Iranian students with expired visas received deportation notices.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, the administration negotiated the Shah's departure from New York, which deprived the Iranian government of one of its chief demands.⁴⁶ After the Mexican government refused to take him back, Hamilton Jordan persuaded General Omar Torrijos of Panama to grant the Shah asylum. On 4 December, Pahlavi left the U.S.⁴⁷

Another avenue for negotiation lay in the unlikely form of Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO). Arafat wanted to help the administration and believed that by utilising his ties with Khomeini, his intervention would boost the PLO's position with the United States.⁴⁸ Yet, when Arafat and the PLO attempted to mediate they encountered resistance from both the students, who refused to negotiate with anyone, and Khomeini, whose advisors told the PLO leader not to approach the subject when he met with the Ayatollah. Nevertheless, the PLO carefully persuaded the regime and successfully negotiated the release of thirteen female and African American hostages. The mediation however came at a price. Despite appreciation for Arafat's efforts, the PLO's status within the U.S. did not significantly improve. The PLO found negotiations with the Iranians even more protracted and frustrating than they imagined and after the release of the thirteen hostages, Arafat shied away from mediating the hostage crisis. Fifty-three hostages remained in captivity with no imminent sign of their release.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 197.

⁴⁶ Dumbrell, *The Carter Presidency*, 170.

⁴⁷ Harris, *The Crisis*, 257-260; The Shah later left Panama for Egypt where he died on 27 July, 1980.

⁴⁸ Salinger, *America Held Hostage*, 51-52.

⁴⁹ Sick, *All Fall Down*, 224-225; The Iranians released another diplomat in July 1980 after he fell seriously ill. Six embassy personnel, who avoided capture found shelter in the Canadian embassy after the embassy was seized. The CIA launched a rescue operation under the guise of a film production company, issued Canadian passports to the diplomats and smuggled them out of Tehran on 28 January, 1980. See Stansfield Turner, *Burn Before Reading: Presidents, C.I.A. Directors, and Secret Intelligence* (New York: Hyperion, 2005), 174-175.

The administration also turned to the United Nations. According to U.S. Ambassador Donald McHenry, ‘whatever had gone on between the United States and Iran, people separated that out from the way it was treating the diplomatic staff.’ The UN route gave the administration an opportunity to be ‘the reasonable ones’ McHenry recalled, ‘we didn’t get anything by lashing out in our language or threatening or any of that.’⁵⁰ The administration became encouraged after the new Iranian Foreign Minister Abolhassan Bani-Sadr requested an emergency meeting of the security council and made public comments that indicated the government’s willingness to negotiate the release of the hostages. Vance and the State Department believed Bani-Sadr to be genuine in his commitment to bring the hostage crisis to an end and this channel represented their best hope for their release. Through UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim, the administration made their demands: upon the release of the hostages they agreed to set up a commission to examine the abuses and excesses of the Shah’s regime and allow the Iranian government to pursue his assets through American courts. Despite initial optimism of the plans chances of success, Khomeini refused and expressed his desire to put the hostages on trial on charges of espionage.⁵¹

Bani-Sadr subsequently resigned, faced with accusations of ‘being soft on the Americans’ and his replacement Sadegh Ghotbzadeh declared there was ‘no room for negotiation at present.’⁵² Carter then accused Iran of acting against international law and pressed for a UN resolution that condemned their actions and the security council unanimously adopted resolution 457, even the Soviet Union spoke out against Iran. They also urged both sides to show restraint and exercise further diplomatic routes available to them to resolve the crisis peacefully.⁵³ To Vance and the State Department, this proved their

⁵⁰ McHenry, Interview with the author.

⁵¹ Moses, *Freeing the Hostages*, 47-49.

⁵² Glad, *An Outsider in the White House*, 182-183; Sick, *All Fall Down*, 226.

⁵³ Cameron R. Hume, *The United Nations, Iran, and Iraq: How Peacemaking Changed* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 30-31.

approach to be the right one. As Anthony Lake surmised, 'we have shown the right combination of firmness and discipline...threats and signs of impatience do not help.'⁵⁴

However, UN condemnation and pressure from allies, did not satisfy Brzezinski. While Vance continued to voice his view that diplomatic avenues be explored, the national security advisor remarked, 'Cy, you always have another diplomatic channel.'⁵⁵ Vance's strategy had yielded little success, and on each occasion, Brzezinski attempted to refocus the administration's approach. He challenged the secretary of state's advice with the president as he sought a more direct response that demonstrated American resolve. The national security advisor persisted with the idea of a military solution as he outmanoeuvred Vance in an attempt to find a solution to the crisis. DCIA Stansfield Turner discovered that the national security advisor began chairing meetings with individuals involved in military planning in secret days after the hostage crisis began.⁵⁶

While the president sided with Vance initially, the failure to secure the release of the hostages through diplomatic initiatives allowed Brzezinski to argue more forcefully for a military response to the crisis. Unable to decide decisively between the advice of his advisors, the president turned to the possibility of a military response to resolve the crisis. He ordered the deployment of the USS *Kitty Hawk* to join the USS *Midway* in the Arabian Sea and authorised sending AWACS (early reconnaissance warning planes) to Egypt in the event of a military operation in Iran.⁵⁷ Vance objected at a NSC meeting on 4 December and voiced his view that this action 'would block negotiations' but Brzezinski maintained that the military preparations ran concurrently with the diplomatic effort as part of the agreed upon 'two-track strategy.' Carter overruled his secretary of state and agreed to deploy the

⁵⁴ "Memo, Lake to Vance (Draft)," 27 December, 1979, Sensitive 10/1 to 12/31/79 - Box 18, Policy and Planning Office of the Director - Records of Anthony Lake, 1977-1981, Record Group 59, General Records of the Department of State, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), College Park, Maryland.

⁵⁵ Zbigniew Brzezinski quoted in Bowden, *Guests of the Ayatollah*, 244.

⁵⁶ Turner, *Burn Before Reading*, 172.

⁵⁷ Sick, *All Fall Down*, 238.

AWACS but continued to side with Vance in his opposition to the mining of Iranian harbours.⁵⁸

In the initial period after the seizing of the embassy, both Vance and Brzezinski forwarded their own strategies to secure the release of the hostages. However, ‘the two-track strategy’ resembled the competing advice and strategies of his two advisors. Carter’s willingness to consider both diplomatic and military solutions heightened the sense of competition between Vance and Brzezinski, which led both to use various avenues to affect decision-making. This resulted in a series of hard and soft measures aimed at resolving the crisis however neither approach secured the release of the hostages. As Carter pivoted between his advisors, it created further bureaucratic divisions within his administration.

Initially, Vance’s approach found favour but diplomatic initiatives failed to produce positive results and as the months passed, the hostages remained in captivity and the clamour for decisive action intensified. He labelled Brzezinski and those who urged Carter to react forcefully to the hostage crisis as ‘the crazies’ as his resolve for a diplomatic solution hardened.⁵⁹ His concern for the hostages increased in late November and early December 1979 when a wave of attacks on U.S. embassies by angry mobs in Pakistan, Libya and Kuwait left two Americans embassy personnel dead. The attacks occurred after Khomeini blamed the United States for inciting the anti-western Muslims who seized the Grand Mosque in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Shaken by the events, Vance confided to Assistant Secretary Harold Saunders, ‘I’m deeply concerned over what would happen to our people if the White House decided to take military action against Iran.’⁶⁰ Moreover, as the diplomatic avenues failed to produce results, it encouraged Brzezinski to argue more vigorously for a forceful strategy to resolve the crisis.

⁵⁸ “Record of a National Security Council Meeting,” 4 December, 1979, NSC 23 - Box 1, Washington Special Actions Group Meetings (WSAG) & NSC Meetings, 1974-1979, Records of the National Security Council (NSC), Record Group 273, NARA.

⁵⁹ McHenry, Interview with the author.

⁶⁰ Cyrus Vance quoted in Harold H. Saunders, “Diplomacy and Pressure, November 1979-May 1980,” in *American Hostages in Iran*, ed. Christopher and Kreisberg, 90-91.

Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan

In the midst of the hostage crisis, on 25 December, 1979, Soviet forces crossed the border into neighbouring Afghanistan with the intention of restoring order and to protect their strategic interests in the Persian Gulf. While the Politburo believed their intervention would only last several weeks, the furious response of the United States prolonged the internal conflict in Afghanistan. Soviet actions detrimentally affected the SALT II treaty, which was shelved by the administration, and effectively ended détente. Moreover, it became a key source of debate between Vance and Brzezinski, as they attempted to orchestrate the administration's response to the invasion. Vance urged a cautious approach that safeguarded SALT but also preserved cordial relations with the Soviet Union. Brzezinski however sought a tough response to punish the Soviets and radically shift the administration's foreign policy agenda. The policy was duly escalated, however whereas previously Carter had sided with Vance on issues relating to the Soviet Union, he supported the policies and approaches of his national security advisor, as the secretary of state's influence within the administration dissipated.

In April 1978, the Afghan communist party deposed President Sardar Muhammed Daoud Kahn whose relationship with Moscow had declined rapidly in the previous years. Daoud's overthrow presented an opportunity for the Soviets to regain their foothold in Afghanistan under new President Nur Muhammad Taraki and Prime Minister Hafizullah Amin.⁶¹ Despite the new government declaring itself a non-aligned nation, they improved relations with Moscow and the two countries signed a Treaty of Friendship in December 1978.⁶² But Taraki's repressive regime inflamed tensions with Islamist factions in Afghan society and hostilities ensued between the mujahedeen fighters and government forces. As the country slid into a civil war, Taraki requested assistance from Moscow. Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko argued vigorously in favour of sending military support to their

⁶¹ Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 162.

⁶² Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 897-901.

neighbours. 'If we lose Afghanistan now, it will drift away from the Soviet Union, and that will deal a serious blow to our (foreign) policy' he declared.⁶³

Tensions in Afghanistan did not go unnoticed in Washington. When Taraki deposed Daoud in April 1978, Brzezinski suspected Soviet involvement in the coup but with no evidence, the other principals dismissed the suggestion. Under Vance's instruction, the administration attempted to fashion stable relations with new regime in Kabul. But when the U.S. Ambassador Adolph Dubs was kidnapped by Islamic militants and subsequently killed in a failed rescue mission ordered by Soviet forces on 14, February, 1979, the United States pointed the finger of blame directly at the Soviets.⁶⁴ Inspired by Brzezinski, U.S. policy toward Afghanistan dramatically shifted following Dubs' death. The national security advisor had argued for some time that the administration should look at covert action to destabilise the Afghan regime and 'frustrate Soviet ambitions.' His suggestions put him at odds with Vance and Dubs, who took the State Department view that they ought to harbour cordial relations with Taraki's government. After the ambassador was killed, Brzezinski called it 'a tragic event which involved either Soviet ineptitude or collusion' and when Amin refused to apologise for Dubs' death, he concluded that the prime minister 'had revealed his anti-America, pro-Soviet colours.'⁶⁵

Coupled with the fall of the Shah in neighbouring Iran, Brzezinski, fearful of the waning influence of the U.S. in the region, took up the issue with the president. He argued that Soviet military intervention or an invasion looked a distinct possibility and the administration needed to take steps to counter their advances. Encouraged by the progress of Afghan insurgents, the CIA proposed support for the mujahedeen, primarily through Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. The State Department however told Vance 'the United States shouldn't go beyond a modest effort to publicise Soviet actions and intentions.' Despite their

⁶³ Andrei Gromyko quoted in Matthew J. Ouimet, *The Rise and Fall of the Brezhnev Doctrine in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 89.

⁶⁴ Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled*, 162-163.

⁶⁵ Cordovez and Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan*, 32-35; Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires*, 15.

resistance, on 3 July, 1979, only weeks after the signing the SALT II accords, Carter authorised the indirect funding of the mujahedeen and other resistance fighters in Afghanistan. Although initially set at only \$500,000 Brzezinski nevertheless believed it provided the U.S. with a significant opportunity to affect events in Afghanistan and destabilise the Soviet influence there.⁶⁶ ‘The secret operation was an excellent idea’ he later reflected, which offered the advantage of ‘drawing the Russians into the Afghan trap.’⁶⁷

Beyond the measures taken in July 1979, Vance and the State Department frustrated Brzezinski’s efforts to draw public attention to the increased Soviet presence in Afghanistan. The secretary of state and his subordinates viewed the events with dread but nonetheless considered it a local conflict rather than a wider geopolitical situation.⁶⁸ Their position agitated Brzezinski who became more vocal and took actions against his ‘softer’ colleagues at the State Department. In August 1979, Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher removed direct references to Soviet intervention in Afghanistan from a speech the national security advisor delivered. In retaliation, Brzezinski told *The New York Times* correspondent Hedrick Smith about the references to Afghanistan, who reported them in his article the next day quoting, ‘administration officials.’ He also took similar action against Under Secretary of State David Newsom after he vetoed Brzezinski’s attempts to publicly highlight Soviet activity in the press.⁶⁹

As the situation in Afghanistan deteriorated, the Soviets acquiesced to a request from Taraki for military support and dispatched 5,000 to 10,000 advisers as well as financial aid to Kabul.⁷⁰ However, the Soviet military presence failed to halt the internal disputes between Taraki and Prime Minister Amin, which caused consternation in Moscow. This led Brzhenev to advise Taraki to depose of Amin. However, the prime minister thwarted the president’s attempts to oust him and instead orchestrated his own coup and killed Taraki.

⁶⁶ Gates, *From the Shadows*, 144-146

⁶⁷ Zbigniew Brzezinski quoted in Cooley, *Unholy Wars*, 10.

⁶⁸ Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 941-947.

⁶⁹ Hammond, *Red Flag Over Afghanistan*, 108.

⁷⁰ Kaufman and Kaufman, *The Presidency of James Earl Carter Jr.*, 196.

Despite his intervention, Amin failed to stabilise the situation with large swathes of the countryside falling into the hands of the mujahedeen while the army, beset by defections, fragmented.⁷¹

The Politburo, dissatisfied by events and Amin's overtures toward the west and the United States, met to consider a further escalation of their involvement in Afghanistan. In early December 1979, Yuri Andropov, the head of the KGB, and Defence Minister Dimitry Ustinov argued in favour of a Soviet invasion of Afghanistan to resolve the civil conflict and protect their strategic interests. They converted Brezhnev, whose health had deteriorated considerably, and Gromyko to their cause and on 12 December, authorised up to 80,000 Soviet troops be readied to cross the border.⁷² When the Soviet Ambassador to the U.S. Anatoly Dobrynin learnt of the plans to invade, he expressed his concerns about the potential impact on U.S.-Soviet relations, but Brezhnev dismissed his fears and said, 'it will all be over in three to four weeks.'⁷³

On 22 December, 1979, U.S. intelligence officials reported the build-up of Soviets forces along their border with Afghanistan and warned of an imminent invasion. Three days later, the Soviets crossed the border into Afghanistan and advanced on Kabul. They captured and murdered Amin. Brzezinski now sought a strong response from the administration, convinced that previous responses to crises such as the Horn of Africa, Shaba II and the Cuba brigade fiasco translated into American 'weakness' and gave the Soviets the confidence to intervene.⁷⁴ The national security advisor noted in his memoirs that the invasion 'was a vindication' of his concerns whilst also suggesting 'had we been tougher sooner...maybe the Soviets would not have engaged in this act of miscalculation.' But he also viewed the situation as an opportunity for Carter to 'demonstrate his genuine toughness.'⁷⁵ While the president had resisted fully embracing Brzezinski's approach

⁷¹ Riedel, *What We Won*, 19.

⁷² Dimitrakis, *The Secret War in Afghanistan*, 54-58.

⁷³ Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, 440.

⁷⁴ Vaughan, "Zbigniew Brzezinski and Afghanistan," 125.

⁷⁵ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 429-432.

towards U.S.-Soviet relations, the invasion of Afghanistan represented a direct threat to U.S. strategic interests in the Persian Gulf Region and a serious challenge for the administration's credibility.⁷⁶

Previously, Brzezinski's calls for tougher action against the Soviets faced resistance from Vance. Overall, the secretary of state's strategy towards U.S.-Soviet relations was the administration's position. But the gradual interference of Brzezinski had produced a gradual tilt and when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, he felt increasingly confident of having his approach implemented. The national security advisor began to exert his authority to persuade Carter to accept his ideas and initiatives at the expense of the policies and approaches advocated by Vance and the State Department. He used the Soviet invasion to strengthen his position within the administration, undermining Vance in the process, and confirm his status as the main architect of U.S. foreign policy and the president's chief advisor.

Brzezinski wrote to Carter on 26 December and said, 'we are now facing a regional crisis...If the Soviets succeed in Afghanistan...the age-long dream of Moscow to have direct access to the Indian ocean will have been fulfilled.' He also cautioned, 'the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan poses for us an extremely grave challenge, both internationally and domestically', however, it also represented an opportunity to for them to act against the Soviets. He called for increased reinforcements of the Afghan rebels, both militarily and economically, and enlist the backing of Pakistan and China in their support for the insurgents. The U.S., Brzezinski believed, would also need to warn the Soviets that their actions placed SALT in jeopardy and risked a formal UN condemnation.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Vaughan, "Zbigniew Brzezinski and Afghanistan," 108.

⁷⁷ "Memo, Brzezinski to Carter: 'Reflections on Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan,'" 26 December, 1979, Documents Prepared for Carter-Brezhnev Project Conference "The Intervention in Afghanistan and the fall of Détente," Lysebu, Norway, 17-20 September 1995, National Security Archive.

Carter appeared on television and told reports ‘such gross interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan is in blatant violation of accepted international rules of behaviour.’⁷⁸ When Carter addressed the NSC on 28 December, he fully embraced the advice and policies of his national security advisor and told them he considered the invasion a watershed moment.⁷⁹ During the course of their meeting they agreed to send Brezhnev a strongly worded message that condemned the invasion and warned the Soviet leadership of the potential consequences to U.S.-Soviet relations if they did not withdraw their troops from Afghanistan. When he replied to the message, Brezhnev dismissed U.S. concerns, which only served to agitate Carter.⁸⁰

In a memo the next day, Brzezinski told the president that tough rhetoric needed to be backed up by strong measures. He wrote to Carter, ‘we have frequently protested Soviet actions (bases in Vietnam, Cubans abroad, etc.). Since we have not always followed these verbal protests up with tangible responses, the Soviets may be getting into the habit of disregarding our concern.’⁸¹ This meant adopting measures to punish Moscow and demonstrate their concern over the impact of the invasion on U.S.-Soviet relations. One of those proposals included a considerable sacrifice, the SALT treaty, which Vance had devoted considerable time, effort and energy too during his time as secretary of state.⁸²

On 2 January, 1980, the NSC met to discuss possible actions against the Soviets, which included removing SALT from the Senate calendar. They agreed to recall the U.S. Ambassador Thomas J. Watson from Moscow and reduce Soviet diplomatic staff in the U.S. The administration would also discuss the merits of an Olympic boycott with European allies. Boycotting the games, due to be held in Moscow, was viewed as a risk-free act of

⁷⁸ Jimmy Carter, “Remarks to Reporters on American Hostages in Iran and Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan,” 28 December, 1979, The American Presidency Project.

⁷⁹ Hammond, *Red Flag Over Afghanistan*, 120.

⁸⁰ Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 949.

⁸¹ “Memo, Brzezinski to Carter: ‘Our Response to Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan,’” 29 December, 1979, Documents Prepared for Carter-Brezhnev Project Conference “The Intervention in Afghanistan and the fall of Détente.”

⁸² Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 432.

public diplomacy, but Carter also planned an embargo on the export of grain and strategic technology. The NSC also agreed to provide military and humanitarian aid to Pakistan after seeking an amendment to the foreign assistance bill and give China favourable trade status ahead of the Soviets.⁸³ Two days later, on 4 January, 1980, Carter addressed the nation and provided some detail of the proposals. He called the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan ‘an extremely serious threat to peace...neither the United States nor any other nation which is committed to world peace and stability can continue to do business as usual with the Soviet Union.’ Détente and the approach advocated by Vance had collapsed.⁸⁴

On SALT, Vance and Warren Christopher found themselves the lone voices in support. They suggested it remain on the Senate calendar, but Carter, Brzezinski, Brown and White House Counsel Lloyd Cutler insisted the treaty be placed on hiatus and removed from consideration until further notice.⁸⁵ A dispirited Vance nevertheless, continued to fight for the SALT treaty. ‘Cy was still hoping to save SALT’ Marshall Schulman, Vance’s advisor on Soviet affairs, remarked ‘it was part of his indomitable optimism.’⁸⁶ Although the NSC agreed to restrict communication between diplomats in Washington and Moscow, the State Department noted that such action had not even been taken when the Soviets invaded Hungary and Czechoslovakia in the 1950s and 1960s respectively.⁸⁷ Vance believed maintaining dialogue was essential to salvage SALT and improve relations and so he attempted to initiate a meeting with his Soviet counterpart Andrei Gromyko. Carter and Brzezinski however, rejected his request as it became clear that Afghanistan had ended their

⁸³ “Memo, Brzezinski to Brown, Mondale & Vance: ‘Results of the NSC Meeting,’” January 2, 1980, Volume VI, Soviet Union, January - May 1980, Document 252, FRUS, 1977-1980.

⁸⁴ Jimmy Carter, “Address to the Nation on the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan,” 4 January, 1980, The American Presidency Project.

⁸⁵ “Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting,” 2 January, 1980, Documents Prepared for Carter-Brezhnev Project Conference “The Intervention in Afghanistan and the fall of Détente.”

⁸⁶ Marshall Schulman remarks at “Global Competition and the Deterioration of U.S.-Soviet Relations, 1977-1980” Carter-Brezhnev Project Conference, Fort Lauderdale, FL., 23-26 March 1995, The National Security Archive.

⁸⁷ Aronoff, “In Like a Lamb, Out Like a Lion,” 446.

desire for co-operation. Brzezinski also vetoed a later attempt to send Schulman to Moscow and meet with Brezhnev.⁸⁸

In respect to the other measures announced by Carter, the secretary of state expressed doubts about the effectiveness of an Olympic boycott. Considerable enthusiasm from Brzezinski and Mondale saw the idea prevail, but in their discussions the secretary of state traded 'heated' words with the national security advisor.⁸⁹ Vance reluctantly supported the boycott after he recalled his belief that the U.S. should have boycotted the 1936 games held in Nazi Germany.⁹⁰ He also supported the embargo on grain sales to the Soviet Union as well as a ban on the transfer of technology to the Soviets.⁹¹

The administration tilted towards China even further with the announcement of more favourable trade status. In light of this declaration, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown's trip to China took on extra significance. Vance opposed Brown's visit even before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which he believed increased tensions between themselves and Moscow. The president overruled him. 'I was alone in my desire to maintain our longstanding policy of even handedness between the USSR and the PRC' he reflected. Carter authorised Brown to offer non-lethal military equipment and high technology transfers to the Chinese despite Vance's objections. Not only did such a move worsen U.S.-Soviet relations but the secretary of state warned 'the Chinese leaders were wary of being used as a counterweight in the U.S.-Soviet geopolitical rivalry.'⁹² In his discussions with the Chinese, Brown found the PRC receptive to the idea of technology transfers and the sale of non-lethal military equipment as well as sharing the administration's condemnation of the

⁸⁸ Marshall Schulman remarks at "Global Competition and the Deterioration of U.S.-Soviet Relations, 1977-1980."

⁸⁹ Sarantakes, *Dropping the Torch*, 80-85.

⁹⁰ Smith, *Morality, Reason, and Power*, 226.

⁹¹ Andrinaopoulos, *Kissinger and Brzezinski*, 199.

⁹² Vance, *Hard Choices*, 390-391.

Soviet invasion but on more substantive issues they went no further. 'I was not surprised' Vance recalled.⁹³

After seeking an amendment to the foreign assistance bill, the administration offered President Mohammed Zia ul-Haq \$400million in military assistance to Pakistan despite the United States withdrawing its aid programme the year before for its human rights abuses and lack of adherence to nuclear non-proliferation agreements.⁹⁴ While Vance did not object to the administration's overtures he believed if they neutralised Pakistan and did not introduce U.S. bases, the Soviets may be amenable to an early withdrawal from neighbouring Afghanistan. Brzezinski dismissed the idea, describing it as 'making the Soviet Union in effect the co-guarantor of neutrality in the Persian Gulf region.'⁹⁵ The national security advisor sought to cement further ties with Pakistan in their support for the Afghan rebels. When he visited Pakistan with Warren Christopher in February 1980, they travelled to an army outpost at Khyber Pass near the Afghan border. As they toured the base, Brzezinski was invited to inspect an AK-47 Kalashnikov. He declined to fire it but instead asked for a group photo and waved the rifle above his head.⁹⁶ According to his press secretary, Jerrold Schechter it was as 'a symbol of defiance.' 'News cameras caught the moment' he recalled, 'and the next day his gesture of American opposition to the Soviet invasion appeared on front pages of newspapers around the world.'⁹⁷

While the administration adopted punitive measures against the Soviets, Brzezinski believed the U.S. needed to go further. He attempted to persuade Carter to initiate a 'doctrine' for the Caribbean after discovering a brigade of Soviet troops in Cuba, although the president did not fully embrace his advice. He did, however, approve a considerable military build-up in the region to counter Soviet and Cuban interference.⁹⁸ Now Brzezinski

⁹³ Cyrus Vance quoted in Dimitrakis, *The Secret War in Afghanistan*, 77.

⁹⁴ Smith, *Morality, Reason, and Power*, 231-232.

⁹⁵ Cordovez and Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan*, 54-55.

⁹⁶ "Brzezinski at the Pass: Bonhomie, Bullets," *The New York Times*, 4 February, 1980, A6.

⁹⁷ Jerrold Schechter quoted in Daadler and Destler, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 122.

⁹⁸ Garrison, *Games Advisors Play*, 116.

sought the president's approval to initiate a wide-ranging series of measures to deter Soviet intervention in the Persian Gulf region and support those who wished to oppose them. The invasion of Afghanistan, he argued, threatened the security of the Persian Gulf and the U.S. needed to protect Western interests and other nations from potential Soviet incursions.⁹⁹

He wrote to Carter and called on him to adopt a doctrine for the Persian Gulf region. He drew a parallel between the situation in Afghanistan and the issues faced by President Harry S. Truman during his time in office and told Carter, 'before you are a President Wilson you have to be for a few years a President Truman.' Brzezinski reminded him that Soviet intimations towards Greece and Turkey inspired the president to first unveil the 'Truman Doctrine' in a speech in 1947, which pledged American support for countries to ward off the threat of communism. As he noted, 'this speech marked the beginning of one of the most creative periods of U.S. diplomacy. Most importantly, it signalled the intention of the U.S. to abandon its past hesitancy and to assume a more activist role internationally.' Whereas previously he criticised the administration's passivity or acquiescence with respect to the Soviet Union, Brzezinski told the president that, in his view, the United States had a duty to act in defiance of the communist threat. Moreover, it offered the opportunity for the U.S. to assert itself on the world stage as Truman had done in 1947.¹⁰⁰

The Persian Gulf, he argued, was particularly vulnerable to Soviet incursions and the U.S. needed to guarantee the security of the area. Truman assigned considerable funding to the Middle East to help them combat the Soviet threat but also preserve American strategic, military and economic interests in the region, through which the United States gained a significant foothold in the region.¹⁰¹ Faced with a similar situation, the administration needed to take actions to preserve their interests and prevent their status from evaporating. 'As in 1947, the West looks to us because only we can provide the necessary leadership and

⁹⁹ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 443-444.

¹⁰⁰ "Memo, Brzezinski to Carter: 'Relevance of the Truman Doctrine to Current Situation,'" 2 January, 1980, Volume I, Foundations of Foreign Policy, Document 134, FRUS, 1977-1980.

¹⁰¹ Bledar Prifti, *US Foreign Policy in the Middle East: The Case for Continuity* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017,) 62-68.

resources to turn back the Soviet threat to our interests in the region and beyond' he told Carter.¹⁰²

He wrote to the president again several days later and outlined a range of measures to expand the U.S. military presence and activities in the region. They included, in addition to covert assistance, increased defence spending and the implementation of a rapid deployment force. In a blow to Vance's attempts to reinstitute good relations with the Soviet Union, Brzezinski noted, 'there is no need to freeze the U.S.-Soviet relationship any further, but by the same token we should have no illusions about an early improvement—nor should we strive for one.' Near the end the memo, he wrote 'our response has to be a sustained one and a regional one. Success or failure will depend on what we do in terms of the longer run in Southwest Asia. You might want to think of a 'Carter doctrine.'" The president underlined 'Carter doctrine.' Much of the contents of the memo became incorporated in the president's state of the union address before Congress.¹⁰³

On 23 January, 1980, Carter declared that in order to protect the Persian Gulf the United States would take certain measures to counter Soviet interference, and safeguard Western interests. To do so, Carter indicated the administration's willingness to use force. 'Let our position be absolutely clear: An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.'¹⁰⁴ The president's address signalled a dramatic increase in the U.S. military presence in the region as well as the reintroduction of selective service (the draft) and a 5% increase in the defence budget. Although not explicitly outlined in the speech, the doctrine paved the way for the creation of a rapid deployment force and confirmed the introduction of new

¹⁰² "Memo, Brzezinski to Carter: 'Relevance of the Truman Doctrine to Current Situation.'"

¹⁰³ "Memo, Brzezinski to Carter: 'A Long-Term Strategy for Coping with the Consequences of the Soviet Action in Afghanistan,'" 9 January, 1980, Volume VI, Soviet Union, January - May 1980, Document 256, FRUS, 1977-1980.

¹⁰⁴ Jimmy Carter, "The State of the Union Address Delivered Before a Joint Session of the Congress," 23 January, 1980, The American Presidency Project.

NATO missile systems in Europe. They also increased the U.S. naval presence in the Indian Ocean and flew B-52 bombers over Soviet positions.¹⁰⁵

Coupled with the punitive measures adopted prior to the address, the Carter doctrine represented the end of the policies and approaches Vance had advocated throughout his time as secretary of state. ‘The tenuous balance between visceral anti-Sovietism and an attempt to regulate dangerous competition could no longer be maintained. The scales tipped toward those favouring confrontation’ he concluded.¹⁰⁶ Some in the State Department, derided the speech and the president’s approach. Anthony Lake, upon receiving a draft copy of Carter’s address, wrote on it ‘this is a piece of unadulterated shit...it is filled with non-arguments (‘Soviet aggression cannot go undeterred’) and other insane formulations.’¹⁰⁷ To Brzezinski, however, the speech vindicated his warnings about the Soviet Union but also embraced his approach to U.S. foreign policy. He referred to it in his memoirs as a ‘particularly gratifying moment.’¹⁰⁸

The speech and the actions taken against the Soviet Union consolidated his position and detrimentally weakened Vance and the State Department. The Soviets meanwhile, knew Brzezinski had influenced the speech and many of the policies that followed. ‘Brzezinski had his hour of triumph’ Ambassador Dobrynin recalled. Moreover, they realised his impact on the administration had resulted in Vance being side-lined and thwarted any hopes for better relations. On 21 March, the secretary of state held a particularly sombre meeting with Dobrynin and alluded to the substantial shift within the administration. ‘Vance told me Carter seemed to be obsessed with the vengeful idea of ‘punishing the Soviet Union for

¹⁰⁵ Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 954-955.

¹⁰⁶ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 394.

¹⁰⁷ Anthony Lake handwritten notes “State of the Union Address (Draft),” n.d., State of the Union, Drafts - Reading Materials - Box 14, Policy and Planning Office of the Director - Records of Anthony Lake, 1977-1981, Record Group 59, General Records of the Department of State, NARA.

¹⁰⁸ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 443.

Afghanistan” the ambassador remembered, ‘that conversation showed that the Carter-Brzezinski team had substantially clipped Vance’s wings.’¹⁰⁹

Carter’s decision to punish the Soviets so forcefully surprised some within his administration, particularly given that he once declared the U.S. to be ‘free of that inordinate fear of communism.’¹¹⁰ In the days following the invasion, Carter went on television and told interviewer Frank Reynolds, ‘this action of the Soviets has made a more dramatic change in my opinion of what the Soviets’ goals are than anything they have ever done in the previous time that I have been in office.’¹¹¹ The comment led to charges of naivety, even from those within his own administration. ‘Is it your understanding that the Soviet Union uniquely invaded Afghanistan? Had they been absent from the territory and suddenly came across with great waves of tanks, is that your understanding of what happened?’ reflected State Department spokesperson Hodding Carter.¹¹² Robert Gates, who previously served as Brzezinski’s special assistant, remembering the reports on Soviet activity his boss sent to the president, noted ‘clearly Carter had been reading what Brzezinski was writing but not taking it on board... that statement basically meant that he had been reading all these short essays from Brzezinski all these years, for three years, and it had had very little impact on him.’¹¹³

Carter had sided with Vance’s assessment of the Soviets for most his presidency. Even when Brzezinski had attempted to harshen the administration’s rhetoric following Soviet and Cuban intervention in Africa and after the brigade crisis, the president resisted fully embracing his approach. However, the national security advisor’s bombardment of memos and strategy papers over the years, convinced Carter that the Soviets held a ‘grand design’ on the Persian Gulf and sought to exploit the situation in Afghanistan and neighbouring Iran. Despite his desire to be ‘the decider’ in the administration, he had no central outlook on foreign policy and required on the job tuition in international affairs. This

¹⁰⁹ Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, 447-453.

¹¹⁰ Carter, “Address at Commencement Exercises at the University of Notre Dame.”

¹¹¹ “Transcript of President’s Interview on Soviet Reply,” *The New York Times*, 1 January, 1980, 4.

¹¹² Carter III, Interview with the author.

¹¹³ Gates, Telephone Interview with the author.

led Brzezinski to constantly inform the president and shift the administration's foreign policy agenda, despite Vance's opposition. As he had agreed with Vance on numerous occasions and attempted to harness U.S.-Soviet relations, he felt betrayed by their aggression. The president sided with his national security advisor while his secretary of state became an increasingly marginalised figure within the administration and his position, according to some, became untenable. 'Brzezinski had won the argument when the Soviets went into Afghanistan' remembered Leslie Gelb, 'at that point, I don't think he (Vance) was in a position to disagree with Carter and Brzezinski's line and didn't make it an issue. He didn't like it though.'¹¹⁴

Moreover, the president's trust in Vance's strategies and ideas ultimately faded and he embraced Brzezinski's approach more generally. Throughout the administration's time in office, Brzezinski had sought to advance his own policies and approaches at the expense of those of Vance and the State Department. Using a range of bureaucratic tools available to him, the national security advisor undermined and outmanoeuvred the secretary of state during the policy wars. Vance resisted those challenges with mixed success but the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan detrimentally affected his position. He no longer had the favour of the president, and his ability to influence the administration's approach to world affairs evaporated. According to NSC staffer Gary Sick, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, 'marked the end of the battle between Cy Vance and the State Department on the one hand, and Zbig Brzezinski and the NSC on the other. Cy lost the battle, and Brzezinski was very much the dominant figure.'¹¹⁵

Sick also noted that Vance's demeanour changed and he became more withdrawn. 'He was sort of backing away from the thing and I think that had to do very much with the differences on Afghan policy...from that point on Vance began drifting away and I think he knew that he had really lost the policy game' he recalled.¹¹⁶ In his final meeting with Soviet

¹¹⁴ Gelb, Interview with the author.

¹¹⁵ Gary Sick remarks at "The Intervention in Afghanistan and the Fall of Détente."

¹¹⁶ Sick, Interview with the author.

Ambassador Dobrynin on 20 April, 1980, Vance admitted that prospects for better U.S.-Soviet relations were bleak. 'For the first time' the ambassador later wrote 'he frankly admitted that other forces were gaining the upper hand. He was uncharacteristically sad, as if absorbed in painful reflect.' Unbeknownst to Dobrynin, the administration had drafted plans for an ambitious military operation to free the American hostages held in Tehran while Vance arrived at a decision on his future as secretary of state.¹¹⁷

Operation Eagle Claw

Between January and April 1980, White House Chief of Staff Hamilton Jordan, Assistant Secretary of State Harold Saunders and desk officer Henry Precht engaged in talks with Christian Bourget, a French lawyer, and Hector Villalon, an Argentine businessman with links to the newly elected Iranian President Abolhassan Bani-Sadr and Foreign Minister Sadegh Ghotbzadeh.¹¹⁸ Both parties worked on the formation of a UN commission to investigate Iranian grievances, in exchange for the hostages' release, but to no avail. This latest failure led Carter to break diplomatic relations and announce additional sanctions on Iran. Vance argued against the president's decision, but reflected that 'within the White House there was growing impatience with the diplomatic approach. Increasingly, I heard calls for 'doing something' to restore our national honour. Carter himself was losing faith.'¹¹⁹ Saunders noted on the morning of 7 April, the day the U.S. broke relations with Iran, the 'momentum for a negotiated settlement seemed to have run out.'¹²⁰

Previously, military options and rescue attempts discussed by the administration, fell by the waste side as diplomatic initiatives took precedence. Brzezinski continually argued in favour of military action or a rescue mission and after the latest diplomatic failure, the national security advisor judged it apt to proceed with such a measure. Carter resisted Brzezinski's advice in the early days of the crisis but he became frustrated by the lack of

¹¹⁷ Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, 453.

¹¹⁸ Glad, *An Outsider in the White House*, 181.

¹¹⁹ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 407.

¹²⁰ Saunders, "Diplomacy and Pressure, November 1979-May 1980," 134.

progress.¹²¹ Moreover, political pressures added to Carter's woes. He faced an uphill struggle to win the presidential nomination of his own party and while opinion poll ratings initially soared in his favour after the seizure of the embassy, they gradually declined to 32% and his decision to initiate further sanctions on Iran received negative feedback.¹²² The media added additional pressure with a third of the televised news dedicated to the hostage crisis. Programmes such as *The Crisis in Iran: America Held Hostage* aired nightly to captivated audience while Walter Cronkite signed off his broadcasts with a painful reminder of the number of days the diplomats had spent in captivity.¹²³

The first serious consideration of a rescue mission occurred at Camp David on 22 March, 1980, when Brzezinski reignited discussions around a possible operation and briefed key advisors on the alternatives available. Carter remained unconvinced but agreed to investigate all options and gave his approval to a reconnaissance flight over Iran to gather further information. Vance also agreed but rejected the idea of a rescue mission.¹²⁴ By the first week of April, as diplomatic efforts collapsed, calls for military action or a rescue operation strengthened. 'The hawks are flying' Gary Sick later wrote, 'I had two unsolicited suggestions (from White House staff members) for a blockade of Iran before breakfast this morning.'¹²⁵ Although restricted to the principal advisors, Vance began asking some members of his own staff questions that alerted them to the possibility of a planned operation. On Easter weekend, he spoke with Henry Precht and asked for his views on a rescue mission. 'I sort of unloaded on him, telling him all the dire things that would happen' Precht recalled, 'and at the end he said "I think so too."¹²⁶ But Brzezinski and the NSC were determined to press ahead with the idea and outmanoeuvre Vance and the State Department.

¹²¹ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 486.

¹²² Rubin, *Paved with Good Intentions*, 330.

¹²³ Gary Sick, *October Surprise: America's Hostages in Iran and the Election of Ronald Reagan* (New York: Random House, 1991), 17.

¹²⁴ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 487.

¹²⁵ Gary Sick, "Military Options and Constraints," in *American Hostages in Iran*, ed. Christopher and Kreisberg, 151-153; Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 511.

¹²⁶ Saunders, "Diplomacy and Pressure, November 1979-May 1980," 142-143; Precht, Interview with the author.

On 8 April, Sick, who also advocated some form of action to release the hostages, penned a memo to Brzezinski entitled ‘Getting the Hostages Free’, which outlined the two options that remained for the administration: gradual application of force against Iran or a rescue mission. Brzezinski redrafted the memo and forwarded it to the president on 10 April.¹²⁷ He wrote, ‘it is now clear the diplomatic option is closed’ and they needed to address the two options. The application of force, Brzezinski noted, carried the risk of endangering the hostage’s lives if Iran decided to retaliate. A rescue mission was a more desirable option and if successfully implemented ‘would be understood – and perhaps applauded – by regional states and allies alike...it would embarrass the Ayatollah and show him and his regime to be inept.’ The element of surprise made the operation desirable although he acknowledged the risks, ‘in my view, a carefully planned and boldly executed rescue operation represents the only realistic prospect that the hostages – any of them – will be freed in the foreseeable future’ he explained. ‘Our policy of restraint has won us well deserved understanding throughout the world, but it has run out. This is the painful conclusion we must now face.’ Returning to the theme of national honour, he recognised the enormity of the decision for Carter to undertake but he also wrote ‘we have to think beyond the fate of the fifty Americans (and also some Iranians) and consider the deleterious effects of a protracted stalemate, growing public frustration, and international humiliation of the United States.’¹²⁸ Carter read the memo and told Brzezinski ‘the time had come to act’ and ordered him to convene an NSC meeting the next day.¹²⁹

After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Vance stepped back from policy making and stopped attending meetings. ‘As things got nastier and nastier during the hostage taking and all of that, Vance began to take himself out of the decision-making process. When we came to meetings it would be Warren Christopher who would represent the State

¹²⁷ Sick, *All Fall Down*, 290.

¹²⁸ “Memo, Brzezinski to Carter ‘Getting the Hostages Free,’” 10 April, 1980, NSC Accomplishments - Iran: 4/80-10/80 - Box 34, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Subject File, JCPL.

¹²⁹ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 492.

Department' Gary Sick recalled.¹³⁰ The situation took its toll on Vance and he departed for a weekend break in Florida with his wife Grace just as Brzezinski's scheduled a crucial NSC meeting on 11 April. Due to the secrecy that surrounded the rescue mission, Christopher had neither conferred with Vance nor held any prior knowledge of any potential operation. Taken aback by the discussion, he reiterated the diplomatic options still available but the mood of those in attendance leaned in favour of assertive action.¹³¹ Carter then announced his decision to proceed with the rescue mission. He noted that Vance provided his objections to any military action prior to his departure but if a choice existed between a blockade and a rescue mission, he preferred the latter.¹³² Christopher however doubted this. During the meeting, he turned to Hamilton Jordan and asked, 'does Cy know about this?' Although Jordan assured him he did, Christopher replied 'no, no – does he realise how far long the president's is in his thinking about this?'¹³³

When Vance returned to Washington on 14 April, Christopher briefed the secretary on the meeting and described his reaction as 'volcanic...the angriest I'd ever seen him.'¹³⁴ A stunned Vance immediately confronted the president the next morning, 'angry that such a momentous decision had been made' in his absence.¹³⁵ He argued, as he had done consistently throughout the hostage crisis, that any rescue effort placed the hostages lives in danger, 'I said to him [Carter], I feel very strongly about this because I'm deeply concerned that taking any action by force may very well jeopardise the lives of a lot of our people.' He considered the rescue mission premature, a reactionary response that endangered the hostages. Recalling past experiences, he noted, 'I had seen real mess-ups, by people going and trying to do things that hadn't really been thought through...I've seen too many people screw up on things, because they're carried away by the situation of the moment and how it affects them.' Moreover, he indicated that diplomatic efforts placed considerable pressure on

¹³⁰ Sick, Interview with the author.

¹³¹ Christopher, *Chances of a Lifetime*, 99.

¹³² Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 493.

¹³³ Warren Christopher quoted in Jordan, *Crisis*, 251.

¹³⁴ Christopher, *Chances of a Lifetime*, 101.

¹³⁵ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 209.

the Iranians to release the hostages and offered hope for their safe release. After he listened to Vance's objections to the mission, Carter granted him permission to present them at a hastily arranged NSC meeting.¹³⁶

At the meeting, he repeated his argument; an ambitious rescue mission placed the hostages in considerable danger, at a time when the Red Cross provided optimistic reports on their health. Even if the operation succeeded in extracting the hostages from the embassy, he believed it would result in casualties. He also warned about a potential backlash, not just in Iran against American citizens, but in the Arab world against the United States and its allies. He had spent a considerable amount of time and effort providing assurances to allies who supported their efforts and taking military action without warning would undoubtedly agitate and annoy them.¹³⁷ After he expressed his concerns, he continued to argue the case for diplomatic efforts but most of the attendees believed those initiatives had failed and remained unconvinced by the secretary's advice. 'There was an awkward silence as Vance scanned the room' looking for support, Jordan remembered. 'I fidgeted, feeling sorry for Cy, who sat there all alone.' The principals, impatient with diplomatic efforts and unmoved by Vance's pleas, supported the rescue operation.¹³⁸

This mission consisted of eight helicopters flying from the USS *Nimitz*, through the Iranian desert before they rendezvoused with six C-130 transport planes carrying a rescue team of Delta troops to a point known as 'desert one' in South Iran. The helicopters would transport the rescue team to a site on the outskirts of Tehran before an assault on the embassy the next evening.¹³⁹ As the administration worked on the details, Vance continued to voice grave doubts about its chances of success. Speaking with Hamilton Jordan, he said 'generals rarely tell you they can't do something. This a complex damn operation, and I haven't forgotten the old saying from my Pentagon days that in the military anything that

¹³⁶ Cyrus Vance quoted in Houghton, *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Iran Hostage Crisis*, 127-128.

¹³⁷ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 409-410.

¹³⁸ Jordan, *Crisis*, 253.

¹³⁹ Kaufman and Kaufman, *The Presidency of James Earl Carter Jr.*, 212.

can go wrong will go wrong.’ Brzezinski dismissed Vance’s doubts. ‘Cy is the ultimate example of a good man who has been traumatised by his Vietnam experience’ he remarked.¹⁴⁰

In the days that followed Vance felt it appropriate to consider his position as secretary of state. He consulted with friends, and concluded that his reservations made it untenable for him to publicly support the mission during the public scrutiny that would follow. ‘Even if the mission worked perfectly, and I did not believe it would,’ he recorded in his memoirs, ‘I would have to say afterward I had opposed it, give my reasons for opposing it, and publicly criticise the president.’ By 17 April, he arrived at the conclusion that he should resign.¹⁴¹ In his formal letter of resignation he told Carter, ‘I wish I could support you...but for the reasons we have discussed I cannot. You would not be well served in the coming weeks and months by a secretary of state who could not offer you the public backing you need.’¹⁴² Carter accepted his letter of resignation with his departure to be confirmed after the rescue mission. Displeased with his decision to quit, the president later called Vance’s resignation ‘a knife in my back.’¹⁴³

The operation took place on 24 April, 1980, but immediately faced difficulties. As the helicopters travelled across the desert to the rendezvous point, one was abandoned due to a mechanical failure while another, damaged by dust storms, returned the USS *Nimitz*. Upon arrival at ‘desert one’ where the C-130s landed successfully, another helicopter turned out to be irreparably damaged. Five helicopters remained useable but with a minimum of six needed to transport the hostages out of Tehran, Delta Force unit leader Colonel Charlie Beckwith recommended that the mission be aborted. Carter reluctantly agreed, relieved that there were no casualties. However, disaster struck as the rescue team prepared to leave when

¹⁴⁰ Jordan, *Crisis*, 264.

¹⁴¹ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 410-411.

¹⁴² “Letter, Vance to Carter,” 21 April, 1980, Secy Vance resignation 4/29/80 - Box 15, Policy and Planning Office of the Director - Records of Anthony Lake, 1977-1981, General Records of the Department of State, NARA.

¹⁴³ Jimmy Carter quoted in Strong, *Working in the World*, 247.

one of the helicopters collided with a C-130 plane. The subsequent explosion killed eight U.S. servicemen.¹⁴⁴ When Carter learned of the accident and of the fatalities, his face turned white. Vance broke the subsequent silence by saying ‘Mr President, I’m very, very sorry.’¹⁴⁵

In the aftermath of the disaster, Carter faced the unenviable task of informing members of Congress and the nation. He went on television that day to explain the events and the decision he took. Brzezinski meanwhile attempted to organise another military rescue mission, codenamed operation ‘honey badger’ but within the administration, few favoured another ambitious operation.¹⁴⁶ When Gary Sick gave a pessimistic report on the feasibility of a second rescue mission, the national security advisor did not acknowledge his assessment. ‘I knew this was not the answer Brzezinski was looking for’ Sick recalled and the idea of a second operation quickly faded.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, when the Iranians learned of the mission, they took the hostages out of the embassy and dispersed them to various locations in Tehran, which made a rescue operation of any kind almost impossible.¹⁴⁸

The hostage crisis continued until 20 January, 1981, entirely along the diplomatic tracks Vance and the State Department advocated with his deputy Warren Christopher taking the lead. After 444 days in captivity, the hostages were eventually freed seconds after power passed from Carter to newly elected President Ronald Reagan.¹⁴⁹ The hostage crisis and the rivalry with Brzezinski took its toll on Vance. When Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke visited Vance to persuade him to change his mind about his resignation, he found the secretary afflicted by a sudden attack of gout.¹⁵⁰ As Vance left the White House for the final time, he departed with the aid of a cane, which led advisor Gerald Rafshoon to quip to Hamilton Jordan, ‘Zbig bit him on the foot.’¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 252-253.

¹⁴⁵ Kalb and Kalb, *Haunting Legacy*, 74.

¹⁴⁶ Houghton, *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Iran Hostage Crisis*, 137.

¹⁴⁷ Sick, *All Fall Down*, 305-306.

¹⁴⁸ Axworthy, *Revolutionary Iran*, 178.

¹⁴⁹ Harold H. Saunders, “The Crisis Begins,” in *American Hostages in Iran*, ed. Christopher and Kreisberg, 62; Kalb and Kalb, *Haunting Legacy*, 69.

¹⁵⁰ Brinkley, “Out of the Loop,” E43.

¹⁵¹ Gerald Rafshoon quoted in Jordan, *Crisis*, 283.

Conclusion

‘We fought like hell to keep him (Vance) from quitting’ remembered Hodding Cater as other State Department staffers discussed resigning en masse in support of their boss.¹⁵² ‘You mustn’t’ Vance told them, backing his deputy Warren Christopher to succeed him.¹⁵³ No mass resignations followed from the State Department but many praised Vance for his conduct as secretary, especially during his high-profile tussles with Brzezinski. Anthony Lake told Vance, ‘it is not the professional satisfaction of working with such a wise and competent man that I will most cherish. It will be the many times in my memory of an extraordinarily decent person, where decency was tested in so many ways, and always was true.’¹⁵⁴

Carter did not accept Vance’s departure graciously. Although he recognised the personal agony Vance felt, his failure to support him and leave at a critical moment for the administration annoyed the president.¹⁵⁵ Brzezinski later reflected that ‘the key point about Vance’s attitude, and this is what angered Carter, is that he was against (the rescue mission) irrespective of whether we succeed or fail.’¹⁵⁶ Instead of appointing Warren Christopher as Vance recommended, Carter selected Senator Edmund Muskie to replace him. Carter said of his new secretary of state, ‘he will play a somewhat different role than the one Secretary Vance played, because of a difference in background and temperament and attitude. I see Ed Muskie as being a much stronger and more statesmanlike senior-citizen figure who will be a more evocative spokesman for our nation’s policy.’¹⁵⁷

Many considered the praise of Muskie as a ‘more statesmanlike’ figure a stinging rebuke, and it led journalist Curtis Wilkie to label the comment ‘a graceless show by the

¹⁵² Carter III, Interview with the author.

¹⁵³ Brinkley, “Out of the Loop,” E43.

¹⁵⁴ “Letter, Lake to Vance,” 28 April, 1980, Secy Vance resignation 4/29/80 - Box 15, Policy and Planning Office of the Director - Records of Anthony Lake, 1977-1981, Record Group 59 General Records of the Department of State, NARA.

¹⁵⁵ Strong, *Working in the World*, 247.

¹⁵⁶ Houghton, *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Iran Hostage Crisis*, 194.

¹⁵⁷ Jimmy Carter, “Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a Town hall Meeting at Temple University.,” 9 May, 1980, The American Presidency Project.

president.¹⁵⁸ It also prompted Vance loyalist, Hodding Carter to resign from his position as State Department press spokesperson. ‘I said “you know what, you don’t need be pissing on that guy. He served you forever.” So, I wrote a letter of resignation right on the spot and that was the end of it.’¹⁵⁹ Hodding Carter also reserved heavy criticism for Brzezinski, as the administration prepared to leave office. He wrote a piece for *Playboy* magazine that took aim at both the president and the national security advisor, referring to the latter as a ‘second rate thinker’ and ‘a rat terrier, he would shake himself off after a losing encounter and begin nipping at Vance’s ankles.’¹⁶⁰ Meanwhile, Vance’s friend, UN Ambassador Donald McHenry, publicly criticised the national security advisor’s predominant and assertive role as detrimental to the administration’s foreign policy objectives. ‘You can only have one secretary of state’ he remarked.¹⁶¹ Leslie Gelb wrote that Brzezinski had constantly undercut the secretary of state and undermined his position; ‘while Mr. Vance played by Marquis of Queensbury rules, it might be said Mr. Brzezinski was more of a streetfighter.’¹⁶²

As this chapter illustrates, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan coupled with the Iranian hostage crisis brought the bureaucratic struggles between Vance, Brzezinski and their respective departments to a close. The national security advisor outmanoeuvred the secretary of state as the president’s chief foreign policy advisor as the two seismic events in the Persian Gulf solidified his position. Vance unsuccessfully lobbied against a tough response to both crises, as his influence with the administration declined and his position became untenable. The national security advisor succeeded in shifting the focus of the administration’s foreign policy agenda.

The reaction of Vance’s staff and colleagues to his resignation demonstrated their frustration and disappointment at the gradual erosion of his authority within the

¹⁵⁸ Curtis Wilkie, “A Graceless Show by the President,” *The Boston Globe*, 18 May, 1980, A5.

¹⁵⁹ Carter III, Interview with the author.

¹⁶⁰ George Lardner Jr., “Hodding Carter Scathes Brzezinski as ‘Second-Rate’: Modelling Carter Rips Brzezinski,” *The Washington Post*, 30 December, 1980, A1.

¹⁶¹ “McHenry Asserts Brzezinski Sent ‘Mixed Signals’: Resignation Takes Effect Jan. 19,” *The New York Times*, 2 January, 1981, A4.

¹⁶² Gelb, “Vance--Torn by Ideals and by Loyalty to Carter,” A23.

administration. Several were not surprised by his decision to quit and believed he may have welcomed the opportunity to leave because of his struggles with Brzezinski. 'I think that he did not regret that the opportunity to leave over principal arose' remembered Hodding Carter, 'he was exhausted; he was tired of getting beat in the bureaucratic wars.'¹⁶³ Others believed the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan left Vance isolated and unable to affect policy. 'He didn't have as much to lose by the time we got to the rescue mission as he did before' Gary Sick noted, 'he was no longer as close to Carter and Carter wasn't looking to him first for advice. So, in a sense this was really sort of his last stand.'¹⁶⁴

Throughout his time as secretary of state, Vance attempted to persuade Carter to follow his advice and strategies with mixed success. The president had sought to balance the advice between his two key advisors, despite their differing perspectives and conceptions of their roles. He consistently proved himself unable to manage the pair or articulate their strategies into a clear and consistent foreign policy agenda. The lack of leadership from the president, ultimately precipitated the bureaucratic struggles between Vance and Brzezinski. Carter later said that he was 'sore' about Vance's resignation and as he reflected on the failed rescue mission, the president said that he should have ordered another helicopter. When the former secretary of state was told of Carter's comments, he 'replied with a wry smile' and said, 'or a different national security advisor.'¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ Carter III, Interview with the author.

¹⁶⁴ Sick, Interview with the author.

¹⁶⁵ Brinkley, "Out of the Loop," E43.

Conclusion

The Presidency of Jimmy Carter became engulfed by a series of foreign policy crises. Revolutions in Iran and Nicaragua, proxy wars in Africa, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and latterly the hostage crisis disrupted the administration's attempts to promote human rights, negotiate an arms control treaty and shift the focus of U.S. foreign policy away from the superpower conflict with the Soviet Union. Each instance was hampered by the bureaucratic wars between Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski and their respective departments. Their debates, and internal manoeuvrings had a significant impact on the administration's foreign policy. While Carter entered the White House with the intention of having a collegial, team based style of decision-making that provided him with a range of options to choose from, it ultimately precipitated an ideological and bureaucratic struggle between the president's principal advisors and their departments.

In terms of policy and approach, they differed substantially, with Brzezinski's emphasis on a tough, assertive foreign policy as opposed to Vance's patient, soft, diplomatic style. As chapter one illustrates, the ideological roots of their dispute evolved from their upbringing and their experiences in government. Their knowledge and expertise attracted the attention of Jimmy Carter and he recruited them as advisors to his campaign for the White House however it was the Polish academic who cultivated a close personal and professional relationship with the future president. Whereas Vance's contribution to the campaign was relatively minor, Brzezinski supported Carter throughout and played a vital role in formulating policy and prepping him for the crucial foreign policy debate with Ford, a significant moment in the race for the White House.

Carter relied heavily on Brzezinski's advice and above all trusted him whereas Vance never fostered the same intimacy with the president. This, as well as his lack of experience and desire for on the job tutoring, led Carter to give the Pole a pre-eminent role within his administration. The formalised NSC structure, outlined in chapter two, benefited

Brzezinski and his department's ability to develop and implement policies but left Vance and the State Department with less opportunity to dramatically shape the administration's agenda. The president favoured the national security advisor and immediately gave him a significant role in the administration to affect the foreign policy agenda. As a result, the bureaucratic rivalry between themselves and their departments developed from day one.¹

The first year saw elements of their struggles fester below the surface as Vance attempted to assert his and his department's influence on policy. As noted in chapter three, the SALT II negotiations with the Soviet Union highlighted their divergent ideological outlooks regarding the superpower relationship and led to a conflict over the American position in the arms control talks. But the bureaucratic disadvantages afforded to Vance, contributed towards Carter's decision to endorse the 'deep cuts' approach of Brzezinski. The Soviets sharply rebuked the proposal, already stung by the administration's human rights agenda. Vance argued against publicly highlighting Soviet human rights abuses for fear it would detrimentally affect SALT, while the Cold War hawk Brzezinski claimed otherwise, appealing to Carter's concern for human suffrage. In other areas, the pair worked collegially on democratic advancement in Africa, the Panama Canal treaties and a Middle East peace deal between Israel and Egypt. The latter case highlighted the potential for co-operation between the president's advisors and their departments.

Chapter four shows how Brzezinski urged Carter to adopt a tougher and more assertive approach to world affairs. As the administration entered its second year in office, an opportunity presented itself, as hostilities erupted between Ethiopia and Somalia in the Horn of Africa and Zaire and Angola in the Shaba region. Divergent interpretations of the conflicts and the role of the Soviet Union and Cuba led to a furious and bitter row over the administration's approach to resolve the disputes. While Vance favoured peaceful, diplomatic mediation, Brzezinski called for a tough response that utilised U.S. military and

¹ See, Destler, Gelb, and Lake, *Our Own Worst Enemy*; Dumbrell, *The Carter Presidency*; David Skidmore, *Reversing Course*; Aronoff, "In Like a Lamb, Out Like a Lion," 425–49; Auten, *Carter's Conversion*.

economic support for Somalia, the Angolan rebels and Zaire to contain the communist threat. Carter however seemed unable to choose between his advisors and adopted elements of the strategies of both his national security advisor and secretary of state. His policy speeches at the time reflected the deviating advice he received, contributing to a perception that the administration's foreign policy was inconsistent and incoherent.

Meanwhile, the administration's attempts to restore diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC) provoked further agitation. Brzezinski and NSC staffer Michel Oksenberg outmanoeuvred and undermined Vance and the State Department to initiate talks with the PRC. Furthermore, normalisation indicated a distinct shift in the administration's approach vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. It also illustrated the importance of Brzezinski's role within the administration. While his position had been defined as 'the thinker' he became 'the doer' by travelling to China, with the president's blessing, to commence talks.

The following year triggered further disputes as Vance and Brzezinski attempted to orchestrate the administration's reaction to unrest in Iran and Nicaragua. With Carter inactive and unable to decide between the two, both competed to influence events. Chapter five also details how Vance's influence began to evaporate. Coupled with his decision to step down after the 1980 presidential election, his relationship with the president sharply declined. This limited his input on policy development and implementation even further, while it enhanced Brzezinski's position as he attempted to persuade Carter to embrace a tougher stance towards the Soviet Union. The 'discovery' of a brigade of Soviet troops in Cuba was a clear indication of the rightward shift in Carter's thinking from the co-operative, diplomatic approach espoused by Vance toward the hard-line strategy of Brzezinski.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, outlined in chapter six, gave him the opportunity to successfully persuade Carter to embrace his approach. The foreign policy objectives of Vance, particularly the successful ratification of the SALT II treaty, were discarded in favour of a 'Carter Doctrine' to tackle Soviet expansionism across the

world. Finally, the Iranian hostage crisis and the president's decision to order an audacious rescue mission prompted Vance's resignation. Throughout the crisis, he defended his diplomatic approach against assaults by Brzezinski and the NSC but the president's reluctant decision to order Operation Eagle Claw left Vance in no doubt that his position had become untenable.

This thesis placed the Vance-Brzezinski relationship within the wider theoretical framework of the bureaucratic politics model to illustrate how presidential decision-making, with respect to foreign policy, can be influenced by competing forces, either by individuals or government departments. It sought to address the role of the president, the secretary of state and national security advisor as well as their respective departments and understand how their contributions during the Carter years affected policy development and implementation.

Given Jimmy Carter's lack of experience and expertise with respect to foreign policy, coupled with his desire to be 'the decider' in the administration, he gravitated towards a system that provided him with a range of options, which allowed him to come to a fully informed decision. However, his inability to manage the differences between his advisors resulted in an incoherent and inconsistent agenda. Increasingly his decisions mirrored the divergent policies of his two key advisors. His responses to the crises in Africa and speeches in 1978 highlighted his failure to effectively combine the advice and policies of Vance and Brzezinski into a clear approach. The press, his advisors and their departments recognised the contradictions, as confidence in the president's ability to co-ordinate U.S. foreign policy faded.

At other times, paralysed by indecision, he failed to pick a clear course of action. The revolution in Iran, highlighted his indecisiveness. At various stages of the crisis, he sided with Vance, at other times Brzezinski, unwilling to authoritatively choose between their approaches. The situation fuelled the tensions between his advisors but also intensified

the departmental competition as they vied to influence the administration's approach to the revolution and court the president's favour.

While bureaucratic politics scholars differ on the role of the president, the example of the Carter administration illustrates how presidential authority can be weakened by the influence of advisors and their departments. Although Carter believed the decision-making structure made him 'the decider' in the administration, it ultimately laid the foundations of the bureaucratic conflict between Vance, Brzezinski and their departments. His indecisiveness and inability to effectively manage their views led both to actively compete with one another to influence his decision. As various crises arose, the outcome of deliberations became increasingly influenced by the policy differences between Vance and Brzezinski, with Carter unable to decisively choose between the two. In sum, this case demonstrates that presidential authority within the bureaucratic politics framework can be seriously reduced and have serious ramifications for policy development and implementation.

The bureaucratic model emphasises that ideological differences coupled with divergent interpretations of roles can exacerbate competition at the executive level. Vance and Brzezinski's contrasting worldviews, backgrounds and personalities produced clashes on key aspects of the administration's agenda, particularly their positions on U.S.-Soviet relations. This was reflected in their positions on arms control, proxy wars in Africa and normalisation of relations with China. Their styles and approaches to U.S. foreign policy also set them apart. Vance, the patient diplomat urged caution and moderation on key issues, as opposed to Brzezinski's pleas for an assertive hard-line agenda.

Moreover, their varied understanding of their roles within the administration further elevated the sense of competition between them. While Jordan identified Brzezinski as 'the thinker' and Vance as 'the doer' within the administration, neither felt comfortable with their roles. Vance considered the position of the secretary of state as the key architect of U.S. foreign policy and viewed his department as the historical vehicle of policy development. Therefore, upon entering the administration he sought to re-establish their authority.

Although he did not object to the position of national security advisor, he viewed Brzezinski as a co-ordinator, not an intellectual driver or implementer of their agenda. The national security advisor meanwhile sought to combine the two roles over time. He established his and his department's supremacy with respect to policy development early on but as time progressed, he became increasingly assertive. He briefed the press, met frequently with foreign ambassadors and travelled abroad as a presidential emissary, replacing Vance as the president's chief diplomat.

His trip to China in 1978 emphasised his increasing status within the administration, while his attempts to manage the administration's response to revolutions in Iran and Nicaragua illustrated his growing dominance over foreign policy. Combined with Carter's inability to decisively choose between his two advisors, the policy wars between Vance and Brzezinski became a consistent feature of his presidency. Both sought to exert their influence over the policy process but the national security advisor eventually came out on top. With respect to the bureaucratic politics paradigm, the Carter administration is a pertinent example of how overbearing, ambitious and determined individuals can seek to manipulate the bureaucratic process to influence presidential decision-making.

Furthermore, both used their departments to develop policies and approaches. As chapter two illustrates, the formalised decision-making structure within the administration handed a significant bureaucratic advantage to Brzezinski and his department to develop and implement policies. Conversely, the system disadvantaged Vance and the State Department, who resented the elevated status of the national security advisor and the NSC. This contributed to a growing sense of distrust between the two departments as both attempted to manage foreign policy development. As this thesis demonstrates however, Carter favoured Brzezinski and the NSC. The president and the national security advisor enjoyed a close personal and working relationship and his department proved itself more efficient at providing the president with policy options in comparison to their rivals at the State Department. Subsequently, a sense of competition developed, leading to bureaucratic

warfare between the two departments. As Jim Hoagland reflected, ‘their staffs frequently clashed, and when that happened, neither Brzezinski nor Vance did much to rein them in.’²

While bureaucratic politics scholars have neglected the effect of the NSC-State rivalry, this thesis demonstrates how both departments influenced decision-making. The two agencies, both loyal and subservient to their bosses, used a variety of bureaucratic tools to affect policy as they sought to advance their strategies and approaches. The administration’s attempts to normalise diplomatic relations with China was a prime example of both an NSC staffer and assistant secretary of state, competing with one another to affect policy. Similarly, the Iranian revolution produced two contrasting responses from the key individuals involved, desk officer Henry Precht and NSC staffer Gary Sick. As Precht himself reflected, those individuals responsible for co-ordinating policy did not work in conjunction with one another. In this and other areas, the administration’s policies, approaches and responses were adversely affected by the policy wars between the State Department and the NSC. As this study reveals, bureaucratic rivalries, at a lower-level, can influence decisions within the executive branch.

The findings of this study highlight the value of the bureaucratic politics paradigm. Its exclusion from the more recent version of *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, amalgamated into a general chapter on theories of international relations, neglects the importance of bureaucratic institutions and inter-departmental rivalries and their impact on policy. While other chapters in the collection and other studies focus their examination of American foreign relations on memory, ideology and personality to ascertain the rationale behind foreign policy agendas, bureaucratic politics’ emphasis on the competing influence

² Jim Hoagland quoted in Lubowski, *Zbig*, 49.

of advisors, organisations and lower-level officials provides an alternative framework to analyse the development of strategies and the mechanics of presidential decision-making.³

It shows how conflict between advisors, organisations and lower-level officials can develop within an administration and influence foreign policy priorities, approaches and reactions to events in the international arena. Furthermore, as the case of the Carter administration illustrates, it can also lead to a reduction in presidential authority and affect the commander-in-chief's ability to manage the course and nature of an administration's foreign policy agenda. It emboldens officials, at the executive level and those below, to assert their authority more vigorously in attempt to influence priorities and approaches.

In addition to powerful and assertive advisors, the growth of contemporary government institutions and their increasing influence over the development and implementation of policy, gives the bureaucratic politics model extra relevance to scholars. With greater access to primary materials and witness testimony, the power of advisors and bureaucracies can be more accurately analysed. Overall, the framework can help determine the president's motivations, the influences on their judgement, how policy is established and who executes strategies. By scrutinising these elements through the spectre of the bureaucratic politics framework, policy development and implementation can be better understood. Above all, the model helps illuminate why presidents make certain decisions or act in certain ways and offers an alternative approach to appreciate the complexities of presidential decision-making as well as American foreign policy, past, present and future.

This thesis also challenges some of the narratives that exist within the historiography on the Carter administration. While some historians argue that the president gradually shifted towards the policies and approaches of Brzezinski, this thesis demonstrates

³ See, Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U. S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Penny M. Von Eschen, "Memory and the Study of U.S. Foreign Relations," in *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, ed. Frank Costigliola and Michael J. Hogan; Richard H. Immerman and Lori Helene Gronich, "Psychology," in *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, ed. Frank Costigliola and Michael J. Hogan.

that Carter, because of his close relationship with the national security advisor, granted him a pre-eminent role within his administration to develop the foreign policy agenda. Indeed, the relationship between Carter and Brzezinski lacks a critical analysis. As this study demonstrated, they enjoyed a close personal relationship and trusted one another, which certainly benefited Brzezinski in the policy wars with Vance, who did not enjoy the same level of familiarity with the president.

Moreover, aside from human rights, Carter lacked a clear and defined ideological outlook, which left him open to the ideas and concepts advanced by Brzezinski. While events, such as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan radically shifted Carter's position towards the strategies of Brzezinski, as evidenced by SALT, normalisation of relations with China and proxy wars in Africa, he had already demonstrated an inclination to move towards a more assertive foreign policy vis-à-vis their Cold War adversary. As this thesis establishes, although Brzezinski manipulated his position to outmanoeuvre Vance and advance his own philosophies, his close personal and working relationship with the president granted him a significant amount of autonomy to do so.

A number of works on the administration also ignore the bureaucratic arrangements within the administration. Jerel A. Rosati, Yael S. Aronoff and Itai Nartzizenfeld Sneh for example, assessed the ideological roots of the conflict whereas Gaddis Smith and Burton I. Kaufman analysed key events as triggers for their disputes.⁴ Certainly, their differing perspectives motivated their struggles however both desired to be the president's chief foreign policy advisor. As this thesis has shown, the construction of the administration's decision-making apparatus, created the sense of competition between them as they both attempted to outdo one another. Additionally, Carter's inability to decide between them heightened the conflict between them. While scholars are divided on the president's ability to manage his administration, this thesis clearly illustrates that Carter was unable to

⁴ Rosati, *The Carter Administration's Quest for Global Community*; Aronoff, "In Like a Lamb, Out Like a Lion."; Sneh, *The Future Almost Arrived*; Smith, *Morality, Reason and Power*; Kaufman, *The Presidency of James Earl Carter, Jr.*

successfully incorporate the views of his advisors, resolve their differences, and effectively lead his administration. Numerous case studies analysed in this study, exemplify Carter's lack of leadership and authority with respect to foreign policy decision-making.

Additionally, while a number of studies have focused on the developing role of the NSC, little attention has been given to the role of the State Department.⁵ They played a significant role in the policy wars of the Carter administration and the testimonies of various individuals from this period, identify the level of antagonism between the two departments. The disputes between the two agencies were just as hostile as the struggles between Vance and Brzezinski and their effect on policy is evident. In the wider historiography on U.S. foreign policy, the NSC-State relationship lacks a critical study, this thesis reveals how the historical rivalry between the two departments can impact on the development and implementation of policy. Moreover, it provides a new avenue to historians of the Carter administration and others, to understand their impact on American foreign policy.

In conclusion, this thesis demonstrates how foreign policy decision-making can be influenced by the competing attitudes of key advisors and their departments. Ideological and bureaucratic differences heightened the sense of competition between Vance, Brzezinski and their departments as they sought to exert their authority over key aspects of the administration's foreign policy agenda. However, the inability of President Carter to effectively manage their divergent views and control the warring factions within his administration, ultimately contributed to an inconsistent and contradictory foreign policy agenda. The rivalry also extended to lower-level officials in the State Department and the NSC, as both sought to protect their status and advance their ideas, which led to bureaucratic warfare between the agencies. President Carter's desire for a collegial system that provided him with a range of advice and policies, ultimately gave way to an increasingly hostile

⁵ See, Mulcahy, "Foreign Policy Making in the Carter and Reagan Administrations," in *Decisions of the Highest Order*, ed. Inderfurth and Johnson; Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*; Shoemaker, *The NSC Staff*; Garrison, *Games Advisors Play*; Rothkopf, *Running The World*; Burke, *Honest Broker?*; Daadler and Destler, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*.

environment between Vance, Brzezinski and their respective departments. Consequently, American foreign policy during this period reflected the divisions within the Carter administration. While events and crises across the world affected the administration's strategy in the international arena, ultimately the conflict between Vance and Brzezinski consistently informed their approach. As, Leslie Gelb, reflected, 'the main battle of the Carter years was that between the Columbia professor and the Wall Street lawyer.'⁶

⁶ Gelb, *Power Rules*, 57.

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