

Sowing the Seeds of Soviet Decline: Zbigniew
Brzezinski and the Carter Administration:
1977-1981

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Zbigniew Brzezinski (1928-2017)

Preface

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my dissertation has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text

It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee.

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Abbreviations

CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CEMA	Council for Economic and Mutual Assistance
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
EU	European Union
ICBM	Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
ISI	Inter-Services-Intelligence (Pakistani secret service)
KGB	State Security Committee (Soviet secret police)
MI6	British security and intelligence service
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NSA	National Security Adviser
NSC	National Security Council
PD59	Presidential Directive 59
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
RDF	Rapid Deployment Force
SALT	Strategic Arms Limitation Talks
SDI	Strategic Defence Initiative
START	Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
UN	United Nations
US	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

Introduction

Zbigniew Brzezinski was one of the most influential statesmen of the twentieth century yet he is under-recognised for his achievements in the historical record. Unlike Henry Kissinger, Brzezinski has not received a similar level of attention and has not had many works written about him. The purpose of this dissertation is to make the case that under his influence the Carter administration helped to end the Cold War. As Brzezinski was President Carter's National Security Adviser, he played a leading role in the administration which, in effect, had a significant though yet not fully recognised part in bringing down the Soviet Union.

It may be said that Brzezinski was amongst the most far-sighted strategists of his generation, whose influence over US foreign policy had been substantial. The focus of this work more specifically is upon Brzezinski's career in politics and the world of academia during the period 1948-1981, with a particular focus upon the Carter era. The central argument is that the Carter administration, under the guidance of Brzezinski, sowed the seeds for the decline of the Soviet Union and put in place important policies that would help end the global conflict. This is a matter which has not been given sufficient attention in the historical record. Recent literature is in fact beginning to corroborate this argument, such as Stuart E. Eizenstat's *Jimmy Carter*, which argued that Carter and his administration deserve more credit than they have thus far received for their role in defeating the Soviets.¹ As Madeleine Albright stated in the foreword to Eizenstat's work, '...history's verdict on Carter is still being debated.'² This dissertation is therefore right upon the cusp of new research to prove the Carter administration played a significant and underappreciated role in neutralising the Soviet threat and ensuring the downfall of the Soviet Union.

There is a vacuum to be filled in relation to research on the end of the Cold War for, as Ian Jackson wrote, 'There remains a dearth of declassified primary sources conducive to arriving at confident judgments about the factors leading to the demise of the cold war.'³ This dissertation postulates that the Carter administration and Brzezinski in particular contributed to ending the conflict by supporting dissidents as well as Western radio stations in Eastern Europe, by carrying out the normalization of

¹ Stuart E. Eizenstat, *Jimmy Carter: The White House Years* (New York, 2018) p. xv

² Stuart E. Eizenstat, *Jimmy Carter*, pxvi

³ Ian Jackson, 'Economics and the Cold War' in Richard H. Immerman & Petra Goedde, *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War* (Oxford, 2016) p. 59

relations between the United States and China, by taking advantage of the Soviet-Afghan conflict and also through strategically upgrading the U.S. military. These were all important factors during the administration in tipping the scales against the Soviets and ushering in the end of the conflict. These factors are not given their due weight, it is argued, in the historiography on the conflict. The economic policies of the Reagan administration are attributed too much credit for, as Ian Jackson wrote: 'The available evidence suggests that the Reagan administration's campaign of economic warfare in the early 1980s had a minimal impact on the Soviet Union.'⁴ While the arms race did play an important role in economically bankrupting the Soviet Union, it is debatable whether it was the principal cause of the Soviet Union's collapse. This thesis endeavours to demonstrate that pivotal events in the Cold War took place during the Carter era and were significantly shaped by Zbigniew Brzezinski. Furthermore that these events had an important effect upon bringing the conflict to a close.

In relation to the Soviet-Afghan War, Geoffrey Warner has written that 'The cold war's climactic Third World conflict, however, occurred in Afghanistan'⁵ and indeed in military terms, the defeat of the Soviets did in fact take place there, which was the result of a policy implemented by Brzezinski. Significantly, this dissertation seeks to prove that although the Soviets were not beaten militarily by the United States, the conflict in Afghanistan was a military defeat for the Soviets and was in fact one of the chief reasons why their empire collapsed.

Emphasising the military defeat of the Soviets in Afghanistan as a factor in the collapse of the Soviet Bloc is important and is something that is not addressed sufficiently in the historiography. As David R. Stone has written: 'Although the cold war fundamentally revolved around a potential East-West military clash in central Europe, military aspects have been strangely divorced from the mainstream of scholarship, echoing a divide between military and diplomatic historians across regions and periods.'⁶ The dissertation postulates that the Soviet-Afghan War was a chief cause in the breakdown of the Soviet Union and is supportive of the views of others who believe so. As John Prados wrote: 'Indeed, some analysts maintain that the

⁴ Ian Jackson, 'Economics and the Cold War' in Richard H. Immerman & Petra Goedde ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War* (Oxford, 2016) p. 63

⁵ Geoffrey Warner, 'Geopolitics and the Cold War,' in Richard H. Immerman & Petra Goedde ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, p. 78

⁶ David R. Stone, 'The Military,' in Richard H. Immerman & Petra Goedde ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, p.341

proxy war in Afghanistan between Russian forces and CIA-backed tribal and religious rebels had a primary role in the Soviet Union's demise.'⁷ This student would concur with such a statement. It is argued that military conflict in Afghanistan broke the resolve of Soviet armed forces and ensured they would not be advanced again to spread or defend communism.

It is also worth adding that it is thanks to Brzezinski that the U.S. began to launch covert operations inside the Soviet Union. Brzezinski therefore broke the code of non-interference in the domestic affairs of the Communist Bloc and thereby brought the Cold War to the Soviet home ground.⁸ This is important as the fomenting of nationalism and in particular Islamic fundamentalism within the borders of the Soviet Union were important additional factors that led to the breakup of the Soviet Union. This was a policy that had been thought of before but was never actually implemented. As Dianne Kirby wrote: 'In 1952 Kennan had warned that foreign interference, especially in the realm of religion, would arouse the suspicions and fear of the insecure Soviets.'⁹ This policy would have a significant effect on the Soviet Union's collapse, as the fomenting of Islamic fundamentalism inside Afghanistan and Central Asia would help to fuel anti-Soviet sentiment and ensure the breaking away of these countries from the Soviet Union.

Nationalism played a key role in bringing about the implosion of the Soviet Union. Since the time he wrote his MA thesis Brzezinski had set out to foment nationalism within the Soviet Union in the hope that this would lead to the breakup of the Communist Bloc. The Soviet Union had sought to stifle nationalism in order to bolster internal cohesion however this policy backfired. As Duara Prasenjat has written: 'Ironically, it (the Soviet Union) ended up fostering national consciousness in places where it had been very weak or non-existent, often at the expense of identification with the Soviet Union which never succeeded in generating its own narrative or symbolism of nationhood.'¹⁰ From the beginning of the Cold War the U.S. had supported nationalism for the purpose of thwarting Soviet ambitions for establishing a

⁷ John Prados, 'Cold War Intelligence History,' in Richard H. Immerman & Petra Goedde, *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, p. 420

⁸ Andreas Etges, 'Western Europe,' in Richard H. Immerman & Petra Goedde ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, p. 169

⁹ Diane Kirby, 'The Religious Cold War,' in Richard H. Immerman & Petra Goedde ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, p. 547

¹⁰ Duara Prasenjat, 'The Cold War and the Imperialism of Nation States,' in Richard H. Immerman & Petra Goedde ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, p. 93

global empire. John Lewis Gaddis wrote of how nationalism was used as an instrument to contain Communism: 'Nationalism, then, would prove the most durable of ideologies; it would be through the encouragement of nationalism, whether in areas threatened by communism or within the communist bloc itself, that the objectives of containment would be largely achieved.'¹¹ However, whereas Kennan sought to utilise nationalism to contain the Soviet Union, Brzezinski took it a step further and sought to use nationalism to dismantle the Soviet bloc.

It is also important to note that the strategic upgrading of the U.S. military and the arms race for which the Reagan administration is usually given credit for and which helped end the Cold War, was in fact begun by the Carter administration. As Duara Prasenjat has written: 'The Reagan administration, with its heightened ideological fervour – and emboldened by the neutralisation of China – ultimately raised military spending to such high levels that the Soviet Union could no longer match it and continue to supply the consumer needs of its population.'¹² It is therefore worth reemphasising that it was Carter who began the policy of increased defence spending. David R. Stone pointed out that the military element is important in deciphering the Cold War's end and that the military build-up was in fact begun by Carter. He wrote: 'The military side of the Cold War, though too often divorced from its international history, has played a major role on the debates on the Cold War's end. A common triumphant narrative of Western victory stresses how the Reagan military build-up (begun in the final years of the Carter administration) forced the Soviets to spend themselves into bankruptcy.'¹³

The ushering-in of the Second Cold War begun by Brzezinski and the Carter administration in the second half of the presidential term was the result of the collapse of détente and a return to traditional bipolar confrontation. The determination of the Reagan administration to bring the Cold War to an end owes its roots to the Carter administration and specifically to the Soviet-Afghan War, when tensions between the superpowers increased and both sides knuckled down for a renewed spat of confrontation to gain advantage over one another and ultimately, bring the conflict to

¹¹ John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War* (Oxford, 2005) p. 46

¹² Duara Prasenjat, 'The Cold War and the Imperialism of Nation States,' in Richard H. Immerman & Petra Goedde, *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, p. 99

¹³ David R. Stone, 'The Military,' in Richard H. Immerman & Petra Goedde, *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, p.355

a close. The US thus went from containment and a change of Soviet worldview to détente to seeking a preponderance of power over the USSR.¹⁴

Eizenstat made the point that the Carter administration is commonly written off as a failure, including its foreign policy and that this is a very debatable judgment. The Carter administration entered the White House with the aim of transforming the Cold War from an era of stalemate and détente to one of active engagement in the internal affairs of the Soviet bloc and the purposeful evolution of the Soviet system. As Daniel Sargent put it: ‘The Carter administration’s policy toward Eastern Europe aimed from the outset to encourage centripetal forces – an approach reflecting Brzezinski’s conviction that the East Bloc was politically fragile and prone to fragmentation.’¹⁵ The Carter administration sought to pursue a dual track approach of both cooperation and confrontation. The period of détente came to an end under his rule and a second Cold War was ignited in the latter half of his presidency. That renewed phase of hostilities was fully exploited and brought to a conclusion under the Reagan and Bush administrations. However, as this thesis will argue, it was Carter, and in particular Brzezinski, who were responsible for accelerating the collapse of the Soviet Union, sowing the seeds of its decline, and ending the period of détente and also the high point of Soviet power and influence.

Brzezinski and Carter ended Soviet parity with the U.S. and revamped the American military in a phase of renewed hostility for the purpose of ending the conflict rather than settling for peaceful coexistence. They overcame the period of Soviet ascendancy when the Soviet Union sought to capitalise on the defeat of the U.S. in Vietnam through expanding its influence in the Third World by punishing such adventurism, bringing the process of SALT II to a halt, and stepping up U.S. countermeasures to ensure not only the containment but ultimately the disintegration of the Soviet Union itself.

There remains much research to be done on bringing to light just how important and influential the Carter administration was in bringing to an end the Cold War. As Dino Knudsen has written: ‘Thus there is still a dearth of research into international

¹⁴ Duara Prasenjat, ‘The Cold War and the Imperialism of Nation States,’ in Richard H. Immerman & Petra Goedde, *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, p. 108

¹⁵ Daniel J. Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, p. 294

organizations, cooperation, and events in the 1970s, and the US foreign policy under Carter has far from been as thoroughly investigated as that of his predecessors.’¹⁶

The Carter administration is remembered for its failures, in particular the Iranian hostage crisis. However, there were a number of undeniable successes which helped tip the balance in the Cold War, in particular, the luring of the Soviets into Afghanistan, the normalization of diplomatic relations with China, the use of soft power in Eastern Europe, and the upgrading of the US defence posture, all of which, Brzezinski had a hand in. As Justin Vaisse wrote:

This is all the more the case in that, as Carter’s national security adviser, he (Brzezinski) left his mark on essential developments in American diplomatic history. Some of these have been haunting the United States ever since (such as the Iranian revolution, the failure of the hostage rescue attempt in 1980, and the support of the Afghan mujahedeen) while others were controversial or incomplete (including progress on human rights policy and the SALT II agreements). Several, however, were undeniable successes, including the Torrijos-Carter treaties on the Panama Canal, the Camp David accords and peace treaties on the Panama Canal, the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt, and the normalization of diplomatic relations with China.¹⁷

Another premise of this dissertation is that the Soviet Union collapsed due to the influence of events happening outside the Soviet Bloc in addition to those happening within it. This is important as it reinforces the idea that the United States triumphed over the Soviet Union and that the latter did not just collapse due to internal pressures. Dianne Kirby wrote that: ‘The scholarly consensus is that the collapse of the Soviet bloc had more to with internal rather than external pressures.’¹⁸ This study seeks to challenge the consensus and argue that the influence of human rights, the normalization of relations with China, the Soviet-Afghan War, and the strategic upgrading of the US military were all external pressures that played an important role in dissolving of the Soviet Union.

¹⁶ Dino Knudsen, *The Trilateral Commission and Global Governance: Informal Elite Diplomacy, 1972-82*, p. 19

¹⁷ Justin Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski: America’s Grand Strategist* (Harvard, 2018) p. 11

¹⁸ Dianne Kirby, ‘The Religious Cold War,’ in Richard H. Immerman & Petra Goedde, *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, p. 555

This dissertation also endeavours to demonstrate that Brzezinski was the single most influential person in the White House next to the president, Jimmy Carter. It makes the case that since the time of its inception, the Trilateral Commission has been engaged in policy formulation which, its members hoped, would then become the official governmental policy of Western nations. The thesis makes the claim that the normalization of US-Chinese relations was carried out in order to gain a strategic advantage over the Soviet Union through enlisting the Chinese on the side of the West in the midst of the Cold War. Furthermore, it shows that Brzezinski was the main man responsible for engineering this diplomatic and strategic coup, significantly building upon the earlier groundwork of Henry Kissinger and President Nixon to establish an informal military alliance with the United States and also substantially aiding China in its process of economic and social modernization. While credit is indeed due to Nixon and Kissinger for this policy, this study shows that Brzezinski took the alliance with China to another more effective level and this is often overlooked.

The thesis attributes to Brzezinski credit for receiving from the Chinese tangible support in containing their mutual adversary, the Soviet Union, particularly through gaining from the Chinese financial support for the Mujahedeen in Afghanistan and also through having them oppose the Soviet-sponsored North Vietnamese. Significantly, Brzezinski's influence in persuading the Japanese to sign the Peace and Friendship Treaty with China is also addressed.

This dissertation aims to show that the Carter administration significantly enhanced the war fighting ability of the United States. It makes the case that the aim of Brzezinski and of the Carter administration more generally was to reduce if not exclude Soviet influence from the Middle East. Brzezinski sought a domineering role for the U.S. in this third strategic front through the establishment of the Rapid Deployment Force and the acquisition of bases in the region. In relation to the Soviet-Afghan war, this study provides evidence that Brzezinski was the main man responsible for devising a strategy to deal with Moscow's military intervention.

Whilst attempting to establish that Brzezinski played a critical role in opposing the Soviet invasion, this study also gives due attention to the Soviet reasons for intervening in Afghanistan, providing primary source material which claims that the Soviets were merely propping up a legitimate communist government beset by an externally sponsored insurrection. Also, it analyses sources which suggest that the move was not designed to impinge upon the sovereignty of surrounding states nor was

it part of a broader design to gain geopolitical control over the Persian Gulf region. That it was not a design to advance southwards towards the Persian Gulf has now been conclusively proven. As Vladislav M. Zubok put it: 'Fifteen years later, new evidence from the Kremlin's archives revealed that the Soviet leadership had no aggressive plans to reach the Persian Gulf. Scholars have concluded that the Soviet leaders reacted above all to the developments in Afghanistan and the region around it.'¹⁹

This dissertation seeks to establish that Brzezinski was one of the main officials responsible for the worsening of US-Soviet relations in the latter half of the Carter presidency, and this is supported with considerable primary source material. Brzezinski was at the forefront of those who sought to take punitive action against the Soviet Union for its expansionist policies. He sought to prevail in the military competition with the Soviet Union and he was to a significant degree responsible for the strategic upgrading of US military doctrine and of the bolstering of US troops in Europe as well as the introduction of the MX missile, the Pershing II ICBM, Presidential Directive 59, and the establishment of a Rapid Deployment Force for the Persian Gulf-Middle East region.

In prevailing upon the U.S. to act decisively and effectively to counter the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Brzezinski was also demonstrating that the U.S. would no longer tolerate, as it had in 1956 and 1968, Soviet domination of countries hostile to Communism and to external control from Moscow. Brzezinski was thus ensuring Washington's adherence to the Truman doctrine of opposition to Soviet subversion of free states. Brzezinski's policy to fund Islamic fundamentalists was carried forward by the subsequent Reagan and Bush administrations and it would contribute significantly to the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union.

As previously stated, this dissertation seeks above all to establish that Brzezinski played a significant part in ending the Cold War. It shows that Brzezinski was the guiding light in many respects concerning the Carter administration's handling of Soviet affairs. In this respect this study will demonstrate his leadership in a number of issues that were of considerable historical significance.

Brzezinski also devised a new US military strategy to place troops in the third strategic zone, namely the Middle East, which would have significant consequences

¹⁹ Vladislav M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (North Carolina, 2009) p. 228

for the US military up to the present day. That is to say, the Carter Doctrine which committed the United States to protect the freedom and integrity of Middle Eastern states and keep them from being dominated by external powers (a doctrine influenced by Brzezinski) and furthermore the establishment of a Rapid Deployment Force, are shown throughout the thesis to have been largely attributed to Brzezinski.

It was at Brzezinski's instigation that Carter decided to formulate a doctrine in the first place. Concerning the Carter administration more generally, the thesis attempts to prove definitively that the Carter administration was anything but weak in the area of foreign affairs and particularly strategic matters, with the exception of the Iranian hostage crisis which sealed the fate of the administration and ensured Carter would not be re-elected for a second term. The study shows that the Carter administration took waging the Cold War very seriously, and moreover that Brzezinski played a leading role in ending the period of détente and reigniting a period of increased military competition that would result in U.S. victory in 1990.

Brzezinski dedicated his life to bringing about the implosion of the Soviet Union. His career as an academic concurrent to his life in politics has been punctuated by a large number of best-sellers and landmark works, which have been instrumental in shaping policy discourse and in augmenting the fields of political science and its subfield geopolitics.

Up until the time of his death in May 2017, Brzezinski continued to exert considerable influence in world affairs, frequently appearing on news networks to advocate policies in line with his long-held views and strategic outlook. For most of his life a vigorous opponent of Russian expansionism, Brzezinski's political philosophy was defined by a deeply-held distrust of Russian "imperialism" and he claimed to have the American interest in mind when delivering policy recommendations.

The Cold War lens through which he looked for most of his life to a certain extent defined his outlook on world affairs, as the spoils of the Cold War have not been completely absorbed by the West and its allies. NATO expansion eastwards to incorporate the former Soviet space continues. For Brzezinski, Russia's weaker neighbours continued to be a focus of concern, demanding vigorous support from the United States in order to fully contain the Russian super-state.

The Cold War may have ended, but the military contest to decide the fate of Eurasia and which superpower will have the mainstay there is ongoing. Brzezinski's energies

were for a substantial period of time directed at destroying the Soviet Union and securing greater unity and predominance for the West. As the world has moved from a bi-polar world toward a multi-polar one Brzezinski adjusted his geopolitical perspective, yet his view that the West would continue to provide ultimate leadership remained intact.

The United States and Europe remain the wealthiest regions of the world and the most modern, in spite of China's rise and the dispersal of economic power from the West to the East. The US and EU continue to account for over half the world's GDP and represent the high standard of living to which most of the world's inhabitants aspire. In these circumstances, Brzezinski remained in the post-Cold war years a strong advocate of transatlantic unity and greater Western involvement in the running of world affairs. He believed that despite accommodating trends in the UN and other multinational organisations to placate China, India and others, the West will retain paramount and decisive world leadership.

Indeed, Brzezinski believed it is the United States in particular who must continue to provide over-arching leadership to the world community in the early years of the 21st century. With its Cold War victory, the United States emerged as the sole global superpower, heralding in an era, according to Brzezinski, in which the United States was uniquely poised to shape a new global equilibrium or, as George H. W. Bush termed it, a 'New World Order.' However, the events of the last two decades have weakened that seemingly omnipotent position somewhat following America's costly engagements in Afghanistan and Iraq. Thus, with Obama's election the US confronted a world in which many had lost faith in America as a force for good. The United States had been discredited by George W. Bush's unilateralism and was further challenged by China's market-authoritarian model which offered an alternative for many developing nations. In this context, Brzezinski argued in his latest work *Strategic Vision*, that the United States must redeem itself internationally and reclaim the mantle of global leadership, conveying to the rest of the world that its socio-economic and political system, as well as its cultural values, are worthy of emulation on a global scale.

As a supporter of President Barrack Obama and a seasoned Democratic Party strategist, Brzezinski's views were taken seriously by the Obama administration. On numerous occasions, Brzezinski was called into the 'situation room' in the White House to give advice on evolving crises and policy options, particularly concerning

ongoing conflicts in the Middle East. His influence can be seen in the clear congruence between Brzezinski's own views as expressed in his writings and the actual conduct of US foreign policy. Indeed, Brzezinski joined Henry Kissinger and Brent Scowcroft as elder statesmen whose views carry immense authority, backed as they are by years of experience in a governmental capacity. Brzezinski's writings appear to have guided the actions of later policymakers such as Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, both of whom may be considered his protégés.

Central to his writings over the last two decades, since the end of the Cold War, has been the notion that the United States should retain world leadership through predominance over the mega-continent of Eurasia. This would be achieved by preventing an emerging Sino-Russian alliance from expelling the United States from areas they claim as falling within their sphere of influence such as Central Asia. Brzezinski advocated strong engagement with the European Union, Japan, and other willing allies to safeguard America's geo-strategic interests and its continued global hegemony.

American influence in Eurasia is guaranteed by American control of key linchpin states that are on the periphery of the continent or in geo-strategically significant locations, such as South Korea and Afghanistan. Occupation of these countries and military alliances with them help to secure the United States' dominant position over the Eurasian continent, prevents it from being dominated by any others, and guarantees their close proximity to sources of oil and other valuable resources needed to fuel their domestic economy. As a long-time proponent of American intervention abroad, Brzezinski can then be seen in the line of many hard-nosed or hawkish U.S. policy makers such as Paul Nitze. Indeed, Brzezinski has supported almost every U.S. war since Vietnam, with the exception of the Iraq wars of 1990 and 2003. What Brzezinski considered most vital to US foreign policy is that the United States remained ensconced on the Eurasian heartland where over three quarters of the world's population and resources are to be found. Such an ejection from that mega-continent would spell the end for the United States as the world's leading power. In this regard, Brzezinski may be seen in the line of Halford Mackinder and other geopolitical theorists who viewed dominance of the Eurasian landmass as the key to global supremacy. Indeed Brzezinski subscribed to Mackinder's view that the Soviet Union had to be contained in its quest to dominate Eurasia. As Paul Kennedy has

written: ‘This growth of the Soviet Empire appeared to confirm the geopolitical predictions of Mackinder and others that a gigantic military power would control the resources of the Eurasian ‘Heartland’; and that the further expansion of that state into the periphery or ‘Rimland’ would need to be contested by the great maritime states if they were to preserve a global balance of power.’²⁰

The dissertation is organised into three chapters which deal with Brzezinski’s career up to and including the Carter administration. The first chapter deals with his formation as a scholar and his early works which specialise on the Soviet Union. The following chapter deals with the beginning of his political career during which time he worked for the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. This section analyses his works written during this period and how they formed the strategy he would implement whilst serving as National Security Adviser. Also, his role in founding the Trilateral Commission is examined. The final chapter deals with the Carter administration and looks at the three issues of human rights and Eastern Europe, the normalization of relations with the People’s Republic of China, and the Soviet-Afghan War. Brzezinski’s contribution to policymaking in these three areas is addressed and finally there is an assessment of the administration’s performance.

Overall, this study will reveal and demonstrate the influence of Brzezinski over the Carter administration during the years 1977-81 and it will analyse the impact he had upon ending the Cold War.

²⁰ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict 1500-2000* (London, 1989) p. 469

1) Early Years

Formation as a scholar

The purpose of this chapter is to trace the development of Brzezinski's ideas as expressed in his early works in order to analyse how they would later shape his approach to waging the Cold War and the policies he would implement whilst in government. Zbigniew Kazimierz Brzezinski was born on March 28, 1928, the son of a Polish diplomat, Tadeusz. His family was of noble lineage, termed szlachta in Polish. At the age of ten his family decided to move to Montreal after his father obtained the position of Ambassador there. In 1948, Brzezinski completed his MA thesis at McGill University. In it he predicted that the Soviet Union would eventually break up along national lines. His views regarding this and the manner in which it would occur were formed early on. As he stated himself:

Already at McGill, I reached the conviction that the weakness of the Soviet Union, its Achilles' heel, was its multinational character. Once I grasped that in my M.A. thesis at McGill, I began to work on formulating a strategy, which in a piecemeal fashion would expose the weaknesses of the Soviet system, detach the countries of the Soviet bloc from the Soviet Union... and then eventually accomplish the dismantling of the Soviet Union itself.²¹

Brzezinski's MA thesis would lay the groundwork for his subsequent onslaught against the Soviet Union and provide a roadmap for what he had to do to undermine Soviet Unity and bring about the implosion of the Communist bloc. Justin Vaisse described it thus:

The text is actually a militant document. It suggests that while it might not be possible to defeat the Soviets today, it is possible to understand their system well enough to identify its weaknesses and increase the likelihood of its succumbing to them. His precise and rigorous study of the various nationalities within the USSR led to a nuanced conclusion: the Soviet Union has a growing problem of unity but can still deal with it. This in turn set up a political recommendation: the

²¹ Patrick Vaughan, 'Brzezinski and the Bear,' *Krakow Post*

West should set up a sort of inverse Comintern that would accentuate the dilemma of the nationalities and fuel the internal frictions that could cause the Soviet bloc and the Union itself to implode.²²

Brzezinski had thus established by 1948 his strategy to bring about the downfall of the Soviet Union through fomenting nationalism and he would set out with vigour upon his mission from here on out. Nationalism and its exploitation however was not the only means Brzezinski sought to use to defeat the Soviets. In his subsequent writings he would disparage the totalitarian systems and highlight their inhumane practices. He would also become a strong supporter of American military power and its widespread use to curtail Soviet influence around the world and ultimately, destroy the Soviet Union itself.

Brzezinski was considered by a friend to have been hawkish at McGill. Indeed, since his youth he had harboured deeply anti-Soviet views and had been vehemently determined to liberate his home country Poland. His time at Harvard helped to assimilate Brzezinski into America. Justin Vaisse quotes Brzezinski as saying: 'I became a scholar simply because Harvard gave me the opportunity to be a scholar, and I became serious about trying to be a decent scholar. But there was always something within me that drew me to action, influencing events, impacting. And the as I began to feel my oats, I began to crystalize my ambition, which was nothing less than formulating a coherent strategy for the United States, so that we could eventually dismantle the Soviet bloc.'²³ Brzezinski was thus determined to defeat the Soviet Union and was not in favour of merely peaceful coexistence. He was in favour of mutual accommodation and cooperation but all the while he was atavistic about bringing the communist bloc down.

Brzezinski began working as an academic however he was subsequently drawn into the world of policymaking. He would however continue to teach while he was not working for the government in addition to writing a large number of important works on international affairs and in particular, the Soviet Union. He became a renowned specialist on the Soviet bloc and expounded upon the intricacies of Kremlin politics as well as that of the satellites.

²² Justin Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski: America's Grand Strategist* (Harvard, 2018) p. 20

²³ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 47

Brzezinski described how he made the transition from academic to policymaker and how he was more attracted to the world of policymaking than that of working in a university. He stated:

When I went to Harvard I didn't have a clear notion that I wanted to be an academic. I wanted somehow to influence events, that I remember. But whether that be by joining the foreign service, or dealing with foreign affairs in some capacity, or being an academic, I hadn't really thought that through. But then Harvard started getting me things. That kind of pushed me in one direction, that direction took off and then I began to be noticed, first as an academic, a promising one, I guess, and then as one with a policy orientation. And at Harvard I noticed that academia and policy intermingled, and that began to attract me more and more. So by the end of that decade and the beginning of the next one, by 1960, it was clear to me that I wanted to combine the two. And by the 70s, it was clear that I wanted the second more than the first.²⁴

Brzezinski began as a specialist on the Soviet Union however by the 1960s he began to broaden his horizons and covered a wider array of topics. He wrote voluminously about all the major issues of the day and would later go on to become an expert on international affairs generally speaking with a particular focus on East-West relations and the development of the Western world. His goal was to consolidate the West and lead it to victory over the Soviet Union, all the while promoting a new world order. Justin Vaisse described this transition from Sovietologist to international analyst as follows:

From the late Harvard years on, Brzezinski looked beyond the USSR toward Eastern Europe, but also toward the Third World. This tendency increased considerably during the 1960s, with articles and books that covered a much broader spectrum than before. His field of expertise was the starting point: Sino-Soviet relations, Africa, transatlantic relations, and the hot topics of American foreign policy in Cuba, for example, and especially the war in Vietnam.²⁵

²⁴ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 67

²⁵ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 81

From Harvard Brzezinski would earn his PhD in political science. He would go on to run the Russian Research Institute in Harvard and would conduct seminars on the Soviet Union with a view to instilling in his students a strident anti-communism. Brzezinski was determined to liberate Poland and hasten communism's collapse and would resort to any means to bring about this end. As Vaisse noted, Brzezinski was considered 'a cynical operator who would stoop to anything in order to prevail.'²⁶ Brzezinski, Vaisse added, 'went on to become an expert in the international politics that had deprived him of his birthplace.'²⁷

It is worth noting that Brzezinski was an early example of the academic turned political adviser who did not gain influence due to his being a part of the establishment but rather was a foreigner who earned his position through academic merit. He, along with Henry Kissinger, were forerunners to the academic turned political adviser. They both matriculated through the university system and established contacts with the establishment, thus maneuvering their way into positions of power and influence. As Vaisse wrote: 'Like Kissinger, Brzezinski was a pioneer, an early exemplar of a now familiar model – that of the political strategist, the academic who becomes counsellor to the president.'²⁸ Kissinger and Brzezinski were admired for being immigrants and making their way into the ranks of the WASP elite and many sought to follow in their footsteps. Between 1956 and 1960 Brzezinski gradually moved from academia into the world of politics.

Brzezinski would go on to advise on the Vietnam War, conflicts in the Middle East, Europe, and the USSR. One could also add that it was Eurasia which he was most concerned with; Latin America, Africa, and Oceania were considered by him to be peripheral and didn't receive as much attention. He advised on the main issues of U.S. foreign policy and was a part of the Cold War universe wherein academic authorities like him were increasingly recruited by the government to give policy recommendations.

Brzezinski was not just an anti-Communist because of his Polish origins. He also felt that it was an inhumane political system and that American national security was fundamentally threatened by the spread of communism and therefore these reasons also made him ardently anti-Communist. Brzezinski was a proponent of George

²⁶ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 133

²⁷ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 1

²⁸ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 2

Kennan's concept of containment and would agree that 'The idea was to prevent the Soviet Union from using the power and position it won as a result of that conflict to reshape the post-war international order.'²⁹ He did not feel that communism was a monolith but felt that it was prone to fragmentation, however he understood only too well that Kremlin leaders were determined to bring about a world Communist society worldwide and fulfil the goals of Marx and Lenin. He was therefore a realist in this regard and felt that the only way to deal with this threat was to neutralise it through dismantling the communist bloc itself. Brzezinski differed from Kennan in that Kennan did not seek to liberate the Communist countries but rather contain them, whereas Brzezinski was determined to bring about their emancipation from Moscow.³⁰ Brzezinski would bring his strong anti-Communist views to bear upon a significant number of U.S. administrations. As Justin Vaisse wrote: 'Across the half-century following Kennedy's inauguration, Brzezinski advised, in one way or another, nine American presidents (the sole exception was George W. Bush), and dozens of other high-ranking American leaders. He worked actively for the presidential campaigns of Kennedy (1960), Johnson (1964), Humphrey (1968), Carter (1976), George H. W. Bush (1988), and Obama (2008).'

³¹ While credit is indeed due to Kissinger, Reagan, Gorbachev and Bush senior, amongst many others for their important, if not seminal roles, in ending the Cold War, it may be argued that Brzezinski also played a significant and overlooked role in bringing about the demise of the Soviet Union. This thesis, that Brzezinski played a crucial role in bringing about the collapse of the Soviet Union was propounded in the MA thesis of this student in 2011 and has since been made persuasively by Andrzej Lubowski in his work *Zbig: The Man Who Cracked the Kremlin*, published in 2013. Lubowski wrote that: 'Brzezinski did indeed play an underappreciated role in the unexpectedly rapid demise of the USSR. He saw the cracks in the façade of the Soviet system more clearly and forecast its ultimate downfall earlier than anyone else in the Washington establishment. When he found himself in the White House he architected the policies that contributed to the erosion and ultimate collapse of the Soviet Union.'

²⁹ John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War* (Oxford, 2005) p. 4

³⁰ John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, p. 27

³¹ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 11

³² Andrzej Lubowski, *Zbig: The Man Who Cracked the Kremlin* (New York, 2013), p.8

A most fervent Cold Warrior, Brzezinski would utilise every means available to him to achieve this end. Not only was he deeply driven by his sense of mission, but the fact that he had conceived of an effective strategy to exploit the weaknesses of the Soviet Union through encouraging nationalism within the camp, promoting political, economic, and cultural independence from Moscow, as well as meeting Soviet challenges anywhere in the world through stepping up US military preparedness and resolve, would make him an adversary not to be taken lightly. Indeed, armed with such a knowledge of the workings of the Soviet bloc and a blueprint to ensure its collapse it is easy to understand why, as Lubowski points out, ‘the Kremlin saw Brzezinski as its most dangerous adversary.’³³

Brzezinski had a nuanced understanding of the Cold War conflict and grasped that the Soviet Union was a challenger to the United States in the military sphere alone. Paul Kennedy has written that at the outset of the Cold War: ‘Only the United States and the USSR counted, so it seemed; and of the two, the American ‘superpower’ was vastly superior.’³⁴ This is true, and this knowledge helped to encourage Brzezinski in his mission to dismantle the Soviet bloc, seeing it as an inherently weaker socio-political system to that of the United States. Brzezinski felt that the U.S. need only outdo the Soviets militarily in order to bring about their defeat and that politically, socially, and culturally, the U.S. was unchallengeable and would not be rivalled by them.

Brzezinski, like most Cold warriors, was in favour of altering the balance of power so as to ensure U.S. dominance. He believed it necessary to not only contain the Soviet Union but to enlarge the West as much as possible and bring as many of the major powers as possible onto its side. This was in line with the recommendations put forward by George Kennan. As Paul Kennedy put it:

The most crucial component of any long-term containment policy would therefore be massive programme of US economic aid, to permit the rebuilding of the shattered industries, farms, and cities of Europe and Japan; for that would not only make the latter far less likely to be tempted by Communist doctrines of class struggle and revolution, it would also help to readjust the *power balances* in America’s favour. If, to use Kennan’s very plausible geopolitical argument, there

³³ Lubowski, *Zbig*, p.8

³⁴ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, p. 460

were only ‘five centres of industrial and military power in the world which are important to us from the standpoint of national security’ – the United States itself, its rival the USSR, Great Britain, Germany and central Europe, and Japan – then it followed that by keeping the three last-named areas in the western camp and by building up their strength, there would be a resultant ‘correlation of forces’ which would ensure that the Soviet Union was permanently inferior.³⁵

As Brzezinski’s influence grew so did his notoriety. He has been subjected to much vitriol on the internet. Many saw him as an arch conspirator working assiduously to enslave mankind and bring about a draconian new world order. Justin Vaisse commented on this: ‘Perhaps it is no surprise that conspiracy theorists came to portray him as a shadowy operator, pulling strings from backstage.’³⁶ Indeed, his role in the Trilateral Commission would seem to validate such claims to some extent as he did work behind the scenes to influence the shaping of world events.

In his early writings, after he earned his PhD degree from Harvard, Brzezinski stressed policy recommendations which would help countries to secede from the Soviet Union in a peaceful fashion. He taught at Harvard as a Sovietologist at the Russian Research Institute, of which he was director, and contributed substantially to advancing a more realistic and sophisticated understanding of the Soviet system. His nuanced understanding of the Soviet system, Russian history, and his overall strategic approach to waging the Cold War distinguished him as someone with the requisite skills and knowledge necessary to make an actual difference in how the Cold War was conducted.³⁷

Brzezinski was seen as an inspirational lecturer and his lectures were known for their strident anti-communism. Justin Vaisse referred to Brzezinski’s vehement opposition to the Soviet Bloc while lecturing at Columbia, and stated that he: ‘threatened students with a billy club to teach what a totalitarian regime was like in the 1950s.’³⁸

Prior to analysing Brzezinski’s ideas for bringing about the dissolution of the Soviet bloc as well as his service in government, it is necessary to begin with an analysis of his early works, beginning with *The Permanent Purge*.

³⁵ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, p. 484

³⁶ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 11

³⁷ Shlomo Avineri, ‘Preface’ in Lubowski, *Zbig*, Pviii

³⁸ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 69

The Permanent Purge

Written in 1956, when Brzezinski was twenty-eight years of age, *The Permanent Purge* is his first published work. It is based upon his doctoral dissertation which he completed at Harvard entitled *The Role of the Purge in the Totalitarian State*. Brzezinski made the case that the purge, i.e. the forced removal or elimination of Soviet citizens from their occupations and/or the Communist Party, was an essential component of the totalitarian system which served the purpose of ridding the system of disloyal or suspect individuals. Such people were thought to weaken the party or even sabotage it through lack of commitment to Communist principles, their veiled hostility to the party, and their careerist predisposition which placed their own ambition above the interests of the party. Brzezinski first outlined the differences between the totalitarian system and the constitutional, democratic political systems of the West, and then charted the historical record of purges in the Soviet Union from the time of its foundation until shortly after the death of Stalin and the rise of Khrushchev to political leadership.

Brzezinski asserted that totalitarianism was a unique political system, distinguished from the absolutisms of the past by its near complete domination of society and its efforts to remould the individual. As Peter Baehr put it: '(Totalitarianism's) chief objectives are to rule unimpeded by legal restraint, civic pluralism, and party competition, and to refashion human nature itself.'³⁹ The totalitarian system, Brzezinski pointed out, pervades almost every aspect of society including the media, education, recreational activities as well as the family and religion. The explicit goals and official ideology of the totalitarian regime brooked no room for deviation and all citizens had to be either convinced or coerced into conforming to the socio-political, economic, and cultural agenda of the party. In defining the inherent "totality" of totalitarian regimes, the way in which they operate and how this represents a novel form of government, Brzezinski proffered the following definition:

The complete mobilization of all human and material resources and the dogmatic insistence on the pulverization of all opposition for the sake of ideologically

³⁹ Peter Baehr, *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas* (Detroit, 2005) <https://pustaka.com/history-of-ideas-totalitarianism/>

proclaimed goals of social reconstruction have produced this *total social impact* which makes totalitarianism a truly unique type of political system.⁴⁰

While totalitarianism is a unique political system, it bears resemblance to the authoritarian governments of the past. Many such governments, in the West and in Asia, were dominated by one person and exercised near-complete control over society. They were also ruled by decree rather than law and the masses were expected to remain loyal to the ruler. China is one example of a country that was ruled by a single person who exercised a domineering influence over society and controlled the majority of the state's resources. Catholic monarchies during the early modern period such as Philip II's Spain also had a near complete monopoly over the means of communication. Thus totalitarian governments, while definitely unique as Brzezinski pointed out, do nonetheless bear a resemblance to dictatorships that have come before.

Brzezinski noted that totalitarian regimes assume the trappings of a semi-religious movement, expecting complete faith in the party leadership on the part of the people who live under them. This is why religion sits uneasy with the totalitarian regime and why the Soviet Union effectively repressed the Orthodox Church in Russia and the satellite states: no other organisation could be allowed to operate which claimed a higher moral authority than that of the state and which held an alternative source of loyalty from the people, in effect competing for influence with the state. The totalitarian regime was to be the sole source of the officially declared truth and would act promptly in the course of establishing its power to eliminate or marginalise any other organisation that effectively held sway over the masses.⁴¹

Totalitarian systems of government, as seen in their fascist emanations in Italy and Germany, though more fully developed and long-lived in the Soviet Union, attempt to completely mould the individual into their ideal conception of what a citizen should be, how he or she should think and act. The Soviet Union more specifically utilised all available technology, scientific expertise, and the coercive power of the armed forces to direct the conduct of the Soviet populations and to regulate their activities, social habits and most importantly, their political behaviour.⁴²

⁴⁰ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Permanent Purge: Politics in Soviet Totalitarianism* (Harvard, 1956) p.1

⁴¹ Brzezinski, *The Permanent Purge*, p.1

⁴² Brzezinski, *The Permanent Purge*, p.3

Unlike democracies in the Western world, no formal opposition to the political establishment in power is to be tolerated. Complete obedience to a one-party state is demanded on the part of the citizens and any who do not support the party or worse still (from the point of view of the totalitarian leaders) actively oppose it are to be regarded as a threat to the integrity of the system and are to be eliminated forthwith.

Limitations to the arbitrary exercise of political power, as enshrined in practically all constitutions of the western world, do not apply in the case of totalitarian regimes, which rather apply the law in a discriminate manner to the advantage of party officials and *nomenklatura* but to the detriment of ordinary citizens, who receive no guarantee to the right of habeas corpus or impartial judicial procedures. The totalitarian system in effect 'enthrones its power through the degradation and purposeful abuse of legal restraints.'⁴³ Brzezinski abhorred the Soviet system and its abuse of power and the rule of law. The vehemence with which he fought the Soviet Union when in office can be clearly detected in his writings through the manner in which he disparaged Soviet contempt for the rule of law and provided an exposition of the system's uglier aspects. He believed the communist political system to be totally inhumane and detrimental to human welfare.

Brzezinski advanced significantly the understanding of totalitarian regimes through defining how they operate and with what goals in mind. He wrote with a moral compass, elucidating the nature of the totalitarian regime whilst disparaging it and exposing it as a political system that is utterly reprehensible. He offered the following definition to encapsulate the dictatorial nature of totalitarianism:

Totalitarianism can, therefore, be defined as a system where technologically advanced instruments of political power are wielded without restraint by centralized leadership of an elite movement, for the purpose of effecting a total social revolution, on the basis of certain arbitrary ideological assumptions proclaimed by the leadership, in an atmosphere of coerced unanimity of the entire population.⁴⁴

'Coerced unanimity of the entire population' is a misnomer, as many in the Soviet Union were supportive of communism and were only too glad to serve its leaders and

⁴³ Brzezinski, *The Permanent Purge*, p.5

⁴⁴ Brzezinski, *The Permanent Purge*, p.7

carry out its ideological agenda. It is true however that a large percentage of the population was forced into obedience though it would be wrong to say the entire population.

The Soviet Union was arguably the most brutal and, in terms of human cost, the most lethal dictatorship this world has ever seen. Joseph Stalin sentenced to death more of his own people than any other leader in history and he is remembered as the biggest mass murderer of all time. Stalin, being a dictator, had complete control over all decision-making processes, and the people Stalin sentenced to death were, for the most part, guilty of no crime. Hannah Arendt pointed out the absurdity of this when she stated:

The gigantic criminality of the Stalin regime which, after all, did not consist merely in the slander and murder of a few hundred or thousand prominent political and literary figures, whom one may “rehabilitate” posthumously, but in the extermination of literally untold millions of people whom no one, not even Stalin, could have suspected of “counter-revolutionary” activities.⁴⁵

Arendt thus corroborated Brzezinski’s view that Stalin was a ruthless tyrant responsible for mass murder and that, furthermore, this killing was unjustified as these people were not in fact counter-revolutionaries. Therefore, both authors are right to decry the excesses of the Stalinist regime and its wanton destruction of life.

It is interesting to note that during the process of *Dekulakisation*, in which wealthy peasant landowners had their property confiscated by the state, peasants who opposed this were labelled counter-revolutionary suspects. This was then used as a justification for increased repression. The Soviet Union thus sent millions of such citizens to their death for the purpose of implementing socialism and viewed their deaths as necessary to carry out this end and also as mere statistics. Orlando Figes observed how the destruction of the *kulaks* did irreparable damage to the Soviet economy. He wrote:

The destruction of the ‘kulaks’ was a catastrophe for the Soviet economy. It deprived the collective farms of the best and hardest working peasants, because these are what the ‘kulaks’ actually were, ultimately leading to the terminal decline of the Soviet agricultural sector. But Stalin’s war against the ‘kulaks’ had

⁴⁵ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York, 2004) p. 394

little to do with economic considerations – and everything to do with eliminating the defenders of the peasant way of life.⁴⁶

During the Soviet Union's grim and bloody existence, a reign of terror was carried out in order to eliminate all sources of opposition to the regime. The element of terror in a totalitarian state and, particularly in the Soviet Union, Brzezinski wrote 'becomes a mass phenomenon, and broad categories of people, ideologically defined as socially unfit for membership in the new society, are marked for extinction.'⁴⁷ The Soviet Union as a totalitarian state was thus comparable to the Nazis as they chose to eliminate from their society anyone with dissimilar political views or who did not act in accordance with the dictates of the leader. Brzezinski is thus correct in arguing that the Soviet Union tolerated no opposition to the political leadership or the ideology.

In order to survive and indeed thrive in such a system, it is of the utmost importance to evince loyalty to the party, the leader and the ideology of the state. However, this alone does not guarantee advancement in such a society, and given the eschewal of the democratic process, the only means left open is stiff competition for positions of power amongst determined and ruthless aspirants who habitually build cliques around their own person and actively seek to remove their rivals from power so as to clear the way for themselves. Factionalism as well as individual vying for influence comes to characterize the totalitarian system.⁴⁸ Hannah Arendt mentioned how the purge leaves room for a new generation to succeed the previous one. She wrote:

If we consider the career conditions in present Russian society, the similarity to such methods is striking. Not only do almost all higher officials owe their positions to purges that removed their predecessors, but promotions in all walks of life are accelerated in this way. About every ten years, a nation-wide purge makes room for the new generation, freshly graduated and hungry for jobs.⁴⁹

The Purges were carried out primarily in order to remove suspect individuals however they also served the purpose of clearing the way for the next generation so they could move into vacated posts. Orlando Figes commented on this. He wrote:

⁴⁶ Orlando Figes, *Revolutionary Russia: 1891-1991* (London, 2014) p. 214

⁴⁷ Brzezinski, *The Permanent Purge*, p.8

⁴⁸ Brzezinski, *The Permanent Purge*, p.20

⁴⁹ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 556

A staggering 18 per cent of the Party's 3.2 million members were expelled in the purge. Most were relatively new recruits, who had joined the Bolsheviks since 1929, when controls on enrolment were relaxed, resulting, it was feared, in the influx of 'careerists' whose loyalty could not be trusted. It is striking that the leadership remained so insecure fifteen years after coming to power. That insecurity was rooted in the problem – faced by many revolutionary movements – that once it found itself in power the Party could not trust its own members and needed constantly to test their loyalty.⁵⁰

Stalin was ruthless in his determination to wipe out anyone who held oppositional political views and even resorted to purging his own party members and indeed his generals in his effort to institute complete ideological conformity. Orlando Figes wrote furthermore that:

Between 1928 and 1932, 150,000 workers were given higher education on this affirmative-action programme; over a million left the factory for administrative jobs. They became the mainstay of the Stalinist regime. They believed in Stalin's vision of progress because they could see improvements in their lives from it. Through their loyalty to the leader they rose through the Party's ranks. Their ascent was quickened by the purges of the thirties, when bosses were removed, allowing those below to move into their jobs.⁵¹

Again distinguishing totalitarian systems of government from democracies is the fact that leaders in such systems often owe their positions to brute force (their usurpation of power) or advancement through the party and are not elected by the people, nor are they representative of them or indeed accountable to them. Communist party members tended to form an elite, with special privileges, and were to be considered as being essentially above the people. Their relative detachment from the people means that they were often out of touch with the masses and inevitably became suspicious of them. This leads to the perception of threats to the regime because the regime is alienated from the people and the gulf in living standards between that elite and the rest of the population naturally inclines communist leaders to seek desperately

⁵⁰ Figes, *Revolutionary Russia: 1891-1991*, p. 234

⁵¹ Figes, *Revolutionary Russia: 1891-1991*, p. 236

to retain their positions of power and influence by, in effect, resorting to purging both the party and society at large of people who may appear to endanger their status and position. Such threats to the regime are inevitably blown out of proportion, the consequence being that often innocent and non-subversive individuals suffer a cruel fate owing largely to the extreme paranoia of their non-elected leaders.⁵² Vladislav M. Zubok highlighted the danger of being labelled a disloyal individual. He stated: 'During the 1930s, indiscriminate state terror had constantly blurred boundaries between good and evil – an individual could be a "Soviet man or woman" today and an "enemy of the people" tomorrow.'⁵³

The purpose of the secret police, the NKVD, later renamed the KGB, was to ensure that internal threats to the Soviet government were swiftly neutralised. It served a vital role in maintaining the Communist leadership in power. As Brzezinski put it, the secret police:

is the most effective instrument of the totalitarian regime. It not only ensures the leader's safety or position but is also the chief weapon of internal combat. Its *raison d'être* is to protect the existing regime. Consequently the actual value of the secret police to the regime is measured in terms of the dangers, real or imagined, that it succeeds in eliminating. The greater the alleged threats to the power of the dictatorship, the greater the role the secret police assumes....Absence of enemies does not mean that the regime has none, but that the secret police has failed to uncover them.⁵⁴

While the secret police did arrest and imprison many innocent individuals, it is true that they also targeted genuine enemies of the Soviet Union, foreign spies as well as domestic saboteurs. They played a necessary role, one could argue, in safeguarding the achievements of the revolution and ensuring that communism was implemented without capitalist infiltration or ruination of their socialist agenda.

Brzezinski argued that the purge is 'inherent in the totalitarian system'.⁵⁵ This is borne out in reality as totalitarian regimes usurp authority as in the case of the Soviet Union, or overturn the democratic system, as in the case of Nazi Germany and are not

⁵² Brzezinski, *The Permanent Purge*, p.20

⁵³ Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p. 2

⁵⁴ Brzezinski, *The Permanent Purge*, p.21

⁵⁵ Brzezinski, *The Permanent Purge*, p.23

to be considered representative of the people's will but are rather elite movements which claim to have the people's best interests in mind but which concentrate authority into a small clique and then seek at all costs to hold onto it. They then proceed to root out domestic opposition which they at once fear as it represents an existential threat to their dictatorial authority.

The purge is thus the logical solution of the totalitarian systems of government to the inevitable opposition that arises to a political establishment that lacks legitimacy and genuine support in the eyes of the populace. This process of elimination turns out to be a perpetual one because as the dictatorship grows in power it effectively generates internal enemies amongst those, workers, farmers, clergy, journalists, intellectuals, whose power and influence in society has been circumscribed. For example, in the Soviet Union the collectivization of farms created enemies amongst farmers whose land was now owned by the state. The censorship of the press and strict control of education offended the prerogative of journalists and intellectuals to express their views without interference from the authorities. Thus the more a totalitarian government intrudes upon a society's liberties and privileges to in effect expand and consolidate its own power, the more enemies it will naturally generate. The purge then becomes a vital mechanism for the regime in order to survive and furthermore to dissuade would-be opponents from voicing their opinions or taking any action against the government.

Brzezinski stated: 'the element of internal combat within totalitarianism finds expression in a permanent purge. Totalitarianism is the system of the permanent purge.'⁵⁶ The purge served to strengthen the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), thus strengthening the unity of the party as all seditious elements are removed. The purge is thus seen as necessary to maintain the totalitarian regime in power.⁵⁷ One could argue that once domestic enemies are removed the purge is no longer necessary. However, Brzezinski is right in asserting that communism inherently generated enemies with each generation due to its repressive policies and lack of toleration for opposing views therefore the purge became a permanent feature of Soviet society.

Concerning intellectuals, totalitarian regimes, in particular the Soviet Union, found it vital to enforce complete obedience to the regime on the part of intellectuals

⁵⁶ Brzezinski, *The Permanent Purge*, p.30

⁵⁷ Brzezinski, *The Permanent Purge*, p.36

because of their likelihood of criticising the regime for its shortcomings or brutal tactics and furthermore because the views of academics carry an authority of their own which would likely influence the masses and threaten the regime.

Citizens in the Soviet Union were also encouraged to denounce their neighbours, friends, and even family if they were not performing well in work, if they harboured grievances against the regime or, more seriously, if they were plotting to undermine it in any way. Owing to the moral degradation of some people, denunciations also became a way of getting ahead in life, particularly in work-life if one sought to reach a higher position. As Brzezinski put it: 'denunciation became a useful vehicle of promotion.'⁵⁸ Orlando Figes further commented on this. He wrote:

The terror thus spread down through the Party's ranks, Soviet institutions and society itself, as colleagues, friends, and relatives, came under suspicion too. The more senior a Party member was, the more likely he was to be arrested. Juniors in the ranks were often ready to denounce superiors to help themselves and perhaps replace them in their posts. They were encouraged to report on them.⁵⁹

Those who were denounced by their fellow citizens or fell foul of the authorities would often be imprisoned or sent to forced labour camps, if not actually killed. In a year and a half, roughly 850,000 ordinary members of the communist party in the Soviet Union were purged.⁶⁰ The purge demoralized Soviet citizens and significantly weakened Soviet industry by removing skilled technicians. The purge as a tactic of cleansing the Communist Party and Soviet society was so widely used that Brzezinski goes so far as to state that 'the Soviet regime almost purged itself to death.'⁶¹ The purge served above all to strengthen Stalin's control over the Soviet Union and as a mechanism for promoting loyalty ensured that only individuals who were determined "Stalinists" could rise to positions of authority.⁶²

Purges continued in the post-war years, though the public did not take part and far less people were affected than had been the case during the 1930s. The Soviets were now more cautious, fearful of a backlash if they purged too many, and instead of

⁵⁸ Brzezinski, *The Permanent Purge*, p.89

⁵⁹ Figes, *Revolutionary Russia: 1891-1991*, p. 274

⁶⁰ Brzezinski, *The Permanent Purge*, p.99

⁶¹ Brzezinski, *The Permanent Purge*, p.116

⁶² Brzezinski, *The Permanent Purge*, p.131

sending citizens to labour camps or to their deaths many were simply transferred, demoted, or both. The purge, however, as a technique of removing undesirable members from the party or citizens from Soviet society would outlive Stalin himself.⁶³ In *The Permanent Purge* Brzezinski even argued that the purge was an indispensable part of the totalitarian regime. He observed:

Totalitarianism needs the purge. Disloyal and potentially deviant individuals or groups must be unmasked and their followers liquidated.⁶⁴

One could argue that the totalitarian government could have merely marginalised such groups rather than send them to their death. Brzezinski is right however that as totalitarianism tolerates no political opposition it is therefore necessary that all those with alternative views be removed from positions of authority.

In Brzezinski's first work the role of the purge in the Soviet Union is extensively treated and new insights are brought forth. In particular, Brzezinski maintained that the purge is not an irrational aberration as many in the West claimed it was but was a calculated and rational way of removing dissenters and ensuring internal cohesion of the communist party and society. Brzezinski thus offered a more nuanced and realistic understanding of the role of the purge in the Soviet Union. Indeed, he affirmed, as Hannah Arendt had previously pointed out, that the purge was a permanent institution of the Soviet Union and was not likely to disappear in the foreseeable future.⁶⁵

⁶³ Brzezinski, *The Permanent Purge*, p.167

⁶⁴ Brzezinski, *The Permanent Purge*, p.168

⁶⁵ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 508 'In the Soviet Union, at any rate, revolutions, in the form of general purges, became a permanent institution of the Stalin regime after 1934.'

Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy

Written in 1956 jointly with Brzezinski's mentor at Harvard, Carl J. Friedrich, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* is a landmark work analysing the nature of totalitarian regimes, how they operate, and also whether or not they are likely to endure in the future. Emerging out of a seminar the two authors gave at Harvard in the early 1950s, the book made a substantial contribution to the literature in the field and, along with Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, is to be considered a classic work of scholarship on totalitarian regimes. Indeed, Hannah Arendt and Friedrich and Brzezinski were the first pioneers of post-World War II analyses of totalitarianism. Michael J. Hogan recalls that it 'came to sweep the board in Western ideological discourse in the 1950s...'⁶⁶ The authors stated at the outset that the purpose of the book was 'to delineate, on the basis of fairly generally known and acknowledged factual data, the general model of totalitarian dictatorship and of the society which it has created.'⁶⁷

Friedrich and Brzezinski observed that the Soviet Union was an altogether novel form of autocratic government, surpassing all previous autocracies in its total control of the economy and society, its disregard for legal or constitutional restraints, its contempt for the status quo, brutality towards its own citizens and determination to industrialise and modernise regardless of the human costs. Although bearing some resemblance to authoritarian governments that preceded it, totalitarian political systems were nonetheless a novelty. Historically, autocracies have been the most prevalent form of government; political power has been concentrated in the hands of a small number of elites and the majority of the people have been coerced into submission, having little say in the exercise of power or the direction in which politics was moving. In the example of the Soviet Union, the claim of the communist party to be the sole interpreters of the teachings of Marxism-Leninism created the illusion that they were appointed as if by providence to lead the masses and exercise ultimate control over political affairs.

Similarly, Lenin, Hitler, and Mussolini all believed the political parties they controlled possessed unique insights into the inner meaning of their contemporary era,

⁶⁶ Michael J. Hogan, *The Ambiguous Legacy: US Foreign Relations in the "American Century"* (Cambridge, 1999), p.389

⁶⁷ Carl J. Friedrich & Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge, 1956) p. xi

that they had a more sophisticated understanding of the problems they faced and most importantly, that they alone had the visionary qualities necessary to lead their fellow citizens to a higher form of society, indeed a utopia as they saw it.

Communism and Fascism both claimed that they were working in the interests of the nation-state, though like the absolutisms and autocracies of the past, they were in essence elite movements more concerned with gaining power and resources for themselves and their coterie than with seeking to uplift the citizens over whom they ruled; this being the case regardless of their official statements and doctrine. This is borne out in the case of the Soviet Union by the special treatment and privileges party members received, whereas everyone else was forced to queue for hours for basic necessities and live in a state of relative deprivation. Totalitarianism, like autocracies before them, therefore claim to act as the guardians of the collective good but invariably prioritise the interests of the wealthy and well educated elite few over the less well educated and relatively poorer many and consequently degenerate into another exploitative form of government.

Scholars of pluralism maintain that the totalitarian governments had popular support and that political power was not entirely centralised. This author would agree with Brzezinski and Friedrich however that the Nazis and communists usurped power and that they were more loved by the masses out of fear than a genuine devotion to the movement and its leaders. Although no doubt many were fond of the totalitarian governments in the Soviet Union and Germany, it is clear that behind their mask of benevolence lay an insidious form of government that was totally inhumane and ultimately detrimental to the interests of the people it represented, as evidenced by the large numbers of its own citizens that perished and also the fact that such totalitarian regimes generated external enemies due to their megalomaniacal aspirations. They were therefore an illegitimate form of government; a government imposed upon a people rather than one that was representative of the will of the people.

Totalitarianism is therefore a modern form of autocracy. A crucial difference however between the two is that totalitarianism draws heavily upon the benefits of the industrial revolution and modern technology to solidify its hold over society. In the case of the Soviet Union, controlling all the means of production gave it complete mastery of the economy and through retaining a monopoly over communications this allowed the communist regime in power to determine to a large extent what information was received by the people. This near complete domination of the

totalitarian government over society through control of the economy and technology means that, as Friedrich and Brzezinski pointed out, ‘totalitarian dictatorship, in a sense, is the adaptation of autocracy to twentieth-century industrial society.’⁶⁸

Like autocracies, totalitarian regimes are not accountable to the people they claim to represent. Through suppression of published literature and laws forbidding criticism of the regime, which they label as seditious, the totalitarian regimes are reminiscent of early modern European governments, such as Spain during the inquisition, which sought to control the beliefs of their citizens in addition to regulating their daily activities.

Friedrich and Brzezinski argued that fascism and communism were neither totally alike nor totally different but were similar enough to both be categorised as totalitarian, distinct from constitutional governments in the West and autocracies of the past. The authors put forth a working definition of totalitarianism and argued that it comprises six main components:

The basic features or traits that we suggest as generally recognized to be common to totalitarian dictatorships are six in number. The “syndrome,” or pattern of interrelated traits, of the totalitarian dictatorship consists of an ideology, a single party typically led by one man, a terroristic police, a communications monopoly, a weapons monopoly, and a centrally directed economy.⁶⁹

Peter Baehr has added other traits to totalitarian regimes which include the following: the shuffling of governmental offices to ensure collegial rivalry; economic-bureaucratic collectivism; a culture of martial solidarity; elimination of designated “enemies of the people”; mobilization of the entire population; and, finally, the use of the concentration camp.⁷⁰

The political party of a totalitarian state, be it Communist, Nazi, or Fascist, differs substantially from those found in the democratic West. Under the Soviet political system, membership of the party is only permitted if one proves that they are totally loyal to the ideology, the party, and above all the dictator in power, whereas in the

⁶⁸ Friedrich & Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, p. 15

⁶⁹ Friedrich & Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, p. 21

⁷⁰ Peter Baehr, *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas* (Detroit, 2005) <https://pustaka.com/history-of-ideas-totalitarianism/>

constitutional democratic West such complete devotion to the movement is not a prerequisite to joining a political party, though members do usually have to tow the party line. The crucial difference is that the political party in democratic states is open to participation by any individual on the basis of their adherence to what the party stands for, whereas in the totalitarian state the party resembles more of an exclusive brotherhood, highly selective in its admission of members and demanding a far greater degree of loyalty and active support. Furthermore, in the totalitarian state the party representing the movement as a whole actually becomes superior to the government itself, as was the case with the communist party in the Soviet Union.⁷¹

Friedrich and Brzezinski pointed out that as totalitarian states sought to convert the entire nation under their authority to their particular ideology and worldview, there is therefore no part of society which extends beyond their reach. However, it must be pointed out that critics of totalitarianism have noted that such governments were never total and failed in their quest to control all aspects of society. This was the view of David Riesman and Hannah Arendt.⁷²

Particularly important is their penetration of the traditionally sacrosanct unit of the family, which they try to render into a tool for indoctrinating the youth of the country and preparing them for a future devoted to serving the totalitarian state. Outside of family life, totalitarian movements institute youth training programs, such as the Hitler Youth, in order to imbue in children and adolescents of the country the virtues they consider to be important to their cause along with what they consider essential training, usually with a heavy emphasis upon physical activity. As the authors put it: 'All Fascists stress the training of youth outside family and school for the tough life of warriors and conquerors who are continually on the march and must be ready to endure all the hardships of such an existence.'⁷³

Totalitarian states, the authors wrote, were not likely to be overthrown from within because of the fact that they controlled all of the means of production, had a monopoly over the armed forces and a terroristic network of police ready to neutralise all actual or potential dissidents. They were also unlikely to be dissolved when a new successor ascends to power because of the entrenched interests of party members who had a personal interest in the perpetuation of the system. The party thus 'remains, with

⁷¹ Friedrich & Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, p. 54

⁷² Peter Baehr, *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas* (Detroit, 2005) <https://pustaka.com/history-of-ideas-totalitarianism/>

⁷³ Friedrich & Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, p. 61

its cadres and its hierarchy.’⁷⁴ The Soviet Union therefore endured for most of the twentieth century as a totalitarian political system because of the entrenched interests of the CPSU and their determination to retain power at all costs. They were embattled by the West and adhered to Marxist-Leninist teaching. They felt the world proletarian revolution would liberate them from their capitalist encirclement and eventually lead them to victory over the forces of imperialism, thus the Soviet system perpetuated itself and totalitarianism held sway over the masses of the communist bloc until the end of the Cold War.

Concerning totalitarian ideology, the authors observed that they tend to be ‘typically utopian in nature,’⁷⁵ and in their effort to destroy the old order and replace it with a new one they see violence as a necessary means of realising their ideological objectives. To coalesce the subjects under their rule and unify them in the pursuit of a shared utopia, both internal “enemies of the people” and external enemies are seen as being essential. The portrayal of the external enemy tends to be a misrepresentation or at least a caricature of the individual or group in question. As Friedrich and Brzezinski pointed out:

For the Nazis it was the fat rich Jew or the Jewish Bolshevik; for the Fascists it was at first the radical agitator, later the corrupt and weak, degenerate bourgeois; for the Soviets, it is the war-mongering, atom-bomb-wielding American Wallstreeter; for the Chinese Communists, it is the Yankee imperialist and the Western colonial exploiters.⁷⁶

Hannah Arendt was also of the view that the totalitarian governments felt they were beset by an external conspiracy against their home country. She wrote that: ‘Contrary to all expectations, important concessions and greatly heightened international prestige did not help to reintegrate the totalitarian countries into the comity of nations or induce them to abandon their lying complaint that the whole world had solidly lined up against them.’⁷⁷ Russia has been a xenophobic country in many respects. Traditionally threatened, or at least felt to have been, by the many neighbours along its vast borders, the Russians have held a hostile view of the outside world. During the

⁷⁴ Friedrich & Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, p. 79

⁷⁵ Friedrich & Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, p. 89

⁷⁶ Friedrich & Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, p. 90

⁷⁷ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 511

Cold War, the Russians believed they were beset by a capitalist conspiracy which sought to deprive them of their national sovereignty and surround them with military bases. They felt the capitalists were trying to take hold of their country and privatise their industries in order to accrue wealth at the expense of the people and thus they were determined to defend their egalitarian society against the capitalist West.

Concerning the image of their enemy: through propaganda the stereotyped image of the enemy is ingrained in the minds of the people and they are induced to fear and loath them. This in turn serves to solidify their loyalty to the totalitarian leadership as they band together through their shared hostility toward a common foe. The fear of a common enemy is a potent device for securing loyalty and cohesion amongst the populace and was extensively made use of by the totalitarian political leaderships.

The totalitarian party also ensures that its perception of domestic and international politics, indeed of reality itself, becomes the official one of the state.⁷⁸ The role of myth is also significant within the ideology of a totalitarian state. Totalitarian myths are unique because 'they are pseudo-scientific. The communist myth rests upon the notion that its view of history is beyond criticism, while the Nazi myth claims biological superiority for a particular race.'⁷⁹ These myths, ascribed the status of truth by the party members, lend the totalitarian movement a sense of credibility that enhances their power and legitimacy.

The authors make the point that the roots of totalitarian ideologies are to be found in the western philosophical tradition. They point to thinkers such as Hegel and his dialectical theory as underpinning the Marxist conception of how history progresses. They cite Hobbes and his belief in the anarchic state of nature as a justification for authoritarian leadership. However, they also rightly observe that totalitarian leaders have perverted the philosophical traditions of such thinkers by utilising their ideas to justify inhumane acts against their fellow citizens, which was not, they claim, the original intention of Hegel or Hobbes. They write that: '...totalitarian ideology is rooted in the totality of Western thought, and more especially its political thought.'⁸⁰

One tenet of Marxism-Leninism was the idea Lenin developed that violence was necessary in order to overthrow the capitalist system. The concept of the revolutionary struggle that must be waged in order to bring about communism on a global scale

⁷⁸ Friedrich & Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, p. 91

⁷⁹ Friedrich & Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, p. 91

⁸⁰ Friedrich & Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, p. 98

forms a central part of communist ideology. Indeed the authors point out that common to all totalitarian systems is the idea that they must export their ideology abroad; that they have pretensions for universalising their socio-political system and also for elevating their nation state to the position of regional, if not global, hegemony. For Mussolini's fascists this concerned the ambition to turn the Mediterranean into an Italian lake and in thus doing so re-establish the greatness of the Roman Empire. For the Nazis it was summed up by the phrase 'today Germany, tomorrow the world.' When the Soviet Union failed to export communism abroad, particularly to Germany, Stalin, against the wishes of Trotsky, initiated the policy of socialism in one country, meaning that the Russians would concentrate on consolidating the communist victory at home. However, it still remained their policy to encourage whenever possible communist takeovers around the world, only the policy of building communism at home was seen as more important than uniting the workers of the world to overthrow capitalism completely. An important point to be gauged from this in relation to Brzezinski's later policy making is that he understood that the Soviets were determined to universalise their socio-political system and he therefore took the threat of communism very seriously and understood furthermore that the notion of peaceful coexistence was only an illusion; the communists were adamant that their ideology would engulf the globe and that communism would become the standard political system throughout the world.

The authors point out the many ways in which totalitarian dictatorships were inhumane and barbaric. For instance, in the case of the Soviet Union, they point to the fact that citizens living under that system had been deprived of legal rights, that the constitution of 1918 stated: 'no one has any rights and all power must be concentrated in the hands of the victorious proletariat, that is to say, its leaders.'⁸¹ It is ironic that the communist party claim to represent the proletariat when they are nothing but the leadership of an elite movement, intent upon subjugating the masses and implementing another form of exploitative government.

Telling Soviet citizens the truth is also not their concern; questionable or disreputable practices are downplayed or omitted while, for example, the economic achievements of the country are embellished. They also note that under totalitarian dictatorships, the citizens are fed a constant stream of propaganda each day. Such is

⁸¹ Friedrich & Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, p. 117

their daily dose of brainwashing, designed to ensure complete obedience and conformity to prescribed ways of thinking and behaving. The authors wrote that: ‘This singular success of totalitarian propaganda is the result of constant repetition.’⁸² The Soviet leadership stifled any criticism of the regime from being aired on television, the radio, or appearing in the print media. The citizens were also discouraged from thinking for themselves and forming their own opinions of the brutal system they lived under. This was carried out chiefly in the institutions of education. Friedrich and Brzezinski wrote that the totalitarians ‘transform a large part of the educational process itself into a school for their particular ideology.’⁸³ History books were rewritten to glorify the nation and vilify its so-called enemies or to assert the superiority of one race over others.

Hannah Arendt reaffirmed that the role of propaganda in the totalitarian state was to indoctrinate the citizenry and stifle freedom of opinion. In addition to this it was to ensconce the leadership in power and lend it a false sense of legitimacy. She wrote of how the totalitarian party amalgamated with the government and instituted its propaganda campaign:

The goal of one party systems is not only to seize the government administration but, by filling all offices with party members, to achieve a complete amalgamation of state and party, so that after the seizure of power the party becomes a kind of propaganda organization for the government. This system is “total” only in a negative sense, namely, in that the ruling party will tolerate no other parties, no opposition, and no freedom of political opinion.⁸⁴

There is thus no chance that civic society will develop where there is no freedom of opinion. Brzezinski would no doubt have drawn from this stifling of individual expression the conviction that freedom of opinion is to be supported in the Soviet Union and this would most likely have impelled him subsequently to support Radio Free Europe in order to entice communist citizens to subscribe to Western values, freedom of speech in particular.

The essential difference between the educational system in the West and that of a totalitarian society is that in the West there is emphasis upon the student arriving at

⁸² Friedrich & Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, p. 144

⁸³ Friedrich & Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, p. 148

⁸⁴ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 556

his or her own understanding of a particular subject whereas in totalitarian societies the emphasis is upon moulding all students into the same mind-set and shared set of beliefs. Diversity of viewpoints is trumped by the strict imposition of intellectual conformity.⁸⁵ Totalitarian regimes thus politicise education. As the authors wrote: ‘The teacher becomes the long-range indoctrinator, the instiller of an ideology that is intended to subjugate the students intellectually and to commit them for the rest of their lives to a doctrinal orthodoxy.’⁸⁶

However, while totalitarian regimes are comparatively much worse than Western liberal-democratic governments, Abbott Gleason made the point that the West was still guilty of giving aid to regimes with woeful human rights records, an issue that will be discussed in greater detail later. As Peter Baehr put it: ‘Starkly dividing the world into liberal-democratic white-hats and communist black-hats, Abbott Gleason remarks, conveniently omitted the extent to which Western governments supported military regimes with bleak and bloody human-rights records.’⁸⁷ Thus the West is not to be exonerated from supporting mass murder, a charge which it levels against totalitarianism and uses to justify delegitimizing such regimes.

Friedrich and Brzezinski point out that totalitarian regimes in fact become more violent as their position in power is secured, as they are then able to eliminate their enemies without fear of reprisals. Whereas on their way into power they felt the need to make concessions to the opposition, once the reins of power are firmly in their hands they begin to carry out a systematic purge of disloyal elements within their ranks, suppress all political opposition, and terrorise the population so as to induce within them the fear of rebelling.⁸⁸ Hannah Arendt corroborated this point when she observed that: ‘Stalin’s insane suspiciousness – concealed the most characteristic aspect of totalitarian terror, that it let loose when all organised opposition has died down and the totalitarian ruler knows he no longer needs to be afraid.’⁸⁹

When the totalitarian leadership feels it is no longer threatened by political opposition, it unleashes a reign of terror upon so-called “enemies of the people.”

⁸⁵ Friedrich & Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, p. 149

⁸⁶ Friedrich & Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, p. 160

⁸⁷ Peter Baehr, *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas* (Detroit, 2005) <https://pustaka.com/history-of-ideas-totalitarianism/>

⁸⁸ Friedrich & Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, p. 170

⁸⁹ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 394

Arendt, Friedrich, and Brzezinski are thus right in observing that the totalitarian state engages in a killing spree once it feels it can do so with impunity.

Through the use of propaganda they seek to mobilise as much of the population as possible behind them in their attempt to eliminate all designated subversive individuals.⁹⁰ The list of enemies the totalitarians pursue includes spies, saboteurs, traitors, and citizens of foreign countries deemed hostile to the totalitarian state. For the Nazis in particular, the designated enemy was the “international, capitalist, Jewish conspiracy.”⁹¹ For the Soviets:

The entire capitalist order, with its countless satellites, is said to be the enemy of the Soviet Union. In the international plane, it supposedly organizes successive systems of capitalist encirclements and plots, ringing the Soviet Union with air bases and military establishments, planning war and destruction.⁹²

Concerning the rights of workers, the authors point out the irony that in a state which claims to be the vanguard of the workers, trade unions were outlawed and workers forbidden to strike.⁹³ The Soviet Union’s success in industrialising was to a considerable extent based upon slave labour, including the millions who were deported to gulags in Siberia to work in appalling conditions.⁹⁴ Although economic exploitation is hardly non-existent in the Western world, it pales by comparison with the situation in the Soviet Union. The authors stated:

The contrast between an unemployed man in the West, eking out a meagre existence on the basis of his unemployment-insurance payments, and an inmate of a Soviet labour camp, systematically starved and brutalised, shows the full measure of difference between democracy and totalitarianism.⁹⁵

Friedrich and Brzezinski address the reasons why people turn toward totalitarianism in the first place, noting the failure of liberal-democratic governments to provide employment to their citizens or significantly grow the economy in the context of the

⁹⁰ Friedrich & Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, p. 165

⁹¹ Friedrich & Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, p. 173

⁹² Friedrich & Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, p. 174

⁹³ Friedrich & Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, p. 245

⁹⁴ Friedrich & Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, p. 253

⁹⁵ Friedrich & Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, p. 254

burden of massive reparations, as was the case with Weimar Germany following the First World War. The people, frustrated with the failure of democratic regimes to improve their situation turn to totalitarian political parties, whose hard line toward foreign powers, for example Hitler's promise to annul German reparations and begin rearmament, they believe to provide the solution to their economic woes. However the authors observed that the situation is only exacerbated by the totalitarian regime's relentless pursuit of warmongering.⁹⁶

Regardless of the efforts of totalitarian regimes to stifle all opposition to their dictatorial rule, there nonetheless remain what the authors call "islands of separateness," groups of people such as the family, churches, universities, artists and writers who nonetheless manage to voice their disapproval of the quenching of human freedom and at times, offer active resistance to the regime itself.⁹⁷ Friedrich and Brzezinski outline in detail however why it is that such individuals find it so onerous to pose a serious challenge to the totalitarian state in which they live. As they put it, quite bleakly:

It is extremely difficult to mount an effective opposition to a totalitarian dictatorship precisely because it is totalitarian. No organizations are allowed unless they bear the stamp of official approval and are effectively coordinated with the ruling party. Nor do the means exist by which an enterprising person might gather others for effective cooperation. The regime's total control of all the means of mass communication, as well as post, telephone, and telegraph; its complete monopoly of all weapons (except insofar as the military can manage to establish some measure of independence); finally, its all-engulfing secret-police surveillance, which utilizes every available contraption of modern technology, such as hidden recording devices, as well as the older methods of agents-provocateurs and the like – these and related features of totalitarianism make any attempt to organise large numbers of people for effective opposition well-nigh hopeless.⁹⁸

The totalitarian political system thus sought to isolate and neutralise all forms of resistance and in effect quell the citizenry's ability to rebel. Brzezinski was right to

⁹⁶ Friedrich & Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, p. 261

⁹⁷ Friedrich & Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, p. 279

⁹⁸ Friedrich & Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, p. 287

argue that opposition to totalitarian regimes is unlikely of succeeding in their overthrow but whether it is well-nigh hopeless is a point of contention, as resistance movements did in fact spring up in totalitarian societies which managed to evade being quashed and, as in the case of the Soviet Union, did in fact contribute to the system's collapse at the Cold War's end, albeit with external support.

Hannah Arendt commented on the stifling nature of totalitarian regimes and put this succinctly when she wrote: 'We know that the iron band of total terror leaves no space for such private life and that the self-coercion of totalitarian logic destroys man's capacity for experience and thought just as certainly as his capacity for action.'⁹⁹ The totalitarian governments aimed to crush their citizen's efforts at rebellion and this no doubt impelled Brzezinski to seek the liberation of the Soviet Union's citizens, in particular his native Poland, as to live under such a system he would have no doubt realised was insufferable and totally unacceptable.

The "island of separateness" which the authors cite as being the most effective in its resistance to totalitarian domination is that of the church, which continued to provide an outlet for community gathering, strengthening of the faith in God, and hope for a better future free of political domination and economic exploitation. They mention that the Russian Orthodox Church, in spite of being officially proscribed by the Soviet government, nonetheless managed to survive underground and remain critical of the totalitarian state. In the Central Asian Republics, the authors noted how the Muslim faith was never completely suppressed and retained the following of almost all citizens within those countries.¹⁰⁰ The authors explain why it is that institutionalised religion posed such a grave threat to totalitarian dictatorship. They wrote:

In conclusion, we can say that the Christian churches have shown themselves to be a real bulwark against the claim to total power of the totalitarian dictatorship, perhaps more real than any others. Whether Protestant or Catholic, the genuine Christian cannot accept totalitarianism. For Christianity claims the whole man and the last word with regard to man's values and man's destiny. This claim the

⁹⁹ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 611

¹⁰⁰ Friedrich & Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, p. 305

totalitarians cannot accept. They may temporarily seek to compromise, but if they accepted this claim they would cease to be totalitarians.¹⁰¹

The authors were correct in pointing out that institutionalised religion posed an enormous threat to totalitarian regimes, owing to the fact that morality and indeed the promotion of peace are central to religious teaching and sit uncomfortably with the totalitarian agenda. Brzezinski would later support the Muslim faith in Central Asia as a means to undermine the Soviet Union and this would have an important effect upon the downfall of communism, as will be shown.

Friedrich and Brzezinski's *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* is truly a landmark work in the field and provided an excellent analysis of how totalitarian regimes, in particular fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, and communist Russia, operate. It is not without moralistic overtones, as it disparages the inhumane practices of these regimes and speaks out against their barbaric use of the armed forces to subjugate their own citizens, making the army a mere branch of the totalitarian party rather than solely the defender of the nation-state. They noted how totalitarian leaders disrespect western diplomatic protocol and use visits to foreign countries as an opportunity to proselytise and attempt to win others over to their own cause. The work admirably makes clear that totalitarian dictatorships are not political systems to be envied by those fortunate enough not to live under them. It marks Friedrich, as well as Brzezinski, as leaders in the field of political science devoted not only to expounding the operations of such regimes but more importantly, to condemning them and putting forth a historically objective assessment that portrays their faults as well as their strengths, thus providing the student not living under a totalitarian government with a realistic account of the lives of those who do.

¹⁰¹ Friedrich & Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, p. 314

Ideology and Power in Soviet Politics

In 1962 Brzezinski published *Ideology and Power In Soviet Politics*. In it, he analysed Soviet ideology, the Russian historical experience (particularly during the tsarist period immediately preceding the October revolution), the operation of the Soviet political system, its foreign policy, and finally the prospects for change within the communist bloc. Each of the five essays that comprise the work was previously published as an article in an academic journal. Brzezinski wrote that: 'The close interaction of ideology and power in both internal and external politics is the theme that links the essays together.'¹⁰²

At the outset Brzezinski stated that the Soviets were fundamentally driven by ideology and that power and ideology are inextricably intertwined in communist countries. By comparison, western statesmen, he argued, tended to be more pragmatic and did not adhere to an officially prescribed dogma but rather allowed their societies to develop spontaneously. The Soviets, by contrast, sought to direct the entire evolution of their societies and ideology therefore played a greater role in their socio-political development. This point is contentious. While western statesmen are not driven by ideology to the same degree as totalitarian leaders, democracy and capitalism are powerful ideological doctrines that motivate them and are central to their political agenda in their own countries and to their proselytising mission throughout the world.

Making the point that totalitarian regimes are not likely to be overthrown due to internal resistance, Brzezinski also noted that totalitarian regimes are not going to be easily defeated by external aggression.¹⁰³ While totalitarian regimes were militarily powerful enough to resist external subjugation for a time, in the end both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union were defeated due to the impact of foreign powers and, in the case of the Soviet Union, also internal pressures.

Brzezinski, while noting that the Soviet Union, like dictatorships in the past, displayed all the coercive qualities used to keep the population in check and maintain the ascendancy of the ruling class, in this case the communist party, he made the distinction that the Soviet Union was constantly striving to alter the status quo in line

¹⁰² Brzezinski, *Ideology and Power in Soviet Politics*, p. 3

¹⁰³ Brzezinski, *Ideology and Power in Soviet Politics*, p. 13

with its ideological objectives.¹⁰⁴ He furthermore pointed out that this drive to transform Russian society into pure communism accelerates as the regime stabilises itself in power. The more power the communists acquire over the political system and socio-economic structure of the country their wherewithal to bring about a declared classless and egalitarian society increases. However, the more communist leaders attempt to refashion society according to their ideological dictates, the more internal enemies they generate and the more external pressure is brought to bear on them. Thus their attempt to impose totalitarianism throughout their societies and to export it to the rest of the world generates stiff resistance from those who will not submit to tyranny and have their political freedom quenched.

Brzezinski described totalitarianism as ‘a forward-oriented phenomenon,’¹⁰⁵ due to its stated objective of building a utopia or perfect society in the near future. To carry out this total transformation of society, Brzezinski wrote that ideology is the key to understanding the orientation of political objectives and, furthermore, that ideologization of the masses is seen as a prerequisite to imbuing the people with the same outlook and enthusiasm as the communist party itself. He wrote: ‘...ideology is not merely a historical guide. It becomes a daily dose of perpetual indoctrination.’¹⁰⁶

Brzezinski correctly pointed out that, although totalitarianism and dictatorship more generally, can and have arisen in agrarian societies, as in the case of Russia or the Asiatic dictatorships of the past, they may come to power in industrially advanced areas, as happened in Nazi Germany. Therefore, industrialisation of a country does not preclude such a country from falling prey to totalitarian dictatorship.¹⁰⁷ Also, in spite of the fact that totalitarian regimes are oppressive of human freedoms and may appear as an aberration in political systems, Brzezinski maintained that rationality and totalitarianism are not necessarily incompatible.¹⁰⁸ A totalitarian regime can still modernise and maintain law and order. That being said, it is evident that in the most civilised and prosperous regions of the world, Western Europe and North America, totalitarian governments did not by and large come into being largely owing to the institutionalisation of democracy, the growth of a civic society and middle class that could keep the political elite in check, and the codification in law of basic rights such

¹⁰⁴ Brzezinski, *Ideology and Power in Soviet Politics*, p. 15

¹⁰⁵ Brzezinski, *Ideology and Power in Soviet Politics*, p. 15

¹⁰⁶ Brzezinski, *Ideology and Power in Soviet Politics*, p. 19

¹⁰⁷ Brzezinski, *Ideology and Power in Soviet Politics*, p. 29

¹⁰⁸ Brzezinski, *Ideology and Power in Soviet Politics*, p. 33

as freedom of speech and assembly that ensure popular participation in government on the part of citizens.

Brzezinski noted the continuities in the Soviet Union from the tsarist era whereby one man continued to rule from the top and the system of government remained autocratic, despite the claims of the CPSU to be a “dictatorship of the proletariat.”¹⁰⁹ However, the advent of Communism in Russia did reverse libertarian trends in the late tsarist era, such as the move toward an independent judiciary, the emancipation of the serfs (somewhat reversed by the forced labour camps and general economic exploitation of the workers) and the moves towards representation in government that the tsars were bringing about, reversed by the dictatorship of the Communist party, claiming to represent the “proletariat” but in effect denying them any say in the governance of their country.¹¹⁰

Foreshadowing one of the arguments later put forth in *Between Two Ages*, that the technocratic leadership of modern governments will inevitably resort to manipulating the emotions and controlling the reason of the masses,¹¹¹ Brzezinski stated that: ‘All modern societies involve mass manipulation, especially since the masses have now become economically and politically important.’¹¹² Coming from someone who was ostensibly in favour of the democratic West and opposed to the totalitarian east, the idea that contemporary politics involves mass manipulation sounds rather contradictory. One would rather assume that a well-informed citizenry would be capable of making up their own mind on all the major political issues of the day.

For the first time mentioned throughout his works, Brzezinski also made another argument that the contemporary era is the era of the mass political awakening. He stated:

Regimes of this (authoritarian) sort could endure as long as the majority of the population remained politically neutral and passive. A variety of well-known factors undermined this neutrality and passivity. Rapid social-economic changes brought about by the machine age, increased literacy, and the rise of nationalism have contributed to the politicizing of the masses and have made the politics of mass consciousness a feature of our age. Practically all contemporary leaders

¹⁰⁹ Brzezinski, *Ideology and Power in Soviet Politics*, p. 44

¹¹⁰ Brzezinski, *Ideology and Power in Soviet Politics*, p. 60

¹¹¹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Between Two Ages* (New York, 1970) p.11

¹¹² Brzezinski, *Ideology and Power in Soviet Politics*, p. 65

have to appeal to popular sentiments and organize various forms of mass action in order to wield power effectively.¹¹³

Brzezinski made the assertion, validated by the historical record, that during times of war or economic downturn, societies are more susceptible to demagoguery and the rise of dictatorial leaders, as they turn to drastic solutions to seemingly insoluble problems, seeing in the tough and often bellicose rhetoric of such leaders the necessary response to their troubles.¹¹⁴

The importance of the Soviet people relinquishing their ideology is mentioned when Brzezinski wrote: 'To abandon these efforts to ideologize society, even if this process is highly ritualised and may no longer involve general individual commitment, would signal the first real step in the direction of the transformation of the system.'¹¹⁵ This notion would become central to Brzezinski's later policy of "peaceful engagement." That is to say, Brzezinski realised that soft power could be used to bring about the dissolution of Soviet ideology and its replacement with Western values.

Brzezinski also outlined the core beliefs of the communist ideology. These include: the class struggle; the inevitable triumph of socialism; public or state ownership of land (and means of production); all power should be vested in the Communist party (or dictatorship of the proletariat); revolutionary struggle and Lenin's concept of the violent seizure of power as being necessary to overthrow the capitalist system in a given country; and consciousness rather than spontaneity (the future society must be planned and actively brought about rather than allowed to develop spontaneously).¹¹⁶

Brzezinski towards the end of this work put forth the argument which was to influence his approach toward the Soviet Union fifteen years later as National Security Adviser, that Communism represented an existential threat to humanity due to the fact that Communist leaders were determined to bring about a global communist dictatorship and thus would never settle for peace between themselves and the West. Such a belief necessitated a tough response to meet Communist aggression anywhere in the world with resolute force and ultimately, opt for a policy of defeating communism rather than settling for "peaceful coexistence". He stated:

¹¹³ Brzezinski, *Ideology and Power in Soviet Politics*, p. 66

¹¹⁴ Brzezinski, *Ideology and Power in Soviet Politics*, p. 67

¹¹⁵ Brzezinski, *Ideology and Power in Soviet Politics*, p. 82

¹¹⁶ Brzezinski, *Ideology and Power in Soviet Politics*, p. 99

Soviet insistence that ultimate peace depends on the total victory of a particular social system led by a particular political party injects into international affairs an element of a fundamental struggle for survival not conducive to conflict resolution.¹¹⁷

Brzezinski's *Ideology and Power in Soviet Politics* sets forth the argument central to his conception of the Soviet Union and how to respond to its expansive policies: the idea that the Soviet Union represented a serious threat to humanity and must be ultimately destroyed. He thus saw the competition as a zero-sum game. Brzezinski also wrote that to realistically bring about the implosion of the Soviet Union the West must encourage the detachment of Soviet bloc countries from Moscow's control; promoting change within the communist bloc in addition to maintaining conventional and nuclear forces capable of defeating the Soviets in an all-out war. He stated:

the West can, however, strive to create favourable conditions for the further growth of the diversity that has developed within the Communist camp... we should encourage some of our allies to exploit the more traditional bonds of friendship that have existed between them and some of the nations presently within the Communist camp. We should continue to address ourselves directly to the Communist-controlled peoples, thereby encouraging domestic pressures for change.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Brzezinski, *Ideology and Power in Soviet Politics*, p.113

¹¹⁸ Brzezinski, *Ideology and Power in Soviet Politics*, p.161

2) A Budding Political Minor Player

Peaceful Engagement

One of Brzezinski's early notions for splitting up the Soviet Union was the concept of peaceful engagement, designed specifically to encourage pressures for change inside the Communist Bloc, including greater autonomy for the Soviet Republics and involving the use of soft power to entice them to identify with the West. This had its precedent in Kennan's strategy to sow disunity in the communist bloc however it was stepped up dramatically by Brzezinski and the Carter administration. John Lewis Gaddis wrote that: 'Despite indications that the Russian were tightening their control there, the administration devoted much time and thought during 1949 to ways of encouraging further dissidence in the satellites, ranging from Voice of America broadcasts and human rights campaigns in the United Nations to economic pressures and covert action.'¹¹⁹ Brzezinski knew that the Soviet Union relied upon conformity and the suppression of indigenous cultures in order to provide cohesion and that a recipe for political change in Eastern Europe would necessarily involve stressing the differences between Russian culture and those of its satellites, thereby encouraging the Soviet Republics to press ahead with their own nation-building and cultural autonomy. The U.S. policy of encouraging dissent goes back to encouraging Tito's separation from the Soviet Union.¹²⁰

Brzezinski was an innovator with regards to U.S. engagement with Eastern Europe. He foresaw that the use of soft power could be effective in dis-entangling the Eastern European nations from the Soviet Union and rather than pursue a policy of containment which would in effect maintain the status quo, Brzezinski sought to transcend the current situation and hasten the liberation of Eastern Europe, not through armed force but through persuasion and the enticement of Western values. He knew that military conflict was not an option therefore he resorted to the use of soft power to bring about the region's liberation. John Lewis Gaddis spoke of how military engagement would have the effect of uniting the satellites behind Russia. He wrote: 'Accordingly, NSC-68 stressed the importance of doing nothing in war or peace that might "irrevocably unite the Russian people behind the regime that

¹¹⁹ John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, p. 66

¹²⁰ John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, p. 100

enslaves them.’¹²¹ The United States therefore could not utilise its military forces to liberate Eastern Europe as to do so would unite the regimes behind Moscow and could lead to nuclear war. Therefore, the policy of using soft power was the only option available to it and this is what Brzezinski exploited to bring about the region’s liberation.

Justin Vaisse succinctly described how Brzezinski policy was innovative and how it differed from previous U.S. policies toward the region. He stated:

With these satellites, achieving neutrality was not enough: it should be a matter of reducing tensions and gradually increasing economic and cultural exchanges, to begin to influence the Eastern European societies and in the long run encourage their independence from Moscow. Brzezinski’s proposed path diverged dramatically from Dulles’s supposed policy of liberation, Kennan’s excessively passive and static policy of containment, and Kissinger’s policy of mutual accommodation to achieve a détente based on acceptance of the status quo.¹²²

Brzezinski’s policy of peaceful engagement was thus innovative and would turn out to be highly effective. Liberating the region from within through fomenting nationalism and promoting Western values would prove to be one of the factors that brought about the Soviet Union’s collapse. The promotion of dissident activity was stepped up dramatically by Brzezinski when he came into office and would over the following decade prove to be a major catalyst in the region’s liberation.

Brzezinski’s approach to emancipating Eastern Europe was thus nuanced. He grasped that direct military confrontation would only harden the bloc’s resolve and lead to increased unity amongst the Eastern Europeans and Russia. He comprehended that soft power could be more effective and pragmatic than military engagement in weaning away the Soviet republics from Moscow’s control. Thus it was necessary to engage Eastern Europe in such a way as to not increase opposition to the West and promote solidarity amongst the communist nations; to draw them towards the West in a manner that would win their admiration for the Western socio-political system while

¹²¹ John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, p. 102

¹²² Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 50

avoiding military conflict and Moscow's cracking down on Western efforts to forcibly dismantle the Soviet bloc.

In a speech delivered before the Foreign Policy Association in Washington, D.C., on December 20, 1978, Brzezinski stated: 'While seeking U.S.-Soviet détente, we have also attempted to foster greater U.S. ties with Eastern Europe. We do not believe that our relations with Eastern Europe should be subordinate to our relationship with Moscow.'¹²³ Brzezinski believed it ought to be the U.S. policy to directly reach out to the communist nations themselves and not have to communicate to them through Russia. Brzezinski's described his strategy to bring about the dissolution of the Soviet Union as such:

I became convinced that America intelligently pursuing a foreign policy designed to dismantle the Soviet Union by exploiting its internal weaknesses might actually work, and I started developing that as a concept, first as a scholar and then as a sort of budding political minor player.¹²⁴

Brzezinski's strategy was to foment nationalism within the Soviet Union and in doing so encourage the breaking away of the Soviet Republic from Moscow's control, first through their partial detachment then their complete liberation. Soft power was to be the chief weapon in carrying this out.

Justin Vaisse goes into considerable detail to describe what the policy of peaceful engagement entailed. It is worth noting that the policy was an alternative means of waging the Cold War and a solution to the impasse of containment that seemed to just freeze the status quo and prolong the existence of the Soviet Union. He stated:

The policy of peaceful engagement was based on an analysis of the weaknesses of the Soviet regime, which was incapable of responding to the aspirations of the populace in terms of economic progress or political liberties. Peaceful engagement meant embracing Eastern Europe as closely as possible in order to transform it gradually and tug it away from Moscow's orbits. Since the West was not ready to commit fully to a strategy of support for uprisings, it needed to stop claiming that it had such a strategy, that it envisaged a possible victory in those

¹²³ Zbigniew Brzezinski, 'The Goals of U.S. Foreign Policy,' in Marin Strmecki ed., *In Quest of National Security* (Colorado, 1988) p.102

¹²⁴ 'Interview with Zbigniew Brzezinski,' One on One, *Al Jazeera*, 11 December, 2010

terms. Instead it should pursue the same objectives – increasing diversity within the Soviet bloc and loosening the ties between Eastern Europe and Moscow – through a different and more effective policy. Thus America and the Western European countries should significantly increase their economic exchanges with Eastern Europe rather than leaving the region in relative stagnation on the assumption that doing so could lead to discontent and regime change (the politics of “the worse the better”). On the contrary, economic development of the region, binding it to the West, would encourage the desire for independence. More generally, Western Europeans should make their Eastern counterparts political and cultural partners rather than adversaries, while multiplying educational, scientific, intellectual, and artistic exchanges among civil societies in order to expose populations to their power of attraction.¹²⁵

Brzezinski’s policy of peaceful engagement was subsequently adopted by the Kennedy and Johnson administrations.¹²⁶ Brzezinski prepared speeches for Kennedy during his campaign, in which Kennedy proposed that restrictions to economic aid to Soviet countries, such as Poland, be lifted, so as to strengthen economic links between these countries and the United States and in doing so promote their economic independence from Moscow. On October 1, 1960, ‘Kennedy gave a speech in Chicago, outlining a program of “peaceful engagement” with the satellites, Poland in particular, as a more effective way to counter the USSR than the politics of liberation pursued by the Republicans. Here Brzezinski’s positions are clearly recognizable.’¹²⁷

Subsequently, Brzezinski met with President Johnson in the White House and his ideas were expressed in numerous speeches.¹²⁸ Indeed, in 1966, while working on the State Department’s Policy Planning Council, Brzezinski was described in *Newsweek* as ‘a brilliant 38-year old political scientist’ who had already become ‘one of the architects of U.S. foreign policy.’¹²⁹ Vaisse described Brzezinski’s meteoric rise to the role of policymaker as thus: ‘It was because he published a number of articles in *Foreign Affairs*, the council’s journal, that Brzezinski began to be known beyond academic circles. And it was through his connections in the CFR rather than through

¹²⁵ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 83

¹²⁶ Lubowski, *Zbig*, p.24 ‘Kennedy liked the idea. It was fresh, stimulating and, as the young senator saw it, promising.’

¹²⁷ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 54

¹²⁸ Lubowski, *Zbig*, p.29

¹²⁹ “The Thinker,” *Newsweek*, November 14, 1966

his contacts at Harvard or Columbia that he was invited to serve on President Lyndon Johnson's Policy Planning Council from 1966 to early 1968.¹³⁰ Brzezinski, indeed, wrote copious amounts of articles for academic journals, the Council on Foreign Relations' *Foreign Affairs* in particular, which were read by policymakers and academics and significantly influenced not just policymaking but political discourse. Brzezinski had a notable impact upon President Johnson's "bridge-building" speech which marked a departure from previous Cold War policy. The U.S. would now engage the Eastern Europeans and attempt to reconcile them with the West. This policy was revolutionary for its time, as it sought to reduce tension between the two blocs and win the hearts and minds of the Eastern Europeans through the sheer power of attraction. Justin Vaisse described the significance of Brzezinski's peaceful engagement as adopted by the Johnson administration. He wrote:

But Brzezinski's main accomplishment came about a few months after he joined the PPS in the summer of 1966; his influence was perceptible in the speech Johnson gave on October 7, 1966, to the National Conference of Editorial Writers. The talk is sometimes identified as "East-West Discourse," or the "bridge-building speech," or even, tellingly, the "peaceful engagement" speech. In it, Johnson discussed US relations with Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and the USSR, and introduced two noteworthy developments in American policy: German reunification was no longer a prerequisite for easing the tensions with the East; on the contrary, it would be a result of reduced tension. America was shifting from a policy of coexistence to a peaceful engagement; this would entail a massive increase in exchanges, especially with Eastern Europe. In short, Johnson adopted two ideas that Brzezinski had been defending since 1961. It is true that the administration had already taken steps in that direction. For example, in a speech delivered in May 1964, Johnson had brought up the need to "build bridges" with the East in order to wear away the Iron Curtain, and the idea of no longer making German reunification a prerequisite had gained support within the administration, even if it had not been expressed officially for fear of offending Bonn. But the October 7 speech marked a real political turning point.¹³¹

¹³⁰ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 76

¹³¹ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 93

This speech in fact used the term “peaceful engagement.” To quote President Johnson: “We must improve the East-West environment in order to achieve the unification of Germany in the context of a larger, peaceful, and prosperous Europe. Our task is to achieve a reconciliation with the East – a shift from the narrow concept of coexistence to the broader vision of peaceful engagement.”¹³²

The policy of peaceful engagement was a pragmatic way of cultivating change within the Soviet Union. Brzezinski’s later colleague at Johns Hopkins University Charles Gati described how innovative the policy was. He stated:

the policy signified a strong opposition to Communist rule, combined with economic enticements and educational exchanges, activities aimed at cultivating intellectuals eager for renewing contacts with the West, and even favours extended to communist regimes that showed signs of either domestic liberalization or a modicum of foreign policy detachment from Moscow. The goal was thus limited in scope: liberalization rather than liberty, diversity rather than democracy, partial detachment from the Soviet Union rather than complete separation, and support wherever possible for nationalist aspirations. Brzezinski offered a realistic, evolutionary alternative to empty political rhetoric.¹³³

Brzezinski did not view the Communist bloc as a monolithic and coherent whole, as it was traditionally regarded by the U.S. establishment. His policy of peaceful engagement, articulated in many articles written during the 1960’s, therefore sought to exploit this weakness of the Soviet Union by drawing the Eastern European states back into the Western orbit through sheer economic incentive and cultural identification. Brzezinski believed that it was only natural that the East European states would evolve that way politically and that Russia would inevitably follow suit given that the Western political and economic system was so demonstrably superior to that of the Eastern one. His views were taken on board by the Johnson administration. As Patrick Vaughan wrote:

Brzezinski’s concept of “peaceful engagement” was expanded in his 1965 work *Alternative to Partition* that recommended the United States take the lead in a significant multinational campaign, similar to the Marshall Plan, designed to

¹³² Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 94

¹³³ Charles Gati ed., *Zbig: The Strategy and Statecraft of Zbigniew Brzezinski* (Baltimore, 2013) XXII

bridge the political and economic divisions that still divided Europe. Brzezinski's work led to an appointment to the State Department during which he wrote President Johnson's famous "bridge building" speech which represented the most ambitious U.S. approach toward Eastern Europe in the Cold War era.¹³⁴

However, Brzezinski's approach was subsequently turned down by Congress for being too soft on Communism, as it offered economic aid to the East European states at a time when conservative opinion in the United States was against any such overture. Concerning the reluctance of the U.S. to grant economic aid to Communist countries: '...American taxpayers would not want to give money to ostensibly neutral but actually hostile regimes...' ¹³⁵

The policy of peaceful engagement nonetheless was revolutionary for its time, and soft power would go on to play a vital role in the erosion of Soviet power, as the Cold War ended in part because of peaceful movements for reform rather than direct military collision between the two superpowers. In the end, Western political values would play an important if difficult to quantify role in encouraging the Soviet republics to break away from the Soviet Union, as indeed they did try to adopt the Western socio-political system along with its respect for human rights and furthermore they sought to move into the Western orbit. Brzezinski was a pioneer in the use of soft power as an alternative to military confrontation and this, in the end, would prove to be more deadly than nuclear weapons in inflicting damage upon the Soviet Union.

¹³⁴ Patrick Vaughan, 'Zbigniew Brzezinski: The Political and Academic Life of a Cold War Visionary' (West Virginia University, 2003) p.14

¹³⁵ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 52

Alternative to Partition

In this work, published in 1965, Brzezinski offered forth a roadmap for overcoming the division of Europe into two camps. He analysed the historical background of how Europe came to be dominated by the superpowers in the aftermath of World War II, with a particular emphasis upon the division of Germany and its capital city, Berlin. This is significant as this issue was the dominant one at the outset of the Cold War. As Paul Kennedy put it: 'In the beginning, the Cold War was centred upon remaking the boundaries of Europe. Underneath, therefore, it was still to do with the 'German problem', since the resolution of that issue would in turn determine the amount of influence which the victorious powers of 1945 would exert over Europe.'¹³⁶ His intention in writing the book was also to formulate a new set of policies for the U.S. government in relation to Europe in order to deal jointly with ending the partition. Brzezinski differed from George Kennan's policy of military disengagement from Europe and argued that military engagement was necessary in order to safeguard America's interests.

His work is thus titled *Alternative to Partition* as Brzezinski believed the status quo could be changed and the continent reunited in the near future in a manner that is satisfactory to the citizens of the countries concerned and also, that is in their security interests as well as those of the superpowers, the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

Brzezinski believed that the time was ripe for dismantling the iron curtain when writing this work. He argued that the key to solving the partition of Europe was first and foremost ending the division of Germany.¹³⁷ In order to bring about a reunited Germany, Brzezinski felt the United States had to take the initiative, as the Soviet Union had a vested interest in keeping Germany weak and divided in order to prevent Germany from again becoming a threat to the Soviet Union and from dominating central Europe.¹³⁸ The memories of Nazi Germany were a reminder that the Soviet Union could not tolerate a strong Central European power which might again threaten its security.

Brzezinski noted how Marshall Plan aid played a significant role in solidifying the division of Europe after the war. The countries that accepted such aid became

¹³⁶ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, p. 480

¹³⁷ Brzezinski, *Alternative to Partition*, p. viii

¹³⁸ Brzezinski, *Alternative to Partition*, p. ix

economically tied to the United States, allowing U.S. goods into their markets as part of the condition to being given funds to rebuild their economies, whereas the countries under Soviet control were ordered by Stalin to firmly reject such aid. As Molotov reported to Stalin in 1948: ‘The Americans “are eager to use this opportunity to break into the internal economies of European countries and especially to redirect the flow of European trade in their own interest.”¹³⁹ Economic domination of Europe was an objective of the U.S. that was advanced through the Marshall Plan and the Soviets were right in stating that the Americans sought to profit from European markets. The whole idea was to establish markets as outlets for American goods in return for granting the Europeans funds to rebuild their economies and this could be seen as an effort to dominate the European economies. The Marshall Plan contributed significantly to the demarcation of Europe into capitalist and communist spheres of influence. As Brzezinski stated, the rejection of Marshall plan aid ‘by the Soviet Union and, under Soviet duress, by the other East European nations provided the foundations on which the Iron Curtain was erected and from which were launched the contrasting European policies of the two great powers.’¹⁴⁰

Brzezinski also went on to mention that the formation of NATO was designed as a security alliance to protect its member states from Soviet aggression and was not intended to be a permanent alliance but rather one that would be dissolved once the Soviet threat had disappeared.¹⁴¹ One could argue however that NATO serves the purpose of protecting Western countries from external aggression and that the alliance is useful in providing for the security of Western states and not just for containing the Soviet Union. The purpose of NATO, as one American diplomat put it, was to keep the Germans down, the Americans in, and the Russians out. The Soviet Union then in response to the formation of NATO created the Warsaw Pact. However, Brzezinski noted that while Western Europe was integrating to a greater degree with the formation of the European Community, following the death of Stalin the monolithic unity of the communist bloc was giving way to increased relativization and diversification.

The Soviet Bloc countries were deciding upon pursuing their own roads to Communism, with national considerations and circumstances in mind, rather than

¹³⁹ Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p. 72

¹⁴⁰ Brzezinski, *Alternative to Partition*, p. 2

¹⁴¹ Brzezinski, *Alternative to Partition*, p. 2

taking direct orders from Moscow. They were also seeking to establish economic ties with the West in order to further develop their economies. This disunity in Eastern Europe is something Brzezinski sought to exploit to further fragment the Soviet Union and bring about its eventual collapse and this would tie in with his policy of peaceful engagement.

Brzezinski pointed out this particular vulnerability of the Soviet Union, arguing that anti-Russian feelings among the Soviet bloc countries were stronger than anti-Americanism amongst Eastern Europeans, and ought therefore to be capitalised upon.¹⁴² Brzezinski was acutely aware of the growing strength of nationalism within the Soviet bloc countries and how this would work to the detriment of unity amongst communist states, each of which being desirous of pursuing its own national interests rather than giving priority to the supranational aims espoused by Moscow. For example, in the economic sphere member states sought to become relatively self-sufficient and to prioritise the industrialisation of their own economies rather than specialising in one particular sector, such as the production of steel, as Moscow wished. The increasingly strong nationalist sentiment was apparently not something Moscow had anticipated.¹⁴³

Brzezinski also wrote that the Sino-Soviet dispute had given the Eastern European nations greater leverage vis-à-vis the Russians, who were consequently more dependent upon them than before for their continued support and therefore increasingly willing to grant them a modicum of political and economic independence. The 'scope for manoeuvre and self-assertion by the East Europeans,' Brzezinski wrote, 'has been greatly enlarged.'¹⁴⁴ Moscow, by allowing the satellite states more autonomy in exchange for their continued loyalty, was in effect sowing the seeds for the demise of the Communist Bloc, for relativization of it was bound inevitably to lead to increased demands for freedom from Soviet interference in domestic politics and foreign policy.

This was a development Brzezinski no doubt applauded, as it served to fundamentally weaken the bonds holding the Communist Bloc together and, as had been argued in his MA thesis in 1948, indicated that nationalism would be the death knell of the Soviet Union rather than armed conflict between the superpowers, it

¹⁴² Brzezinski, *Alternative to Partition*, p. 8

¹⁴³ Brzezinski, *Alternative to Partition*, p. 12

¹⁴⁴ Brzezinski, *Alternative to Partition*, p. 14

would collapse through implosion rather than by military defeat. This in fact turned out to be the way in which the Soviet Union did in fact crumble and Brzezinski was right in correctly foreseeing how seriously the spectre of nationalism would threaten the unity of the Soviet Bloc. Brzezinski described in detail the significance of Communist internationalism being supplanted by the national interests of the countries comprising the Soviet Bloc:

The pattern of change means the revival of the supremacy of states and the reappearance of state to state relations; it means the collapse of the old communist dream of one united communist state. The Soviet leadership failed to capitalise on a historical opportunity to impose an international solution in the late forties when it could have done so; its bumptious and precipitous policies, its reliance on ideological excommunication and economic sanctions (as toward Albania) merely stimulated nationalist reactions. What Stalin felt he need not do or perhaps even could not do, namely, to forge the people's democracies into a single coordinated political and economic system, his successors certainly will not be able to do. Stalin did not create stable foundations for an enduring empire; Khrushchev did not develop the style of international leadership. East Europe is where the dream of communist internationalism lies buried.¹⁴⁵

This post-Stalin relativization of the Communist Bloc is important as it meant the Soviet Union lost its cohesion and unity. The fact that Soviet republics were allowed to go their own way from the time of Khrushchev onwards meant that they would inevitably do so and in all likelihood gravitate toward the West. Such relativization provided fertile ground for Brzezinski's policy of peaceful engagement as it meant the Eastern Europeans were receptive to Western ideas and influence and had a modicum of independence so that they could go their own way politically. They were free to industrialise and borrow technology from the West, increase trade, and promote artistic and scientific exchanges that would help serve to modernise their countries, as well as engage in cultural exchanges with the West that would help solidify the bonds between East and West. This was important as, for example, in the post-Stalin years, the Eastern Europeans were exposed to, for example, American jazz music and

¹⁴⁵ Brzezinski, *Alternative to Partition*, p. 28

movies and this would help inculcate a fondness for the West which was sure to, in the long run, overcome the hostility between the two blocs.

Brzezinski did make the qualification however that while nationalism was on the rise in the Soviet Bloc, subordination to Moscow continued to be the reality, and this was forcefully demonstrated during the Hungarian and Czechoslovak uprisings in 1956 and 1968, respectively. Brzezinski argued that the Cold War would continue due to the fact that the U.S. and USSR both have a universalising mission and desire to see their socio-political systems become the norm around the world. Also the fact that both superpowers possessed the world's pre-eminent military forces meant that tensions among them were likely to remain high. He argued however that Europe need not continue to be an area of great-power conflict, that a solution would be possible whereby Soviet-American tensions on the European continent could be defused through encouraging the eventual reunification of the continent in a manner that did not jeopardise the security interests of either of the superpowers or the European nations themselves. Conflict around the world, through proxy wars and the sponsoring of political parties loyal to either side would most likely continue he argued, but the opportunity for rendering the European continent a region of relative peace was currently at hand.¹⁴⁶

Brzezinski pointed out that East-West trade is more important to Eastern Europe than to Western Europe because of the fact that the latter largely exported industrial goods to the former whereas Eastern Europe largely exported non-industrial goods to Western Europe. This dependency on the West for manufactured goods, machinery and high technology meant that: 'The communist elites would like to lift the Iron Curtain in economics while leaving it down in cultural-social affairs.'¹⁴⁷ Brzezinski advocated that the West should make economic assistance and the granting of credits to the East dependent upon the East revising its social and cultural policies towards the West i.e. allow for a greater movement of people and ideas across the Iron Curtain.

Brzezinski described why the Soviets felt that the contest between the East and West was centred upon Europe. He stated:

¹⁴⁶ Brzezinski, *Alternative to Partition*, p. 44

¹⁴⁷ Brzezinski, *Alternative to Partition*, p. 69

To the Soviets, Europe is still the “central front” in the confrontation with the West. This basic assumption has guided Soviet policy since World War II. It has been systematized and amplified in the course of the Sino-Soviet debate during which the Chinese advanced the counterproposition that the underdeveloped world, especially the “national liberation” struggle, has become the arena for the historically decisive showdown with “U.S. imperialism.” The Soviet position stressed instead the primacy of the direct competition between the developed parts of the two global systems. In the Soviet view the eventual economic supremacy of the communist world, and hence its increased military power, will jointly – albeit peacefully – effect a qualitative turn in world history. Thus, while the battles in the Third World are important, they are peripheral to the direct confrontation on the central front. Europe, the western parts supported by the United States, the eastern part linked to the Soviet Union, is where history will be shaped.¹⁴⁸

This quote is important as Europe was the grand arena where the Cold War was initially fought. The Second World War had been the struggle between European powers for mastery of the continent. The division of Europe after the war meant that neither the East led by Russia nor the West led by America had triumphed over the continent. It made sense that when one power triumphed over the other in the European strategic zone, the conflict would be brought to a close. Europe was the most prosperous region of the world for five hundred years prior to World War II and it made sense that to have this region as an ally would significantly tip the balance of power in your favour.

However, the Cold War would in 1950 move to the next strategic front, East Asia, with the Korean War and stalemate would prevail in Europe. During the Carter administration, the third strategic front on the Eurasian continent, the Middle East, would become the centre of contention between the two superpowers. However, as Europe was the wealthiest of the three strategic zones, it was imperative to have the mainstay there for if the industrialised democracies of Europe fell into either hands that would bring about victory for either side.

The Soviets, Brzezinski observed, sought to weaken the American-European relationship, and undermine European political and economic unity. A united Europe

¹⁴⁸ Brzezinski, *Alternative to Partition*, p. 76

tied to the United States posed a greater challenge to the Soviets and was more likely to triumph over the Communist world thus the Soviet Union sought to keep Europe fragmented and American involvement there to a minimum. This is why the Soviets believed it to be necessary to keep Germany divided and weak.¹⁴⁹

Brzezinski made the point that should the West fail to promote European unification, a fragmented Europe made up of small nation-states would have less bargaining power vis-à-vis the Soviets and would inevitably be dominated by them. Brzezinski thus argued that the US-USSR confrontation in Europe must be transformed into cooperation and that the onus for bringing about such a transformation essentially lay with America.¹⁵⁰ Brzezinski argued this was in America's interest as well, as it would revive admiration for America amongst Europeans, making America more relevant to them, strengthening the alliance and working towards the general promotion of international stability and world order.¹⁵¹ Brzezinski also pointed out that as America had no territorial designs on Europe, it would therefore be in a position to play the role of honest broker and sponsor a settlement that is in the interests of the Europeans themselves.¹⁵²

Brzezinski proposed that "three cardinal assumptions" should underpin U.S. efforts to promote European reunification. Firstly, Western military forces would have to be preserved at their current strength and Western interests be protected. Secondly, that Russia and Eastern Europe together must negotiate any settlement with the West. In this regard Brzezinski noted that Russia would not tolerate East European states defecting to the West, leaving CEMA or the Warsaw Treaty Organisation and that the Communist elites in these countries were not likely to do so even in spite of economic incentives and popular pressures for them to join the West. Brzezinski mentioned here for the first time that the ideal solution would be not only the incorporation of Eastern Europe into a greater Europe but would also include the Soviet Union as well. Brzezinski thus proposed that Russia also be eventually granted entry into the West.¹⁵³ He argued that as the countries of Eastern Europe have more experience with democracy and historically share a stronger cultural affinity with the West, their

¹⁴⁹ Brzezinski, *Alternative to Partition*, p. 85

¹⁵⁰ Brzezinski, *Alternative to Partition*, p. 132

¹⁵¹ Brzezinski, *Alternative to Partition*, p. 133

¹⁵² Brzezinski, *Alternative to Partition*, p. 134

¹⁵³ Brzezinski, *Alternative to Partition*, p. 136

integration should proceed more quickly than that of Russia,¹⁵⁴ a prediction that turned out to be true, given Eastern Europe's integration into the EU and Russia's continued absence from it. Thirdly, Brzezinski stated that Germany would only be reunited as a result of a qualitative change in the relationship between the countries of the West and the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.¹⁵⁵ With these assumptions in mind, he then recommended five policy goals for the U.S.

Firstly, Brzezinski argued that the U.S. must persuade the Eastern Europeans, especially the Czechs and the Poles that their security would be increased if Germany were reunited. He also argued that the U.S. should encourage better relations between West Germany and Eastern Europe as a means of drawing that half of the continent closer to the West. This was an important recommendation as Germany was naturally, owing to its economic clout, the leader of Europe, and therefore good relations between Germany and Eastern Europe was a prerequisite to stability on the continent. It was imperative for both the U.S. and Russia that a resurgent dictatorship did not arise in Germany which would again seek to dominate the continent. As Germany was the most powerful European state, both the U.S. and Russia had to ensure the security of Germany's weaker neighbours and prevent them from being politically dominated by that country.

Secondly, Brzezinski proposed the U.S. should promote a German-Polish reconciliation, as this would bring to an end the animosity over their borders that were redrawn after the Second World War, Poland being given compensation with German territory in exchange for loss of part of its territory in the east to the Soviet Union. Brzezinski argued that the U.S. must encourage the Germans to make clear to the Poles that they have no territorial designs upon Poland and therefore do not seek to redraw the borders between the two countries.¹⁵⁶ This is important as promoting peace between these two countries was crucial to east-west relations and peace in Europe, Poland being the most significant state in Eastern Europe and Germany being the former European hegemon.

Thirdly, Brzezinski stated that the U.S. should try to 'lessen the Russian obsession with Germany.'¹⁵⁷ This referred to the Soviet fear of a resurgent Germany and also to the fact that Russia sought to exact concessions from the West through tightening its

¹⁵⁴ Brzezinski, *Alternative to Partition*, p. 136

¹⁵⁵ Brzezinski, *Alternative to Partition*, p. 137

¹⁵⁶ Brzezinski, *Alternative to Partition*, p. 141

¹⁵⁷ Brzezinski, *Alternative to Partition*, p. 144

control over East Germany, particularly Berlin, as was the case during the blockade of that city in 1948-9 when Stalin closed down all roads and railways after the French, British, and Americans integrated their respective zones of the city into one administrative unit, which the Soviets viewed as a threat. The Soviets always viewed the status of Berlin as an extremely sensitive issue and felt they could induce the West into granting concessions by tightening their grip over their half of the city. Brzezinski was seeking here that the Americans convince the Soviets not to be so obsessed with the potential threat of Germany or with using East Germany and Berlin in particular as leverage with which to exact concessions from the West.

Fourthly, he argued, consistent with his policy of peaceful engagement that the improvements in economic ties between the two halves of Europe should gradually lead to increased cultural and social contacts. Brzezinski hoped such contacts would stimulate admiration amongst Eastern Europeans for Western values, such as freedom of speech, and furthermore smooth over relations between the two blocs. Finally, Brzezinski proposed that the U.S. should seek to cultivate multilateral ties between Western and Eastern Europe, rather than merely bilateral agreements between the respective nations of each half. In this regard, Brzezinski had in mind a 'joint all-European economic development plan,' which would 'be designed to cut across the present European partition, to narrow existing disparities in European living standards, to reduce the economic and political significance of existing frontiers, and to promote East-West trade and human contacts by the development of an all-European system of communications.'¹⁵⁸

In *Alternative to Partition*, Brzezinski thus set forth an ambitious agenda and set of policy goals to realistically bring about the reunification of Europe. He had in mind ending both the division of Germany and the dismantling of the iron curtain, as well as stimulating political, economic, social, and cultural contacts between the two halves and he believed that America was in a position to spearhead such a process. Thus he ended his work stating: 'America could set itself no nobler or more timely task than seeking to end the partition of Europe.'¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ Brzezinski, *Alternative to Partition*, p. 169

¹⁵⁹ Brzezinski, *Alternative to Partition*, p. 175

The Soviet Bloc

Brzezinski was aware that, following Stalin's death in 1953, the Soviet Union underwent a period of diversification and as a result there was greater autonomy for the Soviet satellites. This process of the U.S. bringing about diversification had been inherent in the policy of containment advocated by Kennan since the late 1940s; to encourage diversity and bring about the internal erosion of the communist bloc. As John Lewis Gaddis wrote: 'The third step in his strategy was to bring about such a change: to effect a shift in the thinking of Kremlin leaders away from their own version of universalism – the conviction that security required restructuring the outside world along Soviet lines – to particularism – to toleration and even the encouragement of diversity.'¹⁶⁰ Brzezinski was a proponent of diversifying the communist bloc and decentralising authority from Moscow unto the Soviet republics. In *The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict*, a work that became a classic in its field,¹⁶¹ Brzezinski wrote about how this new era of diversification meant the end of monolithic rule in the Soviet Union. He stated:

In the long run inherent in this relationship was the gradual diffusion of Soviet authority. No matter how often the Chinese proclaimed Soviet leadership or insisted on the obedience of others to Moscow, the very presence in the camp of a power which was *de facto* independent and which pursued its own domestic policies was a denial of the monolithic and hierarchical character of the international Communist system. No empire or church has ever maintained itself with two capitals. Moscow and Peking had to ponder the fate of Rome and Byzantium.¹⁶²

The end of monolithic rule in the Soviet Union following Stalin's death brought to an end the grand dream of Communist party members to establish a Moscow-led communist empire. Brzezinski wrote, furthermore, that: 'In effect, the Stalinist unity

¹⁶⁰ Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, p. 47

¹⁶¹ Lubowski, *Zbig*, p.26 'In February 1960, Harvard University Press published his book *The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict*. It made a splash in the academic world and enhanced the still young political scientist's standing. For thirty years it was a college textbook that never went out of date. Radio Free Europe read excerpts on the air. It was published in *samizdat* inside the Soviet Union. After that empire fell, *Foreign Affairs* (September-October 1997) listed *The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict* among "the most important books of the last seventy-five years."

¹⁶² Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict* (Harvard, 1967) p.134

of ideology and power was dissipated within less than four years of his death.’¹⁶³ Moscow was losing its grip on the satellite states as they were becoming ever more independent and free from domination by the centre. This provided ample scope for Western engagement with the Soviet satellites and meant that they could be weaned away from the Soviet Union given that Moscow had lost its control over them. Thus the prospects for liberating the Soviet satellites were enhanced. The post-Stalin years led to the loss of ideological control as Communist unity dissipated and the satellites pursued their own roads to socialism. As Zubok wrote: ‘It has now been established beyond a doubt that Stalin was determined to keep Eastern Europe in the Soviet Union’s grip at any cost.’¹⁶⁴

The satellites also sought economic independence from Moscow, who had coordinated their economic policies to ensure they specialised in a given sector and that, like colonial empires of the past, Russia benefitted from the influx of raw materials and manufactured commodities, enriching itself in the process. Though to qualify this, the Russians did develop the industries of their satellites, such as Czechoslovakia and East Germany. However, the satellites felt the relationship between them and Russia was exploitative and sought to develop their own industries, diversify, and pursue autarky. They also sought increased contact with the West for the purpose of importing high-technology. It seems that ostensibly, the Soviet satellites sought to be more like the West in terms of economic advancement though politically they were devoted to the principles of Marxism-Leninism and believed in the dictatorship of the Communist party.

Artemi Kalinowski and Etienne Peyret have questioned whether the Soviet Union really suppressed the satellite states, however it seems beyond a reasonable doubt that they did. Stalin manoeuvred loyal supporters of his into power following the Second World War and the satellites were forced to have their foreign and economic policies coordinated by Moscow to ensure they were in line with the policies of the CPSU. Although they were given a modicum of independence following Stalin’s death, they still had to take their orders from Moscow and follow the agenda of the Kremlin leaders. Failure to do so would result in military intervention, as had been the case in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, when the communist parties there attempted to introduce political reforms that were not approved of by Russia.

¹⁶³ Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc*, p.156

¹⁶⁴ Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p. 21

Vaisse noted that Brzezinski was aware of the effect of de-Stalinization upon the satellites and that he wrote an article 'Shifts in the Satellites' in which he addressed how they were to adjust their own political systems so as to reverse the legacy of Stalin. The significance of this is that by the time of the death of Stalin the regimes were no longer under the monolithic control of Stalin but were undergoing a period of relativization and increased nationalism which Brzezinski could exploit.¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, Brzezinski suggested that pluralism might be the future of the political systems in the eastern bloc following de-Stalinization.¹⁶⁶

The period following the death of Stalin is characterised by a shift in Soviet thinking; a transition from the notion that war between the two blocs was inevitable to the notion that a period of "peaceful coexistence" was at hand. As Zubok wrote: 'The Stalinist thesis of the inevitability of a period of wars gave way to a new thesis: "long-term peaceful coexistence" and non-military competition between the capitalist and Communist systems.'¹⁶⁷ This was spearheaded by Nikita Khrushchev who believed the thesis that war between capitalism and communism was flawed and that both sides could live in relative harmony.

Furthermore, although "peaceful coexistence" became the dominant approach to East-West diplomacy it was still the avowed mission of the Soviets to champion Communism worldwide and the U.S. was naturally regarded as a threat to this objective. Therefore, the Soviet Union competed for the support of post-colonial states and sought out military bases around the globe to further their aims. Zubok made the point that: 'Soviet politics after Stalin's death favoured revolutionary-imperial discourse – it was politically suicidal to be seen as soft on Western imperialism. The members of the collective leadership competed among themselves to win support among the party and state elites, offering strategies of strengthening or expanding Soviet power and international influence.'¹⁶⁸ Thus, while "peaceful coexistence" was the avowed policy of the Soviet Union, the Kremlin had grand designs to take over the world and this involved strengthening the communist bloc, infiltration and communist subversion in the West, and expanding its influence in the Third World.

¹⁶⁵ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 48

¹⁶⁶ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 221

¹⁶⁷ Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p. 94

¹⁶⁸ Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p. 95

Although Brzezinski applauded the relativization of the Communist Bloc, he was still aware that the ultimate goal of the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China was to see Communism triumph throughout the world. As Andrianopoulos has pointed out:

Brzezinski's belief that Moscow and Peking were committed to creating a world-wide Communist society did not change as a result of, what he called, the relativization of ideology emanating from changes in the Soviet Bloc, and particularly from the Sino-Soviet schism.¹⁶⁹

Brzezinski was also aware that a change in generations would have significant implications for the unity of the Soviet Bloc. He was cognizant of the fact that the post-Stalin generation of Soviet leaders would seek greater autonomy from the Soviet Union and would not be as easily controlled as were their predecessors.¹⁷⁰

Another important fact about the post-Stalin period is that this gave birth to the dissident movement. From the time of Khrushchev's speech denouncing Stalin Soviet citizens began to become more receptive to Western culture and there was a softening in relations between the two blocs. People began to feel they also had the right to denounce their leaders and become more openly critical of the totalitarian societies they lived in. As Zubok wrote: 'Recently, Jeremi Suri has argued that de-Stalinisation during the 1960s led to the dissident movement which, in turn, together with the movements in Central Europe, began to challenge the fundamentals of the Soviet regime.'¹⁷¹ This was something the Carter administration would capitalise upon after coming into office and would attempt to fuel so as to do utmost damage to communist governments.

Brzezinski thus realised that the diversity now accepted as the norm was something to be exploited. The ideological rigidity of the Stalinist era had disappeared and the Marxist/Leninist doctrine had been adapted to suit the specific conditions of Soviet nation states. Brzezinski wrote about how Marxist/Leninist doctrine was evolving during this time. He stated:

¹⁶⁹ Andrianopoulos, *Kissinger and Brzezinski* p.45

¹⁷⁰ Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc* p.501

¹⁷¹ Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p. 164

Inherent in both the changes in relations among Communist states and in the Communist ideological conceptions governing these relations was the increasing relativization of the doctrine. Formerly absolute and rigid principles were becoming relative and flexible. With each party increasingly able to insist that its Marxism-Leninism was correct, and with the politically expedient principle of agreeing to disagree gaining broader acceptance in relations among Communist states, the doctrine was becoming diluted and less coherent.¹⁷²

Brzezinski understood that the relativization of Soviet doctrine meant that the Soviet bloc was beginning to fragment ideologically. He grasped that ‘in the history of ideas, relativization of a hitherto absolute ideology is often the first stage in the erosion of the vitality of the ideology.’¹⁷³ Brzezinski thus saw an opportunity to be exploited: namely, the growing diversity in the Soviet bloc and the desire of many of its member states to go their own way toward socialism. Brzezinski knew that their desire to be free from dictatorial rule from Moscow was the first step in their greater identification with the Western system. That is to say, Brzezinski understood that the Soviet bloc was not going to last as a monolithic system and that eventually, although the Communist states professed their desire to remain socialist, he knew that the superiority of the western socio-political system would eventually entice them to identify themselves with the West. He also knew that the loosening of ideological orthodoxy meant that communist citizens would most likely become more receptive to Western ideas and values.

In an article entitled ‘Peaceful Engagement: A Plan for Europe’s Future’ written in 1965, Brzezinski outlined his views as to how Eastern Europe might gravitate towards the West. He stated that ‘the more desirable sequence of change would begin with the internal liberalisation of the East European societies and lead toward their gradual evolution into a Greater Europe jointly with the Soviet Union.’¹⁷⁴

What Brzezinski had in mind was that Eastern Europe could be gradually weaned away from the Soviet Bloc through economic incentive and cultural contact, leading eventually to political accommodation with the West.¹⁷⁵ Brzezinski thus saw in the idea of inciting the East Europeans toward the West a more practical alternative to

¹⁷² Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc*, p. 508

¹⁷³ Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc*, p. 511

¹⁷⁴ Zbigniew Brzezinski, ‘Peaceful Engagement: A Plan for Europe’s Future,’ 1965, p.7

¹⁷⁵ Brzezinski, ‘Peaceful Engagement: A Plan for Europe’s Future,’ p.23

stiff military competition and alliance formation. He favoured a carrot and stick approach to bringing about the seduction of East European countries into the Western orbit. He stated that:

Whenever a country increases the scope of its external independence from Soviet control, or liberalises appreciably its domestic system, it should be rewarded. And similarly whenever an opposite trend develops, the West should be prepared to discontinue its assistance, withdraw special privileges (such as the U.S. "most-favoured-nation" clause, a matter of vital importance to the East Europeans), and should not hesitate to indicate the real reasons involved.¹⁷⁶

Robert Mark Spaulding wrote about what the U.S. policy was toward the Communist Bloc with regard to trade. He stated: 'Because the Soviets valued trade with the West and because Western economies were generally not dependent on trade with the Soviets, Western governments found trade useful in devising the broad range of incentives and disincentives they applied across the East-West divide. By facilitating or impeding trade Western governments incentivised some behaviours, punished others, and signalled communist governments about the overall state of relations.'¹⁷⁷ This carrot and stick approach was a useful means of directing the evolution of the Soviet Union on the part of the United States. The U.S. was in a position to coordinate their development as they were dependent upon the West for economic aid, thus Brzezinski was right in advocating a policy of using economic leverage to liberalise the Soviet Union and promote a convergence with the West.

Brzezinski therefore sought to separate the countries of Eastern Europe from the Soviet Bloc through gradual means and in an incremental fashion, beginning with cultural contacts, student exchanges, grants and aid given with stipulations for liberalisation and increased economic interdependence. As he put it:

As direct Soviet control wanes, as East European nationalism (even under Communist leadership) reasserts itself, as the East-West dichotomy becomes less sharp, it should be an explicit goal of U.S. and Western policy to promote

¹⁷⁶ Brzezinski, 'Peaceful Engagement: A Plan for Europe's Future,' p.24

¹⁷⁷ Robert Mark Spaulding, 'Trade, Aid, and Economic Warfare,' in Richard H. Immerman & Petra Goedde, *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, p. 401

multilateral political and economic relations, lest East Europe—and even all of Europe--become Balkanised.¹⁷⁸

Brzezinski was in many ways a visionary for predicting the way in which Eastern Europe was likely to develop in its relations with the West. He knew that just as economic union preceded political union in the development of the founding states of the European Union, so a similar process would have to occur concerning the integration of Eastern Europe into the West.¹⁷⁹

Brzezinski sought out any means to overcome the division between Western and Eastern Europe. He also argued for increased emigration of Eastern Europeans into the West to work in countries like France and Germany which demanded labour and argued that this would not only help to smooth over relations between the two blocs but would in time have 'a profound effect on the East' as labourers brought back stories of the opulence of Western society and inculcated the values of the West before spreading them throughout their own societies. Brzezinski clearly foresaw that Eastern and Western Europe would become integrated in the near future and he worked assiduously to bring this about, seeking out ways to enhance the cooperation of the two blocs and thus bind them together. Such an economic union would eventually lead to political union and have important ramifications for security between the two blocs. As Brzezinski put it:

As long as the West is militarily strong and clear about its goals, we need not fear to extend to the Communist world a sincere offer of economic co-operation designed neither to strengthen nor to weaken those who have made themselves our adversaries, but to bind us all together so that we cannot consider warring against each other.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸ Brzezinski, 'Peaceful Engagement: A Plan for Europe's Future,' p.28

¹⁷⁹ Brzezinski, 'Peaceful Engagement: A Plan for Europe's Future,' p.29

¹⁸⁰ Zbigniew Brzezinski, 'Peaceful Engagement: A Plan for Europe's Future,' p.39

The Fragile Blossom

The next work to be examined is *The Fragile Blossom: Crisis and Change in Japan*, which was written following Brzezinski's return from a six month trip to Japan in early 1971 and its purpose was 'to assess the role of this crucial Asian nation in an unstable world context.'¹⁸¹ Brzezinski's stay in Japan helped to coalesce his view that closer ties between the developed nations was essential. He was broadening his horizons studying this pivotal Asian nation and becoming an international affairs expert for the purpose of studying its relationship to the United States and the rest of the world and, more importantly, for further integrating Japan into the West.

Brzezinski's report of Japan analysed political, economic, security, and cultural matters and offered advice on how the U.S. should move forward in its relations with this highly significant East Asian country. First of all, Brzezinski described Japanese society in 1971 and referred to the fact that Japan had become a newly industrialised country with a capitalist system superimposed upon what was essentially a feudal society, after Japan's state-led industrialisation that began following the Meiji Restoration in 1868.¹⁸²

By this time, the Japanese had become the most technologically advanced of the Asian nations and Brzezinski went into considerable detail depicting their national character and the values that had helped them to excel in all spheres of life and in effect to catch up with the West. The Japanese evinced: 'great discipline, extraordinary loyalty to one's firm or business, and a very high rate of personal savings.'¹⁸³ The Japanese have long been one of the most outstanding and indeed, highly competitive, nations of this world. Since the end of the Second World War they have adapted much of American culture as well as the American political system to their own country. The Americanization of Japan, however, has not come without criticism from a minority of Japanese, who feared the decline of indigenous Japanese culture as their own society became increasingly westernized. For example, Yukio Mishima, a Japanese political and literary figure, was opposed to "Americanized" Japan with, as Brzezinski pointed out 'all its vulgarities, growing hedonism, lack of purpose, and crass concentration on

¹⁸¹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Fragile Blossom: Crisis and Change in Japan* (New York, 1972) p.i

¹⁸² Brzezinski, *The Fragile Blossom*, p.3

¹⁸³ Brzezinski, *The Fragile Blossom*, p.4

the material.’¹⁸⁴ A significant number of Japanese sympathised with him, and also opposed “Americanization” of Japanese society.¹⁸⁵

The three broad issues of Japanese politics in the post-war era, which the Liberal Democratic Party, the party that had been in power the longest in Japan, has had to grapple with were: economic recovery, alliance with the United States, and institutionalization of democracy. In terms of economic recovery, the Japanese success story is well known; the country has caught up with and overtaken many Western countries in terms of its GDP and manufacturing output. The Japanese, as Brzezinski mentioned:

lead the world in shipbuilding, in electronic production (radios, cameras, and transistorized television sets), motorcycles, and a variety of other fields; they are second to the United States in such areas as computers, rayon, aluminium, steel, and so forth – and some Japanese have become almost intoxicated by it.¹⁸⁶

Japan is in many ways the “Britain of the East,” the industrial power-house of East Asia, but with one exception. The Japanese do not possess sufficient quantities of raw materials and therefore rely for their industrial expansion upon imported steel and fuel. For this reason, Japan has a considerable stake in the American led free trade regime as it depends upon access to raw materials from all over the world, particularly oil from the Middle East. Japan thus has a stake in ensuring that trade in raw materials is not disrupted along the oceanic trade routes that link the Middle East with East Asia, especially the Straits of Malacca.

Currently, Japan’s most important trading partner is China, followed by the United States who, for most of the twentieth century, was the number one destination of Japanese exports and the source of most of Japan’s imports. The fate of the Japanese economy still remains closely intertwined with that of the United States. However, the economic relationship between the two countries has not been an entirely smooth one. Writing in 1971, Brzezinski noted presciently that ‘the textile crisis with the United States was an augury of things to follow; an automobile crisis could be next.’¹⁸⁷ Indeed, an automobile crisis did follow, whereby the saturation of Japanese

¹⁸⁴ Brzezinski, *The Fragile Blossom*, p.13

¹⁸⁵ Brzezinski, *The Fragile Blossom*, p. 42

¹⁸⁶ Brzezinski, *The Fragile Blossom*, p.36

¹⁸⁷ Brzezinski, *The Fragile Blossom*, p.48

automobiles in the American market led to a backlash among Americans because of losses suffered by American automobile manufacturers. Brzezinski also accurately predicted that Japanese economic growth would slow down considerably in the years ahead, particularly from 1971 onwards. However, although Japanese economic growth did slow down, the country did continue to punch above its weight relative to the other industrialised nations.

In terms of its international standing, Japan in the 1970s was beginning to emerge from under the military umbrella of the United States and pursue a more assertive foreign policy. Brzezinski saw greater involvement in the United Nations as a fitting role for the Japanese, particularly with regard to peace-keeping.¹⁸⁸ Indeed, only in very recent years, Japan has become actively involved in United Nations peace-keeping operations overseas. It has provided aid to the troubled areas of the Middle East and continues to play a minor role outside of East Asia in seeking to uphold peace and international law.

In light of the fact that Japan had recovered from the devastation wrought by the Second World War and boomed economically, many Japanese felt that their country's economic might should be matched with concomitant political power and Japanese influence abroad, especially in East Asia. Furthermore, as many in the U.S. advocated that the country scale down its military commitments overseas, the government there has been under pressure to rethink its pledge to defend Japan from external aggression and, in the event that the U.S. can no longer be relied upon to provide for Japan's security, many in Japan felt that the Japanese Self Defence Forces (SDF) should move in to fill the vacuum.¹⁸⁹

Japan also found itself in a vulnerable position from a geopolitical perspective, being surrounded by China, Russia, and the United States who, in 1971, were three of the world's most powerful states and who, in 2016, continue to exercise considerable influence over East Asian affairs.¹⁹⁰ The Japanese sought to cultivate political relations with countries other than the United States and to expand their access to foreign markets and raw materials. A suitable role for Japan in Asia would be to act

¹⁸⁸ Brzezinski, *The Fragile Blossom*, p.62

¹⁸⁹ Brzezinski, *The Fragile Blossom*, p.65

¹⁹⁰ Brzezinski, *The Fragile Blossom*, p.68

as the leader of economic development throughout the region and to spearhead initiatives to promote economic growth amongst the less developed Asian nations.¹⁹¹

It is important to note that Japanese leadership of Asia does not necessarily mean Japanese domination. What Brzezinski had in mind in *The Fragile Blossom* was for Japan to become the preeminent Asian nation seeking to further integrate and develop the region without provoking a backlash of hostility from other Asian nations who had suffered mistreatment under the Japanese empire prior to the end of World War II.

Brzezinski also espoused the idea that Japan further integrate itself with the Western world or more precisely, America and Europe. He noted that this was the natural inclination of Japanese businessmen.¹⁹² This was in line with his concept that the three capitalist regions of the world must integrate and provide leadership for the global community. He thus came away from his trip to Japan convinced of the need to draw Japan further into the West so as to promote solidarity and joint cooperation amongst the industrial democracies.

Brzezinski made the point that Japan saw China as a prospective partner in Asia. Added to this, the sheer size of the Chinese market makes China a highly attractive trading partner to the Japanese, who would not only seek to export their goods to the Chinese but also avail of Chinese raw materials, cheap labour, and lastly seek to invest in the Chinese economy.¹⁹³

Brzezinski warned that the U.S. should not cease to provide a security umbrella to the Japanese as to do so would encourage tendencies towards a more nationalist and militarist Japan. He also warned that should Japan revive its military capabilities it would not necessarily enhance its security as it could provoke a regional coalition amongst the country's neighbours which, Brzezinski argued 'would almost offset any additional element of national security thereby gained.'¹⁹⁴

Brzezinski mentioned how the Nixon entente with China caused the Japanese to doubt the commitment of the United States to an alliance with their country, particularly as Nixon made this move without consulting the Japanese beforehand. The Japanese felt the United States was prioritising China over Japan and that the loyalty of the United States to Japan was in question. The "Nixon shocks" thus came

¹⁹¹ Brzezinski, *The Fragile Blossom*, p.72

¹⁹² Brzezinski, *The Fragile Blossom*, p.77

¹⁹³ Brzezinski, *The Fragile Blossom*, p.88

¹⁹⁴ Brzezinski, *The Fragile Blossom*, p.103

as a surprise to the Japanese and did damage to bilateral relations between the two countries.

Japan's economic relationship to the United States is and has been heavily biased toward the Japanese, who import raw materials from the U.S. while exporting manufactured goods. Brzezinski was of the view that Japan should open its markets to more manufactured goods from the United States. At the time of writing, the economic relationship favoured the Japanese who reaped more profit from sales to the U.S. than that country did from sales to Japan. The Japanese flooded the U.S. market with goods such as cameras, radios, and televisions, which were of such good quality and at such a low price that they were able to seize a sizable share of the American market.

Brzezinski wrote of the general transformation of Japan that was taking place. He stated:

Socially, Japan is moving from traditionalism to modernity; politically, from a representative democratic system, superimposed on a rather feudal pattern of authority and cliquism, to a more direct populist relationship between the leader and the masses, with more stress on personalist politics; in values, from a single-faceted concentration on a common goal, reinforced by self-denying discipline, to a more complex and even conflicting set of objectives, involving both greater emphasis on national pride and on social good; internationally, from a posture of dependence to self-assertiveness.¹⁹⁵

Brzezinski argued for a greater understanding amongst Americans of Japan and of the United States' relationship to it, as it was the most important bilateral relationship in Asia. He also recommended diplomatic exchanges between the heads of state from both countries.¹⁹⁶ While Brzezinski did acknowledge that Japan was an economic giant, being the second largest economy of the world at the time of writing, he observed that it was a political dwarf; Japan 'is not a superpower and it is doubtful that it can become one.'¹⁹⁷ However, Brzezinski believed Japan should be given a seat

¹⁹⁵ Brzezinski, *The Fragile Blossom*, p.129

¹⁹⁶ Brzezinski, *The Fragile Blossom*, p.133

¹⁹⁷ Brzezinski, *The Fragile Blossom*, p.134

on the UN Security Council and said it deserved one more so than France or Britain.¹⁹⁸

Brzezinski made the point that to promote for the Japanese a role as leader of Asia would in effect increase Sino-Japanese rivalry. He did however state that the U.S., Japan, and China should work together to address the economic and social problems of the region as well as their common security concerns.¹⁹⁹ It is interesting to note in this regard, that when Brzezinski was National Security Adviser he replaced the Nixon US-China-Russia triangle with a US-China-Japan one, to the exclusion of the Russians.

Brzezinski, writing of the importance of Japan to the capitalist world stated: 'The emergence of the Common Market highlights the fact that, increasingly, the three economic pillars of possible global stability and cooperation are the United States, Japan, and Western Europe.'²⁰⁰ This was one of the main reasons for establishing the Trilateral Commission, as will be discussed in the next section. Indeed, Brzezinski proceeded to outline in detail the role such an organization of the capitalist countries could play in international affairs. He wrote:

A wide cooperative framework, involving a gradual process of shaping a community of the developed nations, would put Japan in the front rank of a global effort to provide for more orderly and satisfactory international political and economic relations. Such a community of the developed nations would not be just a rich man's club; indeed, one of its key purposes would be to undertake a more rational and cooperative effort to help the less developed countries. It would not – or should not – be meant to be a new anti-Communist alliance; indeed, by reducing the temptations in Moscow or Peking to play on national rivalries and by deliberately inviting Communist states into those areas of cooperation for which they are suited, either by the level of their development or by the particular location, the community of the developed nations would help to terminate gradually the ideological global civil war. For the American-Japanese relationship, a wider framework would have the added advantage of simultaneously encouraging the internationalization of Japan without that

¹⁹⁸ Brzezinski, *The Fragile Blossom*, p.135

¹⁹⁹ Brzezinski, *The Fragile Blossom*, p.136

²⁰⁰ Brzezinski, *The Fragile Blossom*, p.140

internationalization being tantamount to Americanization. The latter is understandably resented; the former is needed.²⁰¹

Brzezinski's *The Fragile Blossom* offers an excellent analysis of Japan's domestic and foreign policies, its role on the international stage and a vision of the direction in which he believed the country should be heading. He noted that Japan was to be counted among the capitalist nations at the forefront of the emerging 'technetronic revolution,' that its massive wealth placed upon the country a great responsibility to do more for the poorer nations of the world and finally that Japan was important to the U.S. as an ally, particularly because it is a democracy in a region in which democratic government has yet to fully take hold and develop.

²⁰¹ Brzezinski, *The Fragile Blossom*, p.140

Between Two Ages & The Trilateral Commission

The enlargement of the West is something Brzezinski had been a firm proponent of for most of his life. Indeed, Brzezinski wrote voluminously about the need for the capitalist world to integrate further and enlarge the scope of its influence. Brzezinski went from being a Sovietologist to gaining a more sophisticated understanding of the international system. He ‘...continued to publish, but he extended his realm of expertise to international affairs in general (*Between Two Ages: America’s Role in the Technetronic Era*, 1970), in order to become a more complete, more “universal” expert.’²⁰² In 1973, along with David Rockefeller, Brzezinski would establish the Trilateral Commission. How this came about was the result of David Rockefeller having read Brzezinski’s work *Between Two Ages*. Rockefeller would then go on to propose the establishment of the Trilateral Commission at a Bilderberg meeting in the Netherlands.²⁰³ Justin Vaisse correctly pointed out that Brzezinski was the founder of the Trilateral Commission and that he came up with the idea. He stated: ‘Official historiography designates David Rockefeller as the creator of the Trilateral Commission, and it often leaves the impression that Rockefeller recruited Brzezinski for this enterprise. In reality, it was the other way around. Upon his return from Japan, in the second half of 1971, Brzezinski came up with the idea of a committee that would bring together American, European, and Japanese elites...’²⁰⁴

It was Brzezinski’s idea to promote the increased integration of the Western world for the sake of greater unity and also to transcend Cold War bipolarity and implement the globalist agenda. Dino Knudsen corroborated this when he stated: ‘In 1970, Brzezinski published an article in *Foreign Affairs* in which he stated: ‘A council representing the United States, Western Europe and Japan, with regular meetings of the heads of governments as well as some small standing machinery, would be a good start.’²⁰⁵ This was an important initiative not just in the context of the Cold War. These three regions were the wealthiest of the world and were in a position to steward global affairs and exert considerable influence. In the context of the Cold War, the establishment of the Trilateral Commission was an important initiative. George Kennan made the point that it was important not to let the industrialised regions of the

²⁰² Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 147

²⁰³ Oliver Stone & Peter Kuznick, *The Untold History of the United States* (London, 2012), p.402

²⁰⁴ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 165

²⁰⁵ Knudsen, *The Trilateral Commission and Global Governance*, p. 31

world fall into hostile hands. This was a policy adhered to by Brzezinski with regards to the setting up of the Trilateral Commission.²⁰⁶ Kennan had argued that so long as the U.S. secured the alliance of three of the five major industrialised regions (Britain, central Europe, and Japan), then the USSR would permanently be at a disadvantage. Credit for the establishment of the Trilateral Commission must chiefly go to Brzezinski for: ‘...it was Brzezinski rather than Rockefeller who played the leading role in outlining the Commission, particularly with regard to its theoretical foundations.’²⁰⁷ The agenda of the Trilateral Commission from the outset was to integrate the Western world and assert domination over the rest. One could also argue that secretly it was pursuing the establishment of a world government, which is what many believed it was in fact doing. As Dino Knudsen wrote: ‘The small group of men agreed to form what would become the TriCom, involving highly influential people in business, politics, and academia from North America, Western Europe, and Japan. Soon many saw the TriCom as constituting an embryonic or even shadow world government.’²⁰⁸ The agenda of the globalists is to bring about a world government or at least a global confederacy and the Trilateral Commission was designed as a useful facilitator to this end. Its purpose was to coordinate the political affairs of the three regions and also their interaction with the Second and Third Worlds. The Commission was designed with the specific purpose of advancing policy recommendations so as to mould the policies of Western governments and bring them in line with the agenda of the globalists.

It is worth pointing out that Brzezinski was the academic behind the Commission whereas Rockefeller was the funder. As Dino Knudsen stated: ‘It was the convergence of ideas from Brzezinski, the thinker, and from Rockefeller, the patron, that enabled the TriCom vision to be realised and it was these two men who became the architects of the Commission.’²⁰⁹ David Rockefeller’s endorsement and funding of the Commission is significant, as he was one of the heavy weight oil tycoons and the CEO of Chase Manhattan bank, whom many considered the financial kingpin of New York. With his backing, the Commission was sure to have considerable influence over not just America but world affairs generally speaking.

²⁰⁶ John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, p. 29

²⁰⁷ Knudsen, *The Trilateral Commission and Global Governance*, p. 29

²⁰⁸ Dino Knudsen, *The Trilateral Commission and Global Governance: Informal Elite Diplomacy, 1972-82*, 1972-82, p. 1

²⁰⁹ Knudsen, *The Trilateral Commission and Global Governance*, p. 50

The Trilateral Commission was innovative for its time. While elite gatherings of the West such as the Bilderberg group, had taken place before, the Trilateral Commission was the first such gathering to include Japan and therefore all of the capitalist world. It was geared toward giving policy recommendations, not unlike the Bilderberg group, however, it would manoeuvre its members into power from the time of the Carter administration onwards and play a role in politics more significant than arguably any other private organisation.

As a method, the organisation was unique in trying to coalesce the views of the Western elite in order to bring their influence to bear on the governmental policies of their respective regions. Its meetings as well as its policy recommendations would have a substantial impact upon the governments of the West, who would attempt to implement the Trilateralist agenda in their own countries and exercise influence in accordance with its recommendations throughout the rest of the world. As a method for gathering the elite from the West and having them shape political policy the organisation was very innovative and effective. It would go on to spur the formation of the G7 gathering of political elites from the great powers which would play an important role in solving major global issues, particularly concerning nuclear proliferation, climate change, and the global economy.

Concerning the theoretical foundations of the Trilateral Commission, In *Between Two Ages*, Brzezinski argued that there was a revolution occurring in the advanced sectors of the world heralding in a post-industrial age, which Brzezinski referred to as the ‘technetronic era.’ He described it thus:

The transformation that is now taking place, especially in America, is already creating a society increasingly unlike its industrial predecessor. The post-industrial society is becoming a “technetronic” society: a society that is shaped culturally, psychologically, socially, and economically by the impact of technology and electronics – particularly in the area of computers and communications.²¹⁰

Brzezinski believed that the technetronic revolution, spearheaded by America, would eventually lead to an international consortium of the most developed nation-states. Concerning the shift from the industrial to the postindustrial age: ‘The problem

²¹⁰ Brzezinski, *Between Two Ages*, p.10

was that that age had not fully arrived, and the crisis of modern societies could be explained by the in-between situation, the passage from one to the other, which was quite far along in the United States, less so in Europe and Japan, and even slower to reach the Soviet Union.’²¹¹ The Soviet Union was not leading the transition into the technetronic era as it was still largely an industrial society. It depended upon the West for high technology and did not have a large segment of its population employed in the services sector. Brzezinski understood that the U.S. above all was implementing the technetronic era that the elites presuppose is the new world order; a modern technotopia presided over by the global elite. As Andrianopoulos puts it: ‘Brzezinski’s belief in America’s positive role in the world and the emergence of a global consciousness for the first time due to the impact of the technetronic revolution made him more optimistic than Kissinger about the eventual establishment of a community of the developed states and the creation of a new world order.’²¹²

The speed of this technetronic revolution was already being seen to undermine traditional notions of sovereignty as nation-states became increasingly integrated economically owing to their shared dependence on technology and electronics, as seen, for example, in the areas of communications and the media.

Brzezinski envisioned the world as moving from sovereign nation states to an integrated international system governed by a body such as the United Nations. He believed the anarchic system of realpolitik was being replaced by a more cooperative system which would protect the interests of nation states under the auspices of some supranational organisation. ‘Today,’ Brzezinski wrote, ‘the old framework of international politics – with their spheres of influence, military alliances between nation-states, the fiction of sovereignty... is clearly no longer compatible with reality.’²¹³ Here he was referring to the fact that transnational actors have gained such a preponderant influence that they are now in effect diminishing the role of the nation state. As Dino Knudsen succinctly put it: ‘Many reached the conclusion that the advanced capitalist economies were now so interdependent – due to world economic integration, including liberalisation of trade and lower transportation costs – that the nature of international relations had been altered and nation states were no longer self-governing entities. The management of this interdependency became the *raison d’etre*

²¹¹ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 159

²¹² Andrianopoulos, *Kissinger and Brzezinski* p.74

²¹³ Brzezinski, *Between Two Ages*, p.104

of the TriCom.’²¹⁴ The erosion of a state’s sovereignty in the modern world has resulted in a backlash against globalization however and many people from around the world are promoting their sovereign rights against the infringement of the globalists and multi-national corporations.

The influence of transnational actors has become so great, international banking cartels in particular, that no nation is immune from what transpires outside its borders. The global recession of 2008 is evidence of this. Foreign events now have a tangible impact upon a nation’s domestic affairs and as such the state has had to involve itself more so in international affairs in order to safeguard its domestic interests. As Daniel J. Sargent wrote:

It was too soon to tell how this worldwide information grid would affect world politics, but Zbigniew Brzezinski, a political scientist, predicted the collapse of distinctions between domestic and foreign affairs. “Moral immunity to foreign events,” he argued, could not “be maintained” amid “the electronic infusion of global events into the home.” This was, in effect, Benenson’s gambit: that transnational opinion might be able to restrain the powers of sovereign governments.²¹⁵

Thus the influence of foreign media corporations could sway the opinions of citizens, the international economy can directly affect a country’s domestic economy, and military alliances directly impinge upon a nation’s security; the point being that no nation is immune to international affairs and that each country has to adapt its foreign policy to the growing influence of external actors so as to ensure their interaction with their own country is beneficent and in their country’s interest.

The Trilateral Commission reflected a growing trend in international politics. The rise of transnational organisations and the influence they brought to bear upon governments. As globalization gathers pace, multinational corporations become so powerful that the financial clout they come to exercise can dwarf even that of governments. Thus they are capable of exercising a domineering influence over governments due to the power of money in the modern world. The multinational corporations have an internationalist agenda and are in favour of free trade; they are

²¹⁴ Dino Knudsen, *The Trilateral Commission and Global Governance*, p. 5

²¹⁵ Daniel J. Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, p. 36

opposed to protectionism and seek access to the markets and resources of the world without government interference. Thus nationalists with the goal of protecting a state's resources from foreign exploitation or who seek to develop their own national industries and shield them from foreign competition are seen as a threat to the transnational elite, particularly of the West, and are considered by the Trilateral Commission to be an impediment to their agenda. Dino Knudsen captured the rise of this elite and what it was that was standing in their way:

According to Brzezinski, politics was suffering from being constrained within the nation state. He described how the transnational aristocracy of earlier centuries had faded away, how Universalist ideologies and movements – the Christian Church, socialism, and communism – had become nationalised, and how a new transnational elite composed of international businessmen, scholars, professionals, and public officials was emerging. Before long, Brzezinski wrote, these elites would become “highly internationalist or globalist in spirit or outlook” and may easily come into conflict with the “politically activated masses” that were inclined to oppose cosmopolitanism with nativism.²¹⁶

Dino Knudsen thus touched upon something of considerable significance. The backlash against globalization which takes the form of nativism or nationalism to be more precise. The meetings of the Trilateral Commission arouse controversy on the internet and there is always a crowd of anti-globalist protesters outside of them. The globalist agenda has a significant number of political opponents and does not march unimpeded toward a new world order but rather has to deal with a sizable activist opposition which seeks to halt their agenda and maintain the sovereign independence of their nation states. It is the goal of the elite to coax the general public into the globalist agenda and this is not subscribed to by a significant minority of people. The Trilateral Commission faces a serious challenge from nationalism in seeking to implement its globalist agenda and many nations will no doubt attempt to assert their sovereign rights to independence and freedom from being governed by some supranational authority or having their economies dominated by multinational corporations. The poor of the world understand that globalization further increases the gap between them and the rich and that they stand to lose from the Trilateral agenda.

²¹⁶ Knudsen, *The Trilateral Commission and Global Governance*, p.31

They will thus look to their national governments to shield them from the influence of the transnational elite and in effect manage their economies in the interest of the people rather than foreign corporations.

The technetronic revolution had already made a single capitalist bloc out of the nations of Western Europe, Japan and the United States. What Brzezinski recommended in this book was that these three regions of the world, which comprise the most advanced and prosperous parts of the capitalist world, should take the lead in managing global affairs, stewarding the global economy and directing the evolution of the less developed regions of the world.²¹⁷ Their growing interdependence so much as mandated this. Indeed, as Daniel Sargent argued: ‘The perforated sovereignty and diminished autonomy, Brzezinski argued, made it imprudent to conduct foreign policy as though the international system still comprised autonomous nation-states. His analysis echoed the conclusions of globalists like Lester Brown. Unlike them, Brzezinski focused on the implications for foreign policy. The industrialised countries would do best, Brzezinski concluded, if they coordinated their domestic policies and worked to manage interdependence.’²¹⁸

Rockefeller and Brzezinski felt that, as far as the U.S. was concerned, ‘an era of overbearing American dominance was over.’²¹⁹ They felt the U.S. would have to share power with the rest of the world in a multi-polar system, though one still led by the United States. As Sargent put it:

The challenge for the United States, still *primus inter pares* among nation states, was to orchestrate an international order in which “the entire international community,” North, South, East, and West could participate. Doing this required embracing interdependence. First came the enhancement and deepening of “our collaboration with our friends in the industrial world.” This would facilitate a second objective, which was to expand opportunities “for the new emerging states to enhance, through self-reliance, their own internal progress.” In a third purpose, the Carter administration would involve the Communist countries in its

²¹⁷ Brzezinski, *Between Two Ages*, p. 111 ‘accordingly, an effort must be made to forge a community of the developed nations that would embrace the Atlantic states, the more advanced European communist states, and Japan.’

²¹⁸ Daniel Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, p. 170

²¹⁹ Daniel Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, p. 171

world order concept. “We shall seek cooperation with the communist countries, while striving to reduce areas of conflict.”²²⁰

The Trilateral Commission was thus concerned with the First, Second, and Third Worlds and one could argue therefore that its scope was global and sought to reach into all regions of the world and exert political influence thereupon. As the Trilateral Commission was founded in the United States and funded by David Rockefeller: ‘Many perceived the TriCom a US enterprise or even a US hegemonic tool.’²²¹ This is somewhat justified. There are more multinational firms in the United States than in any other country and the U.S. is by far the wealthiest country in the world. Thus it is only natural that the U.S. should, and should be seen to, dominate the Trilateral Commission and its agenda. Many would argue that this organization comprised of private individuals is exercising an unwarranted interference in the affairs of Western governments, who should be more accountable to their people rather than to the intellectual and financial elite of their population who attend these meetings i.e. the top one per cent.

Brzezinski believed that the nations of the West should relinquish some of their sovereignty for the sake of creating a larger community which would be economically integrated and eventually led by representatives of the most influential sectors of the economy, banking, the media, politics and the military. The role of the multi-national corporation and private banks was to be enhanced as the power of the traditional nation-state would diminish. ‘International banks and multinational corporations’ Brzezinski wrote, ‘are acting and planning in terms that are far in advance of the political concepts of the nation-state.’²²² Furthermore, Sargent wrote that: ‘Reflecting on the dynamics of his era, political scientist Zbigniew Brzezinski discerned novel patterns. “Nation-states are losing their centrality,” he wrote in 1974, “amidst a shift from traditional international politics to a new global process.” The sensation of disjuncture in world affairs prompted some to contemplate the remaking of international order.’²²³

Many in the transatlantic elite felt that untamed nationalism led to international rivalry and no doubt Brzezinski was also of this view. Indeed, he would entitle one of

²²⁰ Daniel J. Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, p. 233

²²¹ Knudsen, *The Trilateral Commission and Global Governance*, p.61

²²² Brzezinski, *Between Two Ages*, p.28

²²³ Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, p. 7

his books written after the end of the Cold War *Out of Control* in reference to the fact that the bipolar world had provided stability and the ensuing multipolar one could be chaotic. In forming the Trilateral Commission Brzezinski sought to consolidate the West and ensure that there was little or no division among its ranks. As Dino Knudsen wrote: ‘To promote this agenda and contain the global tendencies towards fragmentation and chaos that he had identified, Brzezinski proposed to form a community. It should be “less ambitious than a world government” but “more attainable.”’²²⁴ In referring to the fact that this community of Western nations should be more attainable than a world government Brzezinski is more than likely referring to something he mentions in his subsequent writings; namely, the establishment of a global federation. This would no doubt be commendable if there were equal representation among the nations of the world and political power was decentralised and representative of the will of the people. However, the global community envisioned by the Trilateral Commission is one dominated by transnational elites and is not responsive to the popular will, by and large. It is akin to a guardianship more so than a democratic global community. Indeed the Trilateral Commission published a report entitled ‘The crisis of democracy’ in which its authors argued there was too much democracy and that power needed to be centralised. This would no doubt be resented by the rest of the public, who wish to see power decentralised so that they attain a greater level of influence over governmental policy. Dino Knudsen referred to the elite nature of the Trilateral Commission and their exclusive meetings when he wrote: ‘Later works in sociology have taken Pijl’s thesis one step further and argued that connected to globalization processes we are witnessing the emergence of a transnational bourgeoisie, a global ruling class, which becomes politically visible at elite gatherings.’²²⁵

The results of Brzezinski’s *Between Two Ages* were far reaching. In 1973, the Trilateral Commission was established by Brzezinski and David Rockefeller to fulfil the goals set out in this book. Their membership would comprise individuals from the most influential areas of society. The inauguration of the technetronic society would have serious ramifications for democracy and civil liberties, however. As Brzezinski stated:

²²⁴ Knudsen, *The Trilateral Commission and Global Governance*, p. 32

²²⁵ Knudsen, *The Trilateral Commission and Global Governance*, p. 16

Another threat, less overt but no less basic, confronts liberal democracy. More directly linked to the impact of technology, it involves the gradual appearance of a more controlled and directed society. Such a society would be dominated by an elite whose claim to political power would rest on allegedly superior scientific know-how. Unhindered by the restraints of traditional liberal values, this elite would not hesitate to achieve its political ends by using the latest modern techniques for influencing public behaviour and keeping society under close surveillance and control.²²⁶

While the Trilateral nations would apparently cede some of their sovereignty to have it vested into a private organisation such as the Trilateral Commission, the results within their societies would be an increasingly Orwellian and arguably totalitarian state, with an elite management of the economy that is increasingly subject to the influence of transnational organisations. Brzezinski described also how the masses are to be controlled in such a society:

In the technetronic society the trend seems to be toward aggregating the individual support of millions of unorganised citizens, who are easily within the reach of magnetic and attractive personalities, and effectively exploiting the latest communication techniques to manipulate emotions and control reason.²²⁷

The kind of society described in *Between Two Ages* appears as a technocratic dictatorship, where scientific know-how is exploited by elites to keep the masses in check and to suppress rebellion through harnessing the latest technologies of surveillance and control.²²⁸ The book is slightly bizarre as it envisions altering human nature to refashion the individual into a so-called ‘modern man.’ It is also a work of futurology, envisioning the evolution of Western society into a post-industrial technopia. For someone who spent his life battling totalitarianism there are strange elements of support for totalitarian government within the work, such as manipulating

²²⁶ Brzezinski, *Between Two Ages*, p.97

²²⁷ Brzezinski, *Between Two Ages*, p.11

²²⁸ Brzezinski, *Between Two Ages*, p.10 Brzezinski even refers to ‘bio-chemical means of human control’ which ‘augment the potential scope of consciously chosen direction, and thereby also the pressures to direct, to choose, and to change.’ Clearly, he is describing a totalitarian society where humans themselves are bio-chemically controlled to some extent. Indeed he goes on to state ‘Eventually, these changes and many others, including some that more directly affect the personality and quality of the human being himself, will make the technetronic era as different from the industrial as the industrial was from the agrarian.’ 11

emotions and controlling reason and controlling the masses to keep them in obedience.

The Trilateral Commission has received a lot of criticism since its inception owing to the fact that it is a private organisation which seems to exert an inordinate amount of influence over the policies of democratically elected governments in the Western World. Many have claimed it was established for the sole purpose of bringing about a world-government, but Brzezinski dismisses such opinions as fantastical and far-fetched. He stated: 'Contrary to the current myth, the Trilateral Commission is not a conspiracy designed to dominate the world but genuinely strives to engage Americans, Western Europeans, and Japanese in a common endeavour to shape a more cooperative world. Many of its sessions and papers are dedicated to such themes as aid for the developing countries, arrangements for the fairer exploitation of the oceans, or programs to delay or halt the proliferation of nuclear weapons.'²²⁹

In 1973, Brzezinski became the executive director of the North American branch of the commission. This branch would retain a predominant influence over the commission as a whole and would spearhead the TriCom's mission of bringing about a new world order. As Daniel Sargent wrote:

Americans would nonetheless exercise a guiding influence on the commission through Brzezinski, whom the group appointed to be the executive director. "For the first time in the history of mankind," Brzezinski explained in a 1973 statement of the commission's purpose, "a global political process is surfacing, a process that is still quite shapeless." The Trilateral Commission would strive to give it form by cultivating "among concerned Americans, Japanese, and Europeans the habit of working together." The ultimate goal would be "to arrive at agreed and workable trilateral policies designed not only to enhance closer trilateral cooperation but also to progress toward a more just global community."²³⁰

Conspiracy theorists view the Trilateral Commission as an organisation comprised of the elite of the West that is determined to bring about a totalitarian world government. They see it as being a sinister and megalomaniacal enterprise and oppose

²²⁹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser 1977 – 1981* (Toronto, 1983) p.49

²³⁰ Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, p. 171

it vehemently on the internet, decrying what they regard as its usurpation of democracy, its secrecy, and excessive interference and meddling in Western government's affairs. Dino Knudsen provided a portrayal of how the Trilateral Commission came to earn criticism from conspiracy theorists. He wrote:

Because of its elite character and the fact that its meetings took place behind closed doors, the TriCom provoked fierce reactions and controversy since its inception. As a consequence, the public view of the TriCom stems largely from myths about its activities. Conspiracy theories about the Commission have been published in their volumes and in many languages. Today, they are rampant, partly due to the Internet. However, the TriCom's shadowy image resulted not only from conspiracy theories but also from sensational media coverage. When Carter assumed the US Presidency and included a large number of Commissioners in his administration, magazines such as *Penthouse* and *Saturday Night* accused the TriCom of usurping US democracy, including portraying Brzezinski as an American Mao Zedong.²³¹

In an interview with Brian Lamb on C-Span conducted in 1989, Brzezinski was asked to address the belief held by a significant number of Americans that the Trilateral Commission is a conspiracy of elites designed to bring about a world government. Brian Lamb put the question to Brzezinski thus: 'you mentioned something earlier that you've done that comes up right in the spot that you're sitting many times by our callers across the country and that is a suspicion that there is a conspiracy through the Trilateral Commission and the Council on Foreign Relations. You ran the Trilateral Commission for how long?' Brzezinski then responded by saying: 'About three years I think. Something like that. Three years. Not only did I run it I helped to found and organise it with David Rockefeller so if any of our viewers are conspiratorially minded here is one of the conspirators.' In saying 'here is one of the conspirators,' while it being ironically humorous, Brzezinski seemed to some to be admitting that there is a conspiracy through these two organisations.

Brian Lamb then queried Brzezinski on the size of the organization: 'Lets talk about if for just a moment. How big is it? How many people physically belong to the Trilateral Commission?' To which Brzezinski responded:

²³¹ Knudsen, *The Trilateral Commission and Global Governance*, p. 15

When we first started it and let me repeat again so the viewers will know what we're talking about – it's a North American, Western European, and Japanese organization to promote closer contacts between these three regions of the world and the Commission is composed of private citizens not government officials who are leaders in the different sectors of society. So when we first started we sought a commission of about sixty people and initially when I was first helping to organise it we had a hard time recruiting those sixty people because it was a brand new idea which the two of us had thought of, Rockefeller and I. Now we have 360 people with an enormous waiting list. It's been an eminently successful operation obviously filling a major need for a community of dialogue and cooperation between these three regions. We are incidently the ones who proposed originally the holding of the annual summit meeting between the industrial democracies... that was an idea that originated with us in the Trilateral Commission.²³²

Brian Lamb then asked Brzezinski how one becomes a member of the Trilateral Commission, to which Brzezinski replied: 'You become a member by invitation issued by the respective executive committees of the Commission. The Commission is 360 members. The smaller executive committee – the executive committee has its own regional sort of identity so if you want to become a member of the American one the North American executive committee has to invite you. I say North American because this is both a Canadian and U.S. activity.' Finally, addressing the views held by many of his callers that this is a sinister organization Brian Lamb queried Brzezinski: 'Is there any reason for the audience to think that this is a bad organization, that it conspires to... and I want to make sure I represent what they say... that this group really guides the foreign policy of this country?' Brzezinski then responded and in doing so laid bare his own feelings concerning those who disapprove of the organization. He stated:

Well you know I can tell you even better what this group represents... what people think this group represents, people who are conspiratorially-minded because I encounter that all the time when I speak around the country and the kooks that pop up with this theory come either from the extreme loony left wing

²³² Interview with Zbigniew Brzezinski by Brian Lamb, C-Span, 1989

or the loony right wing perspective. If it's a loony right-winger, he will stand up and say you are a conspiracy of people who want to impose one world government and deprive us of our sovereignty and if it's an extremely loony left-winger he will stand up and say you're a conspiracy of rich capitalists who want to control the world for the sake of global profits..... The answer is the Commission operates openly, there's nothing secret about it. It is a group of influential people, we don't hide that, on the contrary we deliberately want influential people from the three regions who try to deal with the problems the three regions encounter, by discussion, by promotional studies, by advocacy.... We have advocated over the years debt relief for the poor countries of the world, we have advocated a variety of aid programs for the Third World, we have advocated closer cooperation in science between our industrial democracies. We are by and large in favour of a free trade arrangement, we are against protectionism and tariffs. We have currently a major study going on in East-West relations produced by authors from the three regions. I think we perform a useful educational function and if any viewer who is watching me wants to explore this so-called conspiracy all he has to do is to write to the office of the Commission and it will give him whatever papers he wants. There is nothing secret about it.²³³

Dino Knudsen alluded to the fact that many in the public felt the Trilateral Commission was in effect trying to hijack the government of the United States. He stated: 'There were also politically motivated attacks on the Commission adding to this picture, such as when the staunchly conservative Barry Goldwater in the late 1970s pronounced the TriCom to be concerned with "seizing control of the political government of the United States." Later, Reagan's election campaign echoed some of these allegations and did much harm to the TriCom's public image. Leftist critiques in general argued that the TriCom was a capitalist instrument while the rightists argued that it constituted a secret world government. In reality, it was the absence of a sovereign authority – a world government or a global federation – that spurred the formation of the TriCom and made it possible and relevant for it to operate.'²³⁴ These allegations would appear to be true as the Trilateral Commission is concerned with moulding the policies of Western governments and having them act in the interests of

²³³ Interview with Zbigniew Brzezinski by Brian Lamb, C-Span, 1989

²³⁴ Knudsen, *The Trilateral Commission and Global Governance*, 16

the elite. Whether it sought to hijack the government of the United States or not is debatable. However, there were twenty-five members of the commission in the Carter administration so this would attest to the fact that this group had more influence over the national government than any other private organisation.

Although its members try to avoid the appellation, the Trilateral Commission is a “rich man’s club” and is determined to consolidate elite control over society, as the conspiracy theorists allege. Justin Vaisse referred to this element of the Trilateral Commission which fed conspiracy theories. He wrote: ‘The organization thought up by Brzezinski and his friends in the fall of 1971 had thus not avoided certain criticisms they had anticipated and dismissed in advance. But more than the “rich man’s club” theme, it was the theme of elitism that fed conspiracy theories and the suspicions of populists on the right and on the left.’²³⁵

The organisation comprises an impressive list of attendees from some of the most influential sectors of society and has been known to serve in crystallising elite opinion on a variety of global issues prior to any action being taken by the government. That is to say that the Trilateral Commission arguably formulates policy that is later implemented by governments, which suggests that it is, to some extent, pulling the strings from behind the scenes. This viewpoint is further reinforced by the fact that Brzezinski alludes to the policy-making role of the Trilateral Commission in stating: ‘we are engaged in a rather ambitious effort to develop a more enduring American-Japanese-European relationship, through the device of joint policy planning and public education.’²³⁶ This statement shows that the aim of the Trilateral Commission is to devise policies for western governments, that is to say it is engaged in policy formulation which governments of the three regions will then implement, and is more than just an advisory group. It seeks rather to mould the policies of Western governments. The following statement by Dino Knudsen further proves that the aim of the Trilateral Commission is to directly influence governments: ‘An important theme for the TriCom organizers was the output of the Commission. Although Rockefeller hoped to produce some “new thinking” in the Commission, he thought that the process of trilateral “conclusion-reaching” was more important than original research; the Commission should not aim to produce books, similarly to the projects

²³⁵ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 182

²³⁶ Brzezinski to Charles Percy, November 12, 1973, Brzezinski Donated Materials

of the Council on Foreign Relations, but rather “agreed reports and recommendations.”²³⁷

The Trilateral Commission exercises a domineering and arguably a stewardship role over Western governments, in that it debates major policies, decides recommendations, and places its members into high office to see that they are implemented. The following statement confirms this: ‘It was concluded that the Commission would have to be “oriented towards practical action and not research alone, and should work vigorously to assure that its recommendations were implemented by the appropriate national governments and international organizations.’²³⁸

It is clear from the evidence thus far presented that the Trilateral Commission is more than just an advisory body. It is the financial and intellectual elite of the Western world attempting to shape the policymaking of their respective governments. Dino Knudsen referred to this thrust of the Commission when he stated Kohnstamm, one of the European executive directors: ‘wanted the Commission not just to assist, but to *push* governments.’²³⁹

From 1973 until 1976 Brzezinski served as the director of the North American regional committee. Brzezinski was of the view that only America, being the strongest of the Western powers, was in a position to galvanise support for Trilateral cooperation and that America’s input, for the sake of promoting unity amongst the Trilateral nations, was absolutely essential.²⁴⁰ Brzezinski also believed that the onset of the technetronic era was rendering the preceding era of nation states obsolete and that, furthermore, the political integration of the capitalist countries of the world would work to the detriment of the Soviet Union. As Andrianopoulos put it:

Brzezinski was convinced that trilateral cooperation was possible because the advanced countries share both common security concerns and certain political-philosophical assumptions, and have the needed economic and technological resources. Hence, they should shape, though not necessarily coordinate, their policies with broader concerns in mind than the dictates of national interest

²³⁷ Knudsen, *The Trilateral Commission and Global Governance*, p. 47

²³⁸ Knudsen, *The Trilateral Commission and Global Governance*, p. 47

²³⁹ Knudsen, *The Trilateral Commission and Global Governance*, p. 57

²⁴⁰ Andrianopoulos, *Kissinger and Brzezinski*, p.110

alone. Such cooperation appealed to Brzezinski because he felt that Soviet opposition to it could neither prevent it nor exploit it.²⁴¹

The Trilateral Commission was also to play a role in bringing to an end the Cold War. The Commission sought to herald in the post-industrial age in the West and eclipse the Soviet Union in the race to institute their universal creed as the dominant socio-political doctrine of the world. It promoted unity among Western powers that was essential if the West was to face down the Soviet threat. As Justin Vaisse wrote:

It was because America had reached a more advanced historical stage in its development, because it was already between two ages (and not stuck in the industrial age) that it ran into turmoil. But that phase was only transitory: there would soon be as much distance between the United States and the USSR as there was between industrial societies and agrarian societies. Historic inevitability, in other words, was switching sides. What was inscribed in material and social reality was not the Soviet Union catching up with and overtaking the United States (Nikita Khrushchev's "we will bury you"), but the Soviet Union's bogging down with a promise of implosion.²⁴²

The Trilateral Commission thus sought to hasten the collapse of the Soviet Union and was a tacit alliance between the Western elite versus the communist bloc. The Commission followed Brzezinski's advice and sought to disentangle the Eastern European countries from the Soviet Union. This was one means of ending the Cold War short of military conflict and would speed up the process of integrating the East into the rest of the world. As Dino Knudsen wrote:

The idea of having an open attitude towards the socialist countries was in line with Brzezinski's thinking in *Between Two Ages*. If the Eastern European countries were brought closer to the West, the Soviet Union would either have to follow its satellites or lose them altogether and this, Brzezinski believed, could help "terminate the civil war" that had "dominated international politics among the developed nations for the last two hundred and fifty years."²⁴³

²⁴¹ Andrianopoulos, *Kissinger and Brzezinski*, p.110

²⁴² Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 162

²⁴³ Knudsen, *The Trilateral Commission and Global Governance*, p.44

Through his service as executive director of the North American branch of the Trilateral Commission Brzezinski exerted a certain degree of influence over the worldviews of its members.²⁴⁴ It was through membership of the Trilateral Commission that a relatively unknown governor of Georgia named Jimmy Carter would receive his nomination to run for the presidential candidacy in 1976.²⁴⁵ This is both a remarkable and an unprecedented occurrence, demonstrating the heavy-weight influence this recently established private organisation had acquired in the U.S. political arena. Peter Kuznick noted that ‘Brzezinski and Rockefeller saw something in Carter that convinced them he was worth cultivating and got behind his candidacy early.’²⁴⁶ The Carter administration was in one sense a TriCom administration that sought to transcend the traditional Cold War bipolarity and inaugurate a post-Cold War world that focused upon interdependence and the ushering in of globalization. As Daniel J. Sargent wrote: ‘The Carter administration, as one aide put it, committed itself to making “the world safe for interdependence.” The only Democrat to occupy the White House between 1969 and 1993, Carter embraced a conception of “world order politics” that enjoyed support in his party and drew upon his experiences in the Trilateral Commission. What Carter attempted as President was novel in relation to his Cold War forebears but exemplary of contemporary ideas.’²⁴⁷ Jimmy Carter was thus the first Trilateral Commission president.

Carter seems to have required an adviser with foreign policy expertise as ‘he brought to the White House no foreign policy experience.’ Indeed, George C. Herring wrote that: ‘his views were formed in a crash course provided through Trilateral Commission meetings.’²⁴⁸ Furthermore, as Lubowski pointed out, Brzezinski performed an important service for President Carter in that he ‘not only taught him and polished him like an uncut diamond... he also made him credible in the eyes of the elite.’²⁴⁹ When elected to the White House, Carter included no less than twenty-

²⁴⁴ George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1776* (Oxford, 2008) p.832

²⁴⁵ Patrick Vaughan, ‘Brzezinski and the Bear,’ *Krakow Post* ‘It was there he [Brzezinski] first encountered a relatively obscure one-term governor from Georgia named Jimmy Carter. Brzezinski soon became Carter’s primary foreign policy adviser on what most experts considered a rather quixotic run for the White House.’

²⁴⁶ Stone & Kuznick, *The Untold History of the United States*, p.402

²⁴⁷ Daniel J. Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, p. 230

²⁴⁸ George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, p. 831

²⁴⁹ Lubowski, *Zbig*, p. 37

five fellow members of the Trilateral Commission within his administration, some of whom occupied the highest positions.²⁵⁰

In his memoirs, Brzezinski stated: 'All the key foreign policy decision makers of the Carter administration had previously served in the Trilateral Commission.'²⁵¹ Indeed, the Carter administration 'showed the imprint of the Trilateral Commission.'²⁵² Justin Vaisse correctly pointed out that the top members of the Carter administration were exclusively Trilateral Commission members when stating 'Carter named only trilateralists to key positions in his administration.'²⁵³

Furthermore, Brzezinski helped to cultivate Trilateral Commission members for positions in government. As Daniel J. Sargent wrote: 'The Trilateralists also worked to build connections to government officials. Such approaches were easy to make; many of the Trilateralists had worked in government. Brzezinski cultivated political leaders, sending them encouraging notes, often attaching his own articles.'²⁵⁴ It was Brzezinski, though, who would become the President's right hand man and who would retain the greatest share of influence in Carter's foreign policy team. As John Orman pointed out, throughout Carter's years in office 'Brzezinski's presence was pervasive in the national security and foreign policy arena. He is never really challenged for access to the president.'²⁵⁵ Indeed, Brzezinski was in direct contact with President Carter for the four years of his term. He stated: 'Coordination is predominance. I learned that lesson quickly. And the key to asserting effective coordination was the right of direct access to the President, in writing, by telephone, or simply by walking into his office. I was one of three Assistants who had such direct access at any time, not subject to anyone's control.'²⁵⁶

In addition to having direct access to the President almost every day he was in office, Brzezinski was also the one who alone presented the President's Daily Briefing to

²⁵⁰ Milestones: 1977 - 1980, Trilateral Diplomacy: the United States, Western Europe and Japan, *FRUS* 'Carter had served as a member of the Trilateral Commission from 1973 to 1976 before he became President, and Brzezinski, a founding member of the Commission, became his National Security Advisor. Many of Carter's top advisors were also fellow members.'

²⁵¹ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p.289

²⁵² Daniel J. Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, p. 232

²⁵³ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 195

²⁵⁴ Daniel J. Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, p. 172

²⁵⁵ John Orman, *Comparing Presidential Behaviour: Carter, Reagan, and the Macho Presidential Style* (Connecticut, 1987), p.31, p.38, p.40, 'Brzezinski leads all advisers with 1061 meetings with the president - National Security got 46% of Carter's time - [Brzezinski] made up over 64% percent of all interactions in this policy area. No matter how one measures it, Brzezinski dominates the rankings of advisors during every time frame.'

²⁵⁶ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p.63

Carter each day. He wrote: 'From the very first day of the Presidency, I insisted that the morning intelligence briefing be given to the President by me and by no one else.....I continued to brief the President alone during the entire four years.'²⁵⁷ This action increased Brzezinski's influence over the President significantly as he was the main person responsible for not only going through the President's Daily Brief with Carter but also in shaping his response to it and what policies were to be put forth. As Peter Kuznick put it: 'Brzezinski quickly instituted a significant change in procedure that allowed him to exert inordinate influence on the president. Whereas in the past, a top CIA official had given the President's Daily Brief, Brzezinski arranged to do this himself, with no one else present.'²⁵⁸

President Carter wrote in his *White House Diary* that Brzezinski was his principle foreign policy adviser. He stated: 'Zbig had been my primary foreign affairs advisor during my presidential campaign and continued in this role as national security advisor. He and I were in close contact throughout each day and had an excellent personal relationship.'²⁵⁹

In his memoirs, Carter also mentioned the fact that he got along really well with Brzezinski and that the two of them enjoyed a cordial, one could even say intimate, relationship:

To me, Zbigniew Brzezinski was interesting. He would probe constantly for new ways to accomplish a goal, sometimes wanting to pursue a path that would be ill-advised – but always thinking. We had many arguments about history, politics, international events, and foreign policy – often disagreeing strongly and fundamentally – but we still got along well. Next to members of my family, Zbig would be my favourite seatmate on a long-distance trip; we might argue, but I would never be bored.²⁶⁰

It is worth noting that Brzezinski was ardently anti-Communist and that this would colour the administration's approach to the Soviet Union given that he was the president's right-hand man. As Justin Vaisse pointed out: '... the Moscow press attacked him quite frequently, starting in the early 1960s, and his image among the

²⁵⁷ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p.64

²⁵⁸ Stone & Kuznick, *The Untold History of the United States*, p.405

²⁵⁹ Jimmy Carter, *White House Diary* (New York, 2010) p.24

²⁶⁰ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, p.54

top Soviet leadership is revealed by a declassified report dating from 1978: “Dr. Brzezinski was seen as the arch enemy, a man not to be trusted. This perception was based on several factors: On what was seen as a past record in academic life of speaking and writing against the Soviets; on the fact that he was a Sovietologist and the view that Sovietologists as a genre are anti-Soviet; and on the fact that he was of Polish ancestry. He could thus be expected to continue to be anti-Soviet in his new position... Both Gromyko and Dobrynin interpreted the appointment of Dr. Brzezinski as an indication that an inexperienced President Carter might come under the influence of anti-Soviet adviser.”²⁶¹

Carter once admitted prior to running for president that he had been an ‘eager student’²⁶² of Brzezinski and when finally introducing him to the members of his cabinet the day after the presidential inauguration, the president stated:

The last person I would like to introduce to the audience and to the nation is the one who, among all others, has helped me most to learn about foreign policy... He will be my closest adviser in tying together our economics, foreign policy, and also defence matters... He will put together the most intimate preparations for any kind of crisis that affects our Nation.²⁶³

²⁶¹ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 262

²⁶² Andrianopoulos, *Kissinger and Brzezinski*, p.133. ‘Brzezinski and Jimmy Carter, unlike Nixon and Kissinger, were personally close since 1973 when Carter joined the Trilateral Commission which Brzezinski directed; and by the end of 1975 Brzezinski emerged as Carter’s principal foreign policy adviser. In announcing Brzezinski’s appointment Carter described him as “the key adviser for me” in international affairs while admitting that “I’ve been an eager student in the last two or three years”.’ Walter La Feber, *The American Age: United States Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad Since 1750* (Ontario, 1989), p.647 “Carter was brought into the (Trilateral) commission as a representative southerner and soon considered Brzezinski “my teacher” in foreign policy.’

²⁶³ Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter. Book I – January 20 to June 24, 1977, 15



Fig. 1 Zbigniew Brzezinski & David Rockefeller at a gathering of the Trilateral Commission



Fig 2. The Logo of the Trilateral Commission



Fig. 3 U. S. President Jimmy Carter & National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, Washington D.C., 1977

3) The Carter Administration

Background

The focus of this chapter is upon the policies formulated and implemented by Brzezinski during the Carter administration from 1977 to 1981. More specifically, it deals with the issues of human rights, the use of soft power through Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty in Soviet Eastern Europe, the normalization of relations with China as well as the Soviet-Afghan War. While not every issue Brzezinski was involved can be examined, priority is given to the three central strategic fronts (Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia) on which Brzezinski sought to curtail Soviet influence. Brzezinski was in many ways the guiding light during the Carter years and the policies he had recommended for breaking up the Soviet Union in his writings and during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, he now had the chance to implement directly.

In running for president, Jimmy Carter pledged to bring honesty back into politics with a slogan that declared ‘I will never lie to you’ and also used to political advantage his lack of official connections in Washington. Indeed, Carter’s untarnished reputation and quaintly informal approach to politics suggested to most Americans that he represented a departure from the policies of the two former Republican administrations. The Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal had damaged the international standing of the United States and brought its political system into disrepute. Promising change, President Carter set out to restore the trust of the American people in their government, to champion American ideals worldwide and ‘he tried to apply the trilateral approach to his foreign policy.’²⁶⁴ Although considered to be an outsider by the American electorate, the “insider” or establishment Trilateral Commission were in fact manoeuvring one of their own groomed political candidates into power, as was shown in the previous section.

The 1970s were in many ways dismal for the United States. In particular, the oil embargo, the loss in Vietnam, and the realisation that power would have to be shared with four other great powers instead of being exercised predominantly by the U.S. in

²⁶⁴ Milestones: 1977 - 1980, Trilateral Diplomacy: the United States, Western Europe and Japan, *FRUS*. This meant the U.S. would work closely with Canada, Western Europe, and Japan in resolving international issues; the three regions which are members of the Trilateral Commission.

a bipolar world, awakened Americans to the fact that their nation was susceptible to international crises and not incapable of being militarily defeated. Nancy Mitchell corroborated this point when she wrote:

Despite the disco music, the garish polyester, the drugs, and the sexual revolution of the 1970s, the global politics of the decade were, for Americans, somber. They grappled with failure in Vietnam and strategic parity with the Soviet Union; they faced the Arab oil embargo and growing economic competition from the European Community and Japan. They suffered through Watergate, the congressional investigations of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and stagflation. There seemed to be weekly reminders that the United States was losing power and influence.²⁶⁵

However, when the Carter administration came into power, things began to improve in the sense that the tide was turned against the Soviet Union and the groundwork was laid for the Reagan offensive of the 1980s. The United States could be said to have rebounded from its post-Vietnam malaise and pursued victory in the Cold War more vigorously.

Carter also maintained following his inauguration that the promotion of American values worldwide would be a central tenet of his administration. As Best, Hanhimaki, Maiolo, and Schulze put it: 'When he won the November 1976 presidential election Carter assured the nation that he would restore moral principles and human rights as the principal ideas guiding foreign policy.'²⁶⁶ In relation to the posture he would adopt toward the Soviet Union, with the guidance of Brzezinski, who was by now National Security Adviser, the United States would undertake a new course - placing human rights high on the agenda and initiating a foreign policy that was now openly critical of both the domestic and the international conduct of the Soviet Union. This was a departure from the traditional policy of containment as formed by George Kennan. Whereas Kennan had argued that the U.S. ought not to involve itself in the internal affairs of the Soviet Union, Brzezinski and Carter would depart from this, become heavily involved in supporting dissidents, and take the Cold War to the

²⁶⁵ Nancy Mitchell, 'The Cold War and Jimmy Carter,' in Melvyn P. Leffler & Odd Arne Westad ed., *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, Vol. 3, p.66

²⁶⁶ Best, Anthony, Hanhimaki, Jussi M., Maiolo, Joseph A., & Schulze, Kirsten E., *International History of the Twentieth Century* (New York, 2004) p. 299

Soviet home ground.²⁶⁷ While Kennan did support covert action, the use of economic pressure, as well as propaganda to bring about change in the Soviet Union, he stopped short of intervening in Soviet internal affairs. Carter would publicly support Soviet dissidents and would step up dramatically American assistance to them inside the communist bloc, as well as implement Brzezinski's policy of "peaceful engagement" to reward those states which showed a degree of independence from Moscow.

Carter sought to transcend traditional containment and usher in a new approach to waging the Cold War. As John Lewis Gaddis put it:

Jimmy Carter entered the White House in 1977 determined to reverse the preoccupation with containment that had dominated American foreign policy for so many years. The time had come, he insisted, to move beyond the belief "that Soviet expansion was almost inevitable but that it must be contained," beyond "that inordinate fear of communism which once led us to embrace any dictator who joined us in that fear," beyond the tendency "to adopt the flawed and erroneous principles and tactics of our adversaries, sometimes abandoning our own values for theirs," beyond the "crisis of confidence" produced by Vietnam and "made even more grave by the covert pessimism of some of our leaders."²⁶⁸

Brzezinski had argued in *Ideology and Power in Soviet Politics* in 1962 that the United States should pursue foreign policies that would serve to rouse nationalist sentiments within the Soviet Bloc, entice member-states to identify politically with the West and also widen the cultural and ethnic cleavages of the Communist camp. Fifteen years later as arguably the most influential statesman in the White House next to the President, Brzezinski was in a position he would later recall 'where I could apply my notions much more directly and authoritatively for four years.'²⁶⁹ There is no doubt that Brzezinski seriously intended to work to the detriment of the Soviet Union upon becoming National Security Adviser. A White House Aide once quoted Brzezinski as saying he enjoyed being "the first Pole in 300 years in a position to really stick it to the Russians."²⁷⁰

²⁶⁷ John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, p. 30

²⁶⁸ John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, p. 342

²⁶⁹ 'Interview with Zbigniew Brzezinski,' One on One, *Al Jazeera*, 11 December 2010

²⁷⁰ Quoted in LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War*, p.290

The Carter administration entered the White House with an utter determination to bring about the liberation of Soviet Eastern Europe, and this drive and enthusiasm to do so largely stemmed from Brzezinski, the President's right-hand man. As discussed earlier, it was Brzezinski's lifelong mission to bring down the Soviet Union and once he became National Security Adviser he applied all his skills and knowledge passionately to this end. Overseeing the National Security Council, Brzezinski took charge of the general thrust of national security policy and coordinated the overall conduct of the Cold War for the administration. He was also in charge of the Special Coordination Committee, which instigated covert activities and crisis management. Through this committee, Brzezinski would spearhead a campaign to attack the internal legitimacy of the Soviet Union, in particular Central Asia, through fomenting nationalism and ethnic unrest. Thus, right from the outset of the presidency, Brzezinski acted covertly with utter determination to inflict maximum damage upon the Soviet Union while, at the same time, pursuing cooperative relations on a state-to-state level. The Carter administration's conduct of the Cold War was a mixture of conflict and cooperation, as had been the case with previous administrations, but in the area of conflict, Brzezinski was very much in the driver's seat and the intensity of the conflict was stepped up considerably.

As Brzezinski was Carter's principal foreign policy adviser, it is not surprising that many of Carter's policies in this area reflected the prescriptions being advocated by him over the decades preceding his taking up of the position of National Security Adviser.²⁷¹ Indeed, not to diminish the input of Carter over his presidency, for he clearly did exercise personal control over affairs and was responsible for a large number of policies as well as leading the nation more generally throughout the time he was in office. Yet it must be pointed out that, as Brzezinski was an expert on international affairs whose views were more authoritative than those of the President, it was only natural that Carter was so deferential to him.

When the Carter administration assumed office, there were three overarching principles it sought to implement. These are elucidated by Justin Vaisse as follows:

The United States thus had to have three priorities. First, it had to shape more cooperative relations among the democracies of Europe and Japan, a condition sine qua non for strengthening their power and for a good response to the other

²⁷¹ Andrianopoulos, *Kissinger and Brzezinski*, p.133

two priorities. Second, it had to increase North-South cooperation and encourage development, seeking especially to separate the radical nations from the moderate ones. Finally, it had to find an accommodation with the Eastern bloc. “East-West accommodation should be a major purpose of American policy, for the East-West conflict bears directly on the problem of human survival. The ideological as well as political conflict between the West and the Soviet Union will go on but one should strive gradually to moderate it. To achieve that moderation both vigilance as well as cooperation will be necessary. Consequently, the maintenance of a strong American military deterrent is a necessary precondition for a stable, increasingly comprehensive as well as a reciprocal détente.”²⁷²

Jimmy Carter’s presidency is particularly associated with American values and their promotion worldwide. Support for democracy as a counterforce to the spread of communism was an important aspect of his administration’s agenda, and this dates to Kennan. As John Lewis Gaddis wrote: ‘Democracy at home might not require the existence of a completely democratic world, but neither could it survive in one that was completely totalitarian: the United States did have a vital interest in the continued independence of at least some nations resembling it.’²⁷³ To Carter and Brzezinski, the encouragement of democratic political procedures around the world was an important means of not only containing communism but also safeguarding American national security through ensuring that regimes hostile to the United States did not emerge anywhere in the world. The democratic peace theory factors into this. The U.S. felt that it would have cordial relations with other democratic countries whereas totalitarian regimes were inherently aggressive and represented a threat to their national security. Democracies have not been known to go to war with each other therefore the U.S. therefore the U.S. did not feel the promotion of democracy would be detrimental to its interests. The policy of promoting the Western socio-political system inside the Soviet bloc in order to fragment it was recommended by Kennan in 1948 though had not been pursued with such voracity until Carter came into power. While economic aid had been given to the communist countries before Carter, following his inauguration the administration dramatically stepped up its support for

²⁷² Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 294

²⁷³ John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, p. 34

the political liberalisation and economic independence of the eastern bloc from Moscow. In 1948, Kennan wrote that:

It has been our conviction that if economic recovery could be brought about and public confidence restored in western Europe – if western Europe, in other words, could be made the home of a vigorous, prosperous, and forward looking civilization – the communist regimes in Eastern Europe would never be able to stand the comparison, and the spectacle of a happier and more successful life just across the fence... would be bound in the end to have a disintegrating and eroding effect on the communist world.²⁷⁴

Carter and Brzezinski both believed that the sheer example of the West, in particular its political liberties and economic prosperity, would suffice in drawing the satellite states away from Moscow's control and entice them to Westernise. This strategy dates to Kennan but was implemented with especial resolve during the Carter administration as countries that liberalised their political systems and pursued economic independence from Moscow were rewarded whereas others that did not were refused aid. Carter and Brzezinski thus made especial use of soft power to help liberate the Soviet Union from Russian domination and this was very much in line with the earlier writings of Brzezinski. Furthermore, Carter believed human rights could be used as a weapon against the Soviets all the while the relationship would continue as before. As John Lewis Gaddis wrote: 'He thought he could embrace the cause of dissidents in the Soviet Union, with all that implied in terms of interfering in the internal affairs of that country, and still continue "business as usual" on other issues.'²⁷⁵

The Carter administration must also be situated in the context of the Nixon and Ford administrations and the changing circumstances of the Cold War. Jimmy Carter portrayed himself above all as a moral leader to offset the damage done by the corrupt and unprincipled Richard Nixon. He intended to practice transparent diplomacy as opposed to Kissinger's secretive back-channel diplomacy. Upon entering office it was his goal to maintain détente however he wanted to transform US-Soviet relations from the previous period of conflict and competition to one of peace and cooperation.

²⁷⁴ John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, p. 44

²⁷⁵ John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, p. 346

However Brzezinski was ultimately determined to dismantle the Soviet Bloc and liberate Eastern Europe. So while Carter sought to transcend containment and promote peaceful relations at the outset of his presidency, it needs to be stressed that for Brzezinski, the NSC and other hawks in the administration the goal was to do utter and irreparable damage to the Soviet Union so as to hasten the Cold War's conclusion.

Carter was passionate about championing American values worldwide and seeing to it that the U.S. did not settle for the international status quo but rather sought to transform the nature of states from dictatorships to democracies and from human rights abusers to ones respectful of their citizens' rights. He sought to uphold international law, promote democracy and civil rights, and maintain cordial relations with the Soviet Union all the while working to undermine it anyway he could. Before analysing the substantive issues dealt with by the Carter administration and Brzezinski's role in influencing them, it is appropriate to begin with an analysis of Brzezinski and Kissinger and compare the performance and worldviews of the two national security advisers.

Brzezinski and Kissinger: A Comparison

What separated Brzezinski's policy orientation from that of Henry Kissinger was that, in the Nixon years, Kissinger was prone to viewing the Eastern Europeans as a fixed part of the Soviet bloc and therefore within its sphere of influence. Thus, he followed a non-interventionist approach that Brzezinski was apt to challenge. Brzezinski saw intervention in the Soviet sphere as a necessary prelude to the region's liberation as the nations of Eastern Europe had been held captive to a large degree and required external intervention to save them from continued Soviet domination. Whereas Kissinger was content in dealing with the *status quo* in the Soviet Bloc, Brzezinski most certainly was not.²⁷⁶ That marked the key difference between the Nixon and Ford administrations with that of the Carter administration. Justin Vaisse made the point that:

The latter (Kissinger), to go back to Mario del Pero's characterization, "explicitly rejected progressive and teleological visions of history, preferring the analysis of structure and stability to that of transformation and evolution." Brzezinski, on the contrary, embraced and welcomed historical change, all the more so in that he often viewed it as playing positively for America. He was a man of movement, not stability. His faith in America and his optimism offered a striking contrast to Kissinger's Splengerian pessimism.²⁷⁷

Brzezinski sought to transcend the Cold War divide and hasten the conflict's demise, whereas Kissinger was in favour of prolonging the status quo. Brzezinski felt that the U.S. need not fear Communism as its adherents could only pose a threat in the military sphere and were not a serious political, economic, or ideological rival. As Daniel J. Sargent put it: "Fear of Communism is no longer the glue that holds our foreign policy together," Zbigniew Brzezinski concurred. These declarations did not mean that Soviet power could be disregarded. The point was that anti-Soviet containment no longer offered a rationale for foreign policy.²⁷⁸ Brzezinski advanced beyond containment and indeed "rollback" to dismantlement and sought the complete destruction of the Soviet Union.

²⁷⁶ Shlomo Avineri, 'Preface,' in Lubowski, *Zbig*, p.ix

²⁷⁷ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 224

²⁷⁸ Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, p. 263

The Carter administration sought to transform the Cold War from a bipolar conflict into an interdependent relationship whereby the Soviet Union would be forced to accommodate to the West and accept inferiority. While Kissinger sought to maintain the status quo and preserve equilibrium Brzezinski and the Carter administration sought to gain unilateral advantage over the Soviets and attain superiority. This was what Brzezinski called a historically optimistic *détente*. As Daniel J. Sargent wrote:

In the past,” Brzezinski explained, “US-Soviet relations dominated everything”. “Other priorities in international relations,” he now asserted, “are equally or more important.” The Carter administration thus deprioritised the Cold War, acting on historical assumptions that inverted Kissinger’s. Unsure of the West’s prospects, Kissinger had tried to stabilise the status quo. More optimistic about the future, the Carter administration assumed that the Soviet Union was on the wrong side of history and that Soviet leaders would have to choose between obsolescence and interdependence. “We are challenging the Soviets to cooperate with us or run the risk of becoming historically irrelevant,” Brzezinski asserted. The insight had implications for foreign policy. “The objective,” Brzezinski explained, was “to assimilate East-West relations into a broader framework of cooperation, rather than to concentrate on East-West relations as the decisive and dominant concern of our times.” The Carter administration thereby presumed that it could push the Soviet Union harder on issues like human rights while preserving *détente*’s gains. Brzezinski called this a “historically optimistic” *détente*, in contrast to Kissinger’s alleged pessimism. Its practical viability remained to be tested.²⁷⁹

The Carter administration entered office with a view to transcending the Cold War and hastening its demise, a vehemence and resolve to ultimately beat the Soviets that was in significant measure due to the influence of Brzezinski. Kissinger had sought to stabilise a great power condominium however Brzezinski was determined to liberate Eastern Europe and this meant interfering in the internal affairs of the Soviet bloc. Brzezinski was all about transforming the Cold War but Kissinger was all about preserving it. Kissinger had been in favour of *realpolitik* and a great power consortium of the five major world powers. Brzezinski was an idealist who wanted to

²⁷⁹ Daniel J. Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, p. 263

see the West triumph over the Soviets and implement the new world order and herald in the technetronic era. As Justin Vaisse put it:

There are three fundamental differences between “peaceful engagement” as advocated by Brzezinski and détente as implemented by Kissinger. Whereas the latter had a pessimistic foundation (it sought to limit the effects of the American decline), Brzezinski’s approach was optimistic (his approach sought to put the assets of the West, its power of attraction, into play). The first, which aimed to stabilise the status quo, was “geopolitically conservative.” The second sought to go beyond the status quo. Finally, while the first minimised the ideological element, the second aimed to exert direct influence on the evolution of Eastern European societies.²⁸⁰

Brzezinski maintained in his early writings that the Soviet Union was a dynamic society never in favour of settling for the *status quo* but constantly trying to move history forward toward the goal of world communism. This very thrust of Soviet ideology and foreign policy meant that the Soviet Union would never settle for peaceful coexistence with the West and resign itself to a balance of power between the capitalist and communist countries. A limited sphere of influence in the world was incompatible with exporting revolution abroad and advancing the cause of communism to the four corners of the earth. Brzezinski thus had a more sophisticated understanding of Soviet objectives than Kissinger, seeing them as essentially threatening to the West and therefore necessitating a tough response.

Brzezinski, unlike Kissinger, was not willing to accommodate with the Soviets but rather saw the urgency with which this totalitarian super-state had to be not only contained but, ultimately, dismantled. As Walter LaFeber wrote: ‘In the early 1970s, Brzezinski had condemned the détente policies of Kissinger, a person with whom he had competed professionally since the early 1950s. Railing against Kissinger’s willingness to coexist with Soviet domination of Eastern Europe, he advocated the “independence” of such bloc states as Rumania.’²⁸¹ Brzezinski sought to apply a strategy consistently designed to hasten the Soviet system’s collapse rather than manoeuvring between conflict and cooperation as Kissinger had done. Furthermore,

²⁸⁰ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 263

²⁸¹ LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War*, p.290

Brzezinski saw the principle of promoting human rights as something not only laudable in and of itself but also a useful means to undermine the legitimacy of Soviet rule over its satellites and furthermore foster domestic unrest and criticism of Moscow. Kissinger, on the other hand, was reluctant to support the cause of human rights in the Soviet Union because of the obvious damage that would cause to relations between the two superpowers.²⁸²

The Carter administration's rendition of détente, largely attributable to Brzezinski, therefore differed between that of the Nixon and Ford administrations. Brzezinski understood détente to mean equality amongst the two superpowers and placed a particular emphasis on the words 'global' and 'reciprocity,' meaning détente applied to the conduct of both powers throughout the world and that there had to be a quid pro quo to their exchanges in the sense that both powers extended favours to each other equitably. Brzezinski felt that the Soviets were transgressing the rules of détente in the aftermath of the Vietnam War through their adventurism throughout the Third World, particularly in Africa. As Zubok wrote: 'Raymond Garthoff, participant and scholar of détente, observed that both sides wanted to obtain, whenever possible, a unilateral advantage over the other side.'²⁸³ Brzezinski therefore felt détente had to be placed on an equal footing and restoration of harmony had to be achieved. What is ironic however is that Brzezinski would then implement policies to gain unilateral advantage over the Soviets in the Third World just as the Soviets had done to the Americans, such as in the Ogaden War between Ethiopia and Somalia and concerning the funding of the Mujahedeen.

While détente was important at the outset of the Carter administration, this author would argue that Brzezinski was driven all along by the ultimate goal of defeating the Soviets and that détente was just a phase of cooperation that would inevitably be trumped by a renewal of conflict as both powers were so fundamentally opposed to each other and locked into hostilities that a period of peace could only be transitory and therefore the conflict would have to resume and be brought to a close, with one power triumphing over the other. Justin Vaisse offered an accurate description of what détente meant to the Carter administration. He wrote:

²⁸² Shlomo Avineri, 'Preface,' in Lubowski, *Zbig*, p.ix 'for all his commitment to democratic values, Kissinger viewed their use against the Soviet Union as a dangerous weapon, and shied away from them; Brzezinski, on the other hand, realized their usefulness as a wedge which could undermine the Soviet system from within with the use of overt Western force.

²⁸³ Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p. 230

The Soviets seemed to consider that détente had worked to their advantage, and he thought that these gains could well precipitate a new era of Soviet assertiveness, owing to the Soviets new confidence, their sense that the “correlation of forces” was working in their favour, along with the crisis that reigned in the West. Détente thus had to become reciprocal and global; it had to give Americans the same access to the USSR as the Soviets enjoyed to the United States, and it had to encompass all aspects of the relationship, including a moderation of Soviet behaviour in the Third World. Those two key terms of struggle against Kissinger’s détente – reciprocal and global – quickly became stakes in Brzezinski’s contest with Cyrus Vance over the definition of Carter’s foreign policy.²⁸⁴

Concerning their similarities, Brzezinski and Kissinger may both be considered realists who were primarily interested in great power politics and in gaining advantage over states with whom the United States was competing with in the international system. They both played the game of *realpolitik* while in power.²⁸⁵ Brzezinski and Kissinger both appear to have exceeded their authority somewhat whilst in government. That is to say, they dominated both formulation and implementation of US foreign policies to a degree that marks them off from other National Security Advisers. As Walter LaFeber put it: ‘Kissinger and Brzezinski transformed the National Security Advisor’s position into another, and at times more powerful, State Department. The 1947 act creating the National Security Council assumed the Advisor would act as the President’s foreign policy coordinator, not his formulator of foreign policy.’²⁸⁶

Stuart Eizenstat points out the similarity of the two national security advisers as domineering personalities who made their views explicit policy and exercised effective leadership from the top. He stated:

There are two types of White House national security advisers. In the Kissinger-Brzezinski model the adviser organises interagency meetings and decisions for the president, but strongly advocates his own ideas. To my mind Brzezinski ran a

²⁸⁴ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 264

²⁸⁵ Andrianopoulos, *Kissinger and Brzezinski*, p.4

²⁸⁶ LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War*, p. 305

fair and transparent decision-making process but brought along his own strong views. Brown, for example, never felt Brzezinski suppressed his recommendations. The other model is best exemplified by Brent Scowcroft, President Ford's national security adviser, who saw his role as a coordinator, a synthesiser of inevitable interagency disagreements, but not a forceful advocate. Of course it would have been hard for him to act otherwise with Kissinger also serving as Ford's secretary of state.²⁸⁷

Although Brzezinski was the most influential person within Carter's administration, he does not appear to have wielded the same amount of authority as Kissinger had in the Nixon administration. While both were dominant personalities, Brzezinski appears to have delegated more tasks to subordinates than Kissinger, who evidently was rather exclusive and took the lead personally on many issues.²⁸⁸

Kissinger and Brzezinski are both proponents of a new world order, whereby the United States would shape a new international community of states who would cede some if not all of their sovereignty and agree to establish some sort of supranational institution, even a world government, which would regulate relations amongst them. Both were concerned that anarchy was an enduring feature of international affairs and they sought to mitigate the effects of such a hazardous and chaotic international environment through having the United States spearhead, largely through the United Nations, a movement to provide more global stability. Through using the UN to enforce collective security and the peaceful arbitration of disputes, both sought, incrementally and gradually, to bring about a new world order that would render the world less susceptible to international conflict and rivalry amongst nation-states.²⁸⁹

On the issue of opposing the Soviet Union and its allies, Brzezinski and Kissinger were both adamant that the US must be forthright and determined in its opposition to the expansion of Soviet hegemony around the world. Both believed the Soviet Union to be a destructive force in world affairs, sponsoring revolutions in Third World countries and generally destabilising international relations.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁷ Stuart E. Eizenstat, *Jimmy Carter*, p. 593

²⁸⁸ Charles W. Kegley & Eugene R. Wittkopf, *American Foreign Policy: Pattern and Process* (Boston, 1996), p.347. 'Zbigniew Brzezinski's dominance in the Carter administration was less than Kissinger's had been under Nixon, but he, too, emerged as his boss's key foreign policy adviser.'

²⁸⁹ Andrianopoulos, *Kissinger and Brzezinski*, p.39

²⁹⁰ Andrianopoulos, *Kissinger and Brzezinski*, p.43

While both Kissinger and Brzezinski differed in their approach to the Soviet Union and its allies, Kissinger largely acceding to the Soviet demand for status as a global superpower and Brzezinski rejecting it, both however were fundamentally opposed to the expansion of communism worldwide. Brzezinski however, was prepared to take the Cold War deep inside the Soviet Bloc during his tenure as National Security Adviser, thus undermining the very fabric of Soviet society and delegitimizing communism from within. The significance of this is that such a policy would contribute substantially to actually defeating the Soviets. Therefore opting for a policy of promoting human rights rather than refraining from doing so, would make it appear that, as Shlomo Avineri put it, ‘in retrospect, Brzezinski was proven right and Kissinger was wrong.’²⁹¹

²⁹¹ Shlomo Avineri, ‘Preface,’ in Lubowski, *Zbig*, p.x



Fig 4. Zbigniew Brzezinski & Henry Kissinger



Fig. 5 Zbigniew Brzezinski & Henry Kissinger on the Charlie Rose Show

Eastern Europe and Human Rights

The Helsinki accords, signed in 1975 by President Ford, had set up an international standard for human rights to which the Soviet Union had become, for the first time, a signatory party. However, the impact of the Helsinki conference was initially quite limited. The coming to power of President Carter in 1977, in effect, signalled the onset of a far more comprehensive campaign to promote human rights internationally.²⁹² Indeed, Carter's election led to a burgeoning interest in human rights internationally.²⁹³ Samuel Moyn noted this coming of age of the human rights movement in the 1970s. He stated: 'Over the course of the 1970s, the moral world of Westerners shifted, opening a space for the sort of utopianism that coalesced in an international human rights movement that had never existed before.'²⁹⁴ Furthermore, Moyn referred to the role of Jimmy Carter in spearheading the international human rights movement. He observed: 'Even politicians, most notably American president Jimmy Carter, started to invoke human rights as the guiding rationale of the foreign policy of states. And most visibly of all, the public relevance of human rights skyrocketed, as measured by the simple presence of the phrase in the newspaper, ushering in the current supremacy of human rights.'²⁹⁵

From the outset of the Carter presidency human rights were to be used to show up the weaknesses of the Soviet political system and encourage dissent within it. Brzezinski and Carter both saw human rights as a soft power weapon of great potential for doing internal damage to the communist bloc, in particular its political leadership. While Carter favoured supporting human rights for moral reasons primarily, for Brzezinski the main aim was to do damage to the Soviet political system and bring about its collapse. Madeleine Albright referred to the viewpoints of both the President and his National Security Adviser regarding human rights when she stated: 'President Carter was idealistic; he wanted America to present a morally

²⁹² Jerel A. Rosati, 'Continuity and Change in the Foreign Policy Beliefs of Political Leaders: Addressing the Controversy over the Carter Administration,' *Political Psychology*, Vol. 9, no. 3 (Sep., 1988), p.483 'The Carter Administration sought to improve the world. It attempted to promote a new system of world order based upon international stability, peace, and justice. In order to pursue a global community, the policy of containment that had been the basis of American foreign policy since World War II was rejected.'

²⁹³ Sarah B. Snyder, *From Selma to Moscow: How Human Rights Activists Transformed U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York, 2018) p. 1

²⁹⁴ Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Harvard, 2012) p. 1

²⁹⁵ Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, p. 4

untainted image to the world. His national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, distrusted the Kremlin leaders and had no illusions about our struggle with the Soviet Union. But both agreed that we would be more successful in countering Communism if we made respect for human rights a fundamental tenet of our foreign policy and in our national interest.²⁹⁶

Implementing many of the policies long advocated by Brzezinski, the Carter administration delved into ideological warfare within the communist bloc.²⁹⁷ They elevated human rights to a higher standard internationally through spearheading their advocacy and immediately promoted human rights activists with an aim to undermining Soviet internal legitimacy. As Daniel J. Sargent pointed out: ‘The United States, Carter announced, would meddle in the internal affairs of foreign countries if human rights concerns warranted it doing so. This was a bold commitment and a striking departure from Washington’s previous diplomatic practice.’²⁹⁸ This meddling in the internal affairs of another state for the purpose of promoting human rights was a novelty and was not what human rights were traditionally utilised for. As Samuel Moyn put it: ‘The “rights of man” were about a whole people incorporating itself in a state, not a few foreign people criticising another state for its wrongdoings.’²⁹⁹ Carter however would champion interference in another state’s domestic activities for the purpose of promoting international codes of conduct and respect for basic rights. The human rights campaign thus affected not just the Soviet Union but also other regions of the world where dictatorships were in power. What Carter began has remained the official policy of the United States government; to criticise the treatment of human rights abuses by foreign governments and to intervene when deemed to be necessary, under the label of “humanitarian intervention” to uphold the proper treatment of citizens believed to be physically endangered by their government, as was the case in Libya in 2011.

If the Kremlin leaders weren’t already suspicious of the United States for encouraging dissident activity in the aftermath of Helsinki, then President Carter’s decision in 1977 to publicly inform Russian defector Andrei Sakharov of his firm commitment to supporting human rights in the Soviet Union certainly spelled out their

²⁹⁶ Stuart E. Eizenstat, *Jimmy Carter*, p.xv

²⁹⁷ Robert M. Gates, *From the Shadows* (New York, 2006) p.91 ‘As early as March 1977, Carter approved several of Brzezinski’s proposals for covert propaganda inside the USSR.’

²⁹⁸ Daniel J. Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, p. 251

²⁹⁹ Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, p. 26

concerns. As Samuel Moyn noted in this regard: ‘It was Carter’s carefully crafted reply to Sakharov, which the latter released in mid-February, that caused a major uproar and showed that Carter really meant what he said. “Human rights is a central concern of my Administration,” reporters transcribed from the copy in Sakharov’s apartment. “You may rest assured that the American people and our government will continue our firm commitment to promote respect for human rights not only in our country but also abroad.”’³⁰⁰

The Soviets considered the human rights campaign a blatant transgression of their sovereign rights and an attack upon their internal legitimacy. The Soviets wished to “remain masters in their own house” and be free from external criticism which might call into question their oppressive actions.³⁰¹ Or, as Samuel Moyn put it: ‘Soviet diplomacy and its international law conceptions stressed sovereign equality in international affairs more than human rights...’³⁰² The Soviets thus felt that a state had the right to treat its own citizens as it saw fit and was not legally subject to external intervention which sought to remedy its perceived injustices.

However, that being said, the Soviets were blatant transgressors of human rights and denied their citizens the entitlements that were commonly held by those residing in the West. Sarah B. Snyder alluded to this when she wrote: ‘... the communist system inherently repressed a number of human rights, including the freedom of religion, movement, and property ownership.’³⁰³ Freedom of speech was an important additional right they infringed and many dissidents made their way to the West where they could openly criticise the Soviet political system. Alexander Solzhenitsyn is one example, whose *Gulag Archipelago* had an enormous impact in the West and in the Soviet Union and served to expose the injustices of the Soviet forced labour camps. The most prominent dissident the Carter administration supported was Andrei Sakharov, the nuclear physicist who immigrated to the United States.

President Carter’s unwavering and resolute commitment to human rights was aptly described by Lars Schoultz who wrote: ‘In mid-1976 presidential candidate Jimmy Carter promised that his administration would “restore the moral authority of this country in its conduct of foreign policy,” no one was surprised to hear the new president assert that “our commitment to human rights must be absolute,” nor to hear

³⁰⁰ Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, p. 156

³⁰¹ Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p. 237

³⁰² Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, p. 71

³⁰³ Snyder, *From Selma to Moscow*, p. 18

his conviction that “human rights is the soul of our policy.”³⁰⁴ Carter’s human rights campaign was also designed to win the approval of neoconservatives opposed to détente. He felt that such an offensive action as the human rights campaign was sure to garner support from the right in moving beyond détente and stepping up an attack on the internal legitimacy of the Soviet Union. The neoconservatives were in favour of renewing hostilities with the Soviet Union and Carter, although ostensibly soft on the Soviet Union, nonetheless had a National Security Council filled with hawks who were determined to cause as much damage to the Soviets as possible. Brzezinski described what the human rights policy of the Carter administration entailed, recording in his memoirs that:

In courting Eastern Europe, the Carter Administration worked to encourage political and economic trends already very much in evidence. We sought to reward those nations which demonstrated an evolution toward a more liberal internal political system and to call to attention the human-rights abuses in those nations which remained committed to totalitarianism. Through the Conference of Security and Cooperation in Europe, we maintained public pressure on the Soviets and their satellites to comply with the provisions of the Helsinki Accords.³⁰⁵

The person who served as deputy assistant to National Security Adviser Brzezinski was Robert Gates, who was Secretary of Defence in the Obama administration. In a book he wrote entitled *From the Shadows*, Gates described how President Carter’s foreign policy differed from that of previous administrations:

The effort to promote human rights, support dissidents, and stir up the nationalities went far beyond presidential statements and letters. Beginning early in the administration, and going beyond the human rights campaign, Brzezinski initiated, and Carter approved, an unprecedented White House effort to attack the internal legitimacy of the Soviet Government.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁴ Lars Schoultz, ‘Latin America,’ in Richard H. Immerman & Petra Goedde, in *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, p. 203

³⁰⁵ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p.300

³⁰⁶ Gates, *From the Shadows*, p.90

Prior to 1977, the Soviet ‘homeland’ had not been the main concern of the CIA; the Cold War was waged, militarily and ideologically, in regions that lay *outside* of the Soviet bloc. Brzezinski had, since the beginning of his academic career in the 1950’s, advocated policies of ‘peaceful engagement’ designed to encourage political change inside the Communist camp. As Gates goes on to mention, the United States purposefully refrained from carrying out policies to influence domestic affairs in the Soviet bloc - ‘this just wasn’t done; it wasn’t within the parameters of the rules of the game as it had been played for many years.’³⁰⁷ Traditionally, the two superpowers had respected the territorial integrity of one another as well as their right to pursue whatever domestic policies they deemed fit. This is how international relations had been orchestrated for centuries. States did not interfere in the internal affairs of one another and the domestic policies of one state were its own business. The policies of previous U.S. administrations during the Cold War had adhered to this norm of non-interference. As Sarah B. Snyder wrote: ‘The White House often felt that more could be gained in its relationship with the Soviet Union by overlooking human rights violations than by championing them.’³⁰⁸ Carter transformed this, making the intervention in a state’s internal affairs a prerogative of a state if it failed to adhere to international codes of conduct. He was thus a forerunner to the neoliberal policies of humanitarian intervention. The Soviets wished to maintain the traditional state-to-state practice of non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign nations. As Barbara Keys and Roland Burke put it: ‘The “equality of the superpowers and “non-interference” in internal affairs were détente’s foundational principles, Brezhnev wrote, referring Carter to the 1972 Basic Principles Agreement.’³⁰⁹

Carter’s human rights campaign had a distinct anti-Soviet thrust. The human rights campaign had as its implicit goal the liberation of Eastern Europe, in addition to being pursued for purely altruistic reasons. As Samuel Moyn noted: ‘But it was also the case that human rights became almost immediately associated with anti-Communism.’³¹⁰ The United States sought to promote conditions within foreign countries conducive to the observance of human rights. As one State Department official put it: ‘We seek social, economic, and political conditions in all countries which foster observance of human rights and encourage attitudes within each country that contribute to progress

³⁰⁷ Gates, *From the Shadows*, p.92

³⁰⁸ Snyder, *From Selma to Moscow*, p. 18

³⁰⁹ Daniel J. Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, p. 264

³¹⁰ Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, p. 71

in this field.’³¹¹ The U.S. would discontinue its economic assistance to any country that was a gross violator of human rights.

Barbara Keys and Roland Burke emphasised that human rights advocates were preoccupied with meddling in the internal affairs of sovereign countries, particularly the Soviet Bloc. They wrote: ‘The architects of East-West détente emphasised non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states as the basis for cooperation. The transnational human rights movement emerging at the same time challenged this premise, arguing that global security and internal affairs, in the form of respect for human rights, were intertwined.’³¹² This is evidently true as the spread of communism throughout the world would have endangered human rights in other countries and therefore it would appear necessary for human rights activists and governments to intervene in a country’s affairs to ensure universal standards of respect for citizens’ rights were being upheld.

It was the goal of the Carter administration from the outset to foment unrest within the Soviet bloc. Human rights was the chief weapon to be used in promoting rebellion within as the highlighting of Russia’s mistreatment of dissidents and the advocating of rights that they were entitled to was sure to cause serious damage to the very fabric of communist societies. Carter believed he could advance the cause of human rights which would hasten the breakdown of the Soviet Union while simultaneously pursuing peaceful relations with Moscow. As Daniel J. Sargent wrote:

Unlike Kissinger, Carter assumed that he could advance human rights while making progress in other areas of Soviet-American relations. It was “not his intention,” Carter reassured the Soviet ambassador to the United States, Anatoly Dobrynin, “to interfere in the internal affair of the Soviet Union.” Yet this was how Soviet leaders construed Carter’s entreaties on behalf of Soviet dissidents. “We will not allow interference in our internal affairs,” Brezhnev insisted, “no matter what kind of pseudo-humane pretense is used.” Talking about human rights nonetheless remained the essence of Carter’s interference.³¹³

³¹¹ Memorandum From the Coordinator for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs (Wilson) to All Regional and Functional Assistant Secretaries of State and the Administrators of the Agency for International Development (Parker). *FRUS*

³¹² Barbara Keys & Roland Burke, ‘Human Rights,’ in Richard Immerman & Petra Goedde ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, p. 492

³¹³ Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, p. 266

Following the inauguration of President Carter the United States adopted a policy of public as well as covert support for Soviet dissidents - certainly for the sake of the citizens themselves, but implicitly for the purpose of undermining Soviet unity. As Fred Halliday remarked, 'Carter's human rights policy was transformed into an anti-communist crusade in a new guise.'³¹⁴ For Carter the human rights campaign was something he felt a moral commitment to; for Brzezinski however, it was a means to wage ideological warfare with and attack the internal legitimacy of the Soviet Union. Samuel Moyn noted how significant human rights became following Carter's inauguration: 'In this broad sense, Carter's election, in a campaign suffused with promises of moral transcendence of politics, opened the way for the astonishing explosion of "human rights" across the American political landscape.'³¹⁵ Human rights thus became highly respectable owing to Carter's sponsoring of them. Samuel Moyn made the point that 'In the right place in the right time, Carter moved "human rights" from grassroots mobilization to the center of global rhetoric.'³¹⁶

Carter felt deeply concerned about the welfare of citizens across the world. Brzezinski, although sharing such concerns, was more focused on the geopolitical implications of using human rights as a form of soft power to bring about communism's erosion. As Daniel Sargent has written: 'Zbigniew Brzezinski considered Carter's human rights to be "more embedded in morality and religion than in geopolitics and strategy."' For Brzezinski, the reverse was true.'³¹⁷ Justin Vaisse stated: 'For Brzezinski, then, the defence of human rights represented a genuine commitment, and also one of the key differences between the West and the communist bloc. For this reason, it was also an instrument of the Cold War.'³¹⁸

Brzezinski described how the human rights campaign was partly aimed at attacking the internal legitimacy of the Soviet Union:

I felt strongly that a major emphasis on human rights as a component of U.S. foreign policy would advance America's global interests by demonstrating to the emerging nations of the Third World the reality of our democratic system, in sharp contrast to the political system and practices of our adversaries. The best

³¹⁴ Fred Halliday, *The Making of the Second Cold War* (New York, 1986) p.217

³¹⁵ Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, p. 154

³¹⁶ Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, p.155

³¹⁷ Daniel J. Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, p. 235

³¹⁸ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 256

way to answer the Soviets' ideological challenge would be to commit the United States to a concept which most reflected America's very essence.³¹⁹

Brzezinski understood that the issue of human rights was sensitive for the Soviet Union. He hoped not only to highlight their abuses for the sake of safeguarding the rights of Soviet citizens but, more importantly for him in the Cold War struggle, he sought to inflict as much damage as possible upon the Soviet leadership. By highlighting their mistreatment of citizens their legitimacy and reputation would be damaged and this would hasten their downfall and replacement by a more liberal government. He was thus exploiting their weaknesses; namely, their inhumane mistreatment of their own citizens. As he put it:

I felt strongly that in the U.S.-Soviet competition the appeal of America as a free society could become an important asset, and I saw in human rights an opportunity to put the Soviet Union ideologically on the defensive. Arguing that "human rights is the genuine historical inevitability of our times," I suggested that by actively pursuing this commitment we could mobilise far greater global support and focus global attention on the glaring internal weaknesses of the Soviet system.³²⁰

The human rights campaign had an enormous impact worldwide and the United States effectively secured the release of thousands of political prisoners.³²¹ The campaign also inspired millions of Soviet citizens and reminded them that they had inalienable rights. As Stuart E. Eizenstat put it, Carter's human rights campaign offered 'hope to the oppressed peoples in the communist bloc.'³²²

Furthermore, Eizenstat goes on to describe in detail why Brzezinski sought to use human rights as a weapon in the Cold War. He wrote:

Zbig maintained that cooperation in the face of Soviet aggression served only to make Carter look indecisive and that the Soviets needed to be stopped in their tracks. He was deeply suspicious of the Soviets; gravely concerned at their major military buildup; and eager to counter their aggressive export of revolution in

³¹⁹ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p.124

³²⁰ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p.149

³²¹ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p.144

³²² Stuart E. Eizenstat, *Jimmy Carter*, p.6

Africa, through their Cuban proxies, in such far-flung places as Angola, Namibia, and Ethiopia, and their support of Western European Communist parties. He believed that opposing them externally would weaken them internally, and told the president that the Soviets were engaged in a “selective détente,” only where and when it suited them. The proper response, Brzezinski advised Carter, was not to undermine cooperative relationships “but to increase the costs of Soviet behaviour in the malignant category. In the briefest form, this meant continued insistence on human rights as part of the ideological competition, heightening the cost of Soviet interventionism, and more affirmative political initiatives in areas of Soviet sensitivity, such as China. So for Zbig, human rights was not mainly a handmaiden of peace, but a weapon in the Cold War.”³²³

Although unknown at the time, the Carter administration’s human rights policies would go on to play a significant role in ending the Cold War. It put the spotlight on the internal weaknesses of the Soviet Union and highlighted the glaring lack of respect for the human rights of Soviet citizens. As Stuart Eizenstat put it: ‘In later years Soviet dissidents would be virtually unanimous in their praise of Carter’s policy and its importance in elevating their cause. Robert Gates, who served on Brzezinski’s NSC staff, and as Defense secretary in both the George W. Bush and Obama administrations, wrote: “Too bad for Carter that the important impact of his policies would only become known years later, as dissidents fled the East and those affected by his policies would become leaders as their nations became free.”’³²⁴

Initially the Soviet Union did not grasp the enormity of the threat posed by Carter’s human rights campaign. It was only following the Soviet Union’s collapse that the cumulative impact of Carter’s human rights initiative would become known. Zubok pointed out that: ‘Andropov had long insisted that the human rights campaigns were nothing but “attempts of the adversary to activate hostile elements in the USSR by means of providing them financial and other material assistance.”’³²⁵ Little did they know that the human rights movement begun by Carter would help spur the creation of the Solidarity movement in Poland and Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia as well as many other activist groups, which together would help bring about the downfall of the

³²³ Stuart E. Eizenstat, *Jimmy Carter*, p. 592

³²⁴ Stuart E. Eizenstat, *Jimmy Carter*, p.605

³²⁵ Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p. 256

Soviet Union as they exposed the inhumanity and illegality of its treatment of citizens and garnered opposition to it from amongst the recalcitrant populations of the Soviet Union.

The United States chose to pursue a selective human rights policy whereby countries that were close allies to the United States and were important in the Cold War struggle against Moscow, such as Iran, were exempt from criticism and allowed it impunity to abuse the human rights of their citizens. Other countries, such as those of Latin America, were called into question and forced to respect the human rights of their citizens. This was necessary as the United States relied upon the continued support of such allies and could not afford to seek to topple their regimes when they effectively acted as a bulwark against the spread of Communism. One could argue, however, that they could have remained allies of the United States while modifying their behaviour so as to respect the human rights of their citizens. Daniel J. Sargent commented on this situation. He wrote:

Still, it was easier to embrace human rights in the abstract than to advance the cause in specific contexts, where human rights might conflict with other goals and purposes. Many of the non-Communist governments that NGOs targeted were regimes the United States had nurtured. Indonesia, Iran, and South Korea were proven violators, but they were also close allies in rough neighbourhoods. The People's Republic of China had a woeful human rights record (which the NGOs did little to excavate). China, however, remained a pivot point on which Cold War geopolitics turned. In these cases, human rights faced uphill struggles. The principles might be noble, but American diplomats, unlike the NGOs, would have to weigh human rights against other priorities. Thus, while Carter wanted to strike a balance that was quite different from Kissinger's, the trade-offs between human rights and competing priorities endured, as did the countervailing claims of sovereignty.³²⁶

Barbara Keys and Roland Burke commented on the inherent hypocrisy of Carter's human rights policy. They pointed out the administration pursued a double standard in its relations with abusers of human rights. On the one hand, they called into question abusers of human rights and chastised them, so they would mend their ways. On the

³²⁶ Daniel J. Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, p.254

other, hand they turned a blind eye to human rights abuses in countries that were of strategic significance to the United States in the Cold War struggle against Moscow. They wrote:

In his 1977 inaugural address, Carter promised to restore morality to a central place in foreign policy. Human rights, however, was only one factor in policymaking, and other interests sometimes took precedence. Where cold war security and economic interests were marginal, as in Uganda and Paraguay, the administration was a strong critic of abuses. Where such interests were significant, the administration's willingness to subordinate human rights considerations invited charges of hypocrisy.³²⁷

There were of course limitations to Carter's human rights campaign. He advanced the cause significantly and made human rights an issue to be taken seriously by governments worldwide, thus lending them further legitimacy. However, there was only so much Carter could accomplish through supporting human rights given the restraints imposed upon him by alliances and Cold War exigencies. As Daniel J. Sargent wrote: 'The International League for Human Rights credited Carter with making human rights "a subject of national policy debate in many countries (and) the focus for discussion in international organizations."' These were judicious verdicts: they lauded Carter for raising the profile of human rights but acknowledged that he led the world's dominant superpower – not an NGO with nuclear missiles.'³²⁸

The Carter human rights campaign had a significant impact worldwide and also boosted the reputation of human rights amongst governments. Brzezinski fundamentally believed in human rights, not only as a means to undermine support for the Soviet Union but also as a desirable goal in and of itself, and he played a major role in the Carter administration in advancing their cause. As Justin Vaisse pointed out: 'Brzezinski pressed regularly in favour of human rights. For instance, he discussed Carter's policies in this area with the newly elected pope John Paul II, who thanked him with a big smile.'³²⁹ The human rights campaign would play a significant role in ending the Cold War and in mobilising opposition to the Soviet Union within

³²⁷ Barbara Keys & Roland Burke, 'Human Rights,' in Richard H. Immerman & Petra Goedde ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, p. 496

³²⁸ Daniel J. Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, p. 260

³²⁹ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 331

the communist bloc, and Carter and Brzezinski's roles in spearheading this campaign and thus helping to end the Cold War is not to be underappreciated. As Barbara Keys and Roland Burke have written: 'In stark contrast to the cold war's division of the world into two antagonistic blocs, ideas about universal human rights brooked no global divides: they were predicated on a belief that the most important identity was a common humanity. Such ideas predated and outlasted the cold war and, while the conflict persisted, became powerful enough to play a role in ending it.'³³⁰

President Carter chose from the outset of his inauguration to support Soviet dissidents and human rights internationally. This would serve to help bring the Cold War to an end. As Barbara Keys and Roland Burke have written: 'Solzhenitsyn, physicist Andrei Sakharov, and other Soviet dissidents created a human rights movement behind the Iron Curtain that eventually affected the nature and course of the Cold War. The dissident movement was a distinctly Soviet phenomenon that sprang from internal sources but harnessed the cold war competition for global public opinion to its own ends – and in a twist that surprised everyone, thereby helped bring the conflict to a close.'³³¹ Human rights was thus a factor which helped end the conflict and this campaign moved into full operation during the Carter presidency. Also, of importance is that the glaring inadequacies of the Soviet Union were exposed and called into question. As Sarah B. Snyder wrote: 'Although the United States did little to ensure the agreement's (Helsinki Accords) implementation at first, the commission, transnational activism, and the Carter administration would ultimately transform U.S. attention to and engagement with human rights violations in the Soviet bloc.'³³² The campaign thus did have a tangible impact upon domestic politics in the Soviet Union, in addition to spurring the formation of dissident movements which would help to bring about communism's collapse a decade later.

Nancy Mitchell described starkly how influential Carter's human rights campaign was upon the outcome of the Cold War. She wrote:

Carter did not initiate the discussion of human rights; he rode a wave that had been growing since the end of World War II and that had gained momentum in

³³⁰ Barbara Keys & Roland Burke, 'Human Rights,' in Richard H. Immerman & Petra Goedde ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, p. 486

³³¹ Barbara Keys & Roland Burke, 'Human Rights,' in Richard H. Immerman & Petra Goedde ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, p. 493

³³² Snyder, *From Selma to Moscow*, p. 40

1975 when the United States, the Soviet Union, and the countries of Europe, East and West, signed the Helsinki Accords. Many in the United States, including Carter, had denounced Secretary of state Henry Kissinger and President Gerald R. Ford for signing an agreement that seemed to legitimate Soviet domination of Eastern Europe. They failed to grasp the significance of the fact that the agreement committed all signatories to respect the human rights of their citizens. This was the Greek army in the Trojan horse; invisible at first, it penetrated the heart of the Soviet empire and destroyed it.³³³

As well as declaring public support for Soviet defectors, President Carter's campaign to undermine the internal legitimacy of the Soviet Union entailed efforts to strengthen dissident East European radio stations. In March 1977, Brzezinski pressed Carter to submit to Congress a "Report on International Broadcasting." Consequently, the United States began providing additional transmitters to the U.S. sponsored Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty. The sixteen 250-kilowatt transmitters given to the stations were effective in overcoming jamming efforts by Soviet leaders. Furthermore, in 1977 Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty were the only alternative modes of public communication allowing dissidents to contact their respective national communities. Brzezinski's success in guaranteeing the supply of transmitters for the East European radio stations now meant communist party leaders would find it increasingly difficult to suppress them. As Patrick Vaughan remarked, 'Brzezinski engaged in a personal campaign to save the station, leading Jan Nowak-Jezioranski to call him the "patron saint of Radio Free Europe."³³⁴ Thus the U.S. sponsored radio stations, reaching millions of listeners each day, were able to serve their purpose as vehicles for political change in Soviet Eastern Europe.

Sponsoring Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty through providing them with transmitters, funds and waiving restrictions on their freedom were policies in line with what Brzezinski had been advocating since the 1960s, namely, the use of soft power to undermine the legitimacy of the Soviet Union. As Andrianopoulos observed:

³³³ Nancy Mitchell, 'The Cold War and Jimmy Carter,' in Leffler & Westad, *The Cambridge History of the Cold War Vol. 3*, p. 71

³³⁴ Patrick Vaughan, 'Brzezinski and the Bear,' *Krakow Post*

Since the 1960s he (Brzezinski) had urged Western leaders to try and shape East European public opinion as the Soviets cultivated Western public opinion, and not to be too concerned about damaging relations with East European governments since they were becoming more responsive to public attitudes. For this task he viewed Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty as indirect but useful means and opposed any restrictions on their freedom.³³⁵

In 1986, Brzezinski described the enormous contribution Radio Free Europe had made to political reform in Eastern Europe, saying how the station ‘has almost single-handedly prevented Moscow from accomplishing a central objective: the isolation of Eastern Europe from the rest of Europe and the ideological indoctrination of its people.’³³⁶ In his memoirs, Brzezinski wrote that:

I also used my office to provide more support for Radio Free Europe. I felt strongly that the Radio offered us the best means for influencing the internal political transformation of Communist systems and that more use should be made of this vital instrument. Accordingly, I pressed for larger financial support and I also used my White House office to free the Radio of excessive political control, notably from State. While the Radio should not be used to foment insurrections in the East, it should, in my judgment, serve as an instrument for the deliberate encouragement of political change. This meant that the broadcasts had to be addressed to the internal problems of the Communist systems and offer a genuine alternative to Communist policies.³³⁷

Brzezinski thus took direct action upon becoming National Security Adviser to increase the influence of Soviet dissidents. In providing funds for these two radio stations he helped wage propaganda warfare against the Soviets and thus boost the standing of the West inside the Soviet bloc. As Justin Vaisse wrote: ‘Brzezinski’s support for the radio broadcasts RFE-RL and Voice of America, for the circulation of information via samizdat, and for ethnic minorities was conceived as a way of supplying tools at the service of dissidents in the eastern bloc and elsewhere.’³³⁸

³³⁵ Andrianopoulos, *Kissinger and Brzezinski: The NSC and the Struggle for Control of US National Security Policy*, 118

³³⁶ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Game Plan*, 233

³³⁷ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 300

³³⁸ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 331

That the Carter campaign to support human rights was also a means to undermine the internal legitimacy of the Soviet Union seem beyond a reasonable doubt. Indeed, Michael H. Hunt in his work *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* stated that ‘Brzezinski, who carried from his native Poland a deep-seated anti-Soviet animus, pushed the president toward a policy of confrontation and skilfully played on the themes of self-determination and human rights to advance his own crusade against the Kremlin’s grand strategy of expansion and its repressive practices at home.’³³⁹

Brzezinski and Carter thus did considerable damage to the Soviet Union through supporting the cause of human rights and providing funds for Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty. These two policies would play a significant role in ending the Cold War over the following decade and would prove that soft power could be utilised effectively to help bring the conflict to a close, in addition to traditional hard power.

³³⁹ Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Yale, 1987), p.185

The Third World

The upsurge in Soviet interventions throughout the Third World in the late 1970s convinced some in America that Moscow sought to capitalise on the recent defeat of the U.S. military in Vietnam. The Soviets saw this defeat as a chance to advance their interests in the Third World, seek increased military bases, recruit client states, and further the spread of communism. As Vladimir O. Pechatnov wrote: 'In the Soviet Union détente was also full of contradictions. Proponents of U.S.-Soviet cooperation were soon outnumbered by those who saw détente as a chance to fill the vacuum left by America's weakening power and expand the sphere of Soviet influence in Africa, the Middle East, and Central America.'³⁴⁰ That the USSR sought to capitalise on the recent defeat of the US in Vietnam has now been confirmed, for as Gaddis wrote: 'The Brezhnev regime, it appeared, had taken the American defeat in Vietnam as a signal to seek opportunities elsewhere in the "third world" an accurate enough assessment, Soviet sources now confirm.'³⁴¹

As well as using Cuban proxies in Angola to prop up a Marxist regime, the Soviets were making their presence felt in Ethiopia, situated at the strategically important Horn of Africa. However, it is to be pointed out, as Piero Gleijeses makes clear, that the Cubans were also acting of their own accord in assisting fellow communist regimes in Africa and were not just taking orders from Moscow.³⁴² They felt they had a mission to help others in the Third World and were not just acting as proxies for the Russians. Gleijeses observed that the Cubans were idealistic in assisting Angola, and sent thirty thousand of their citizens over there to serve in armed combat as well as to teach and provide medical treatment to the Angolans.³⁴³

Soviet leaders felt confident they could exert power around the globe with the United States in a relatively weaker position. As Odd Arne Westad wrote: 'Recent memoirs and Moscow's own declassified documents show that the MPLA victory in Angola, together with Hanoi's victory in Vietnam, gave rise to unprecedented optimism in Soviet Third World policy – "the world," according to one of their high

³⁴⁰ Vladimir O. Pechatnov, 'Soviet-American Relations through the Cold War,' in Richard H. Immerman & Petra Goedde, *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, p. 113

³⁴¹ John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, p. 348

³⁴² Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa: 1959-1976* (North Carolina, 2002)

³⁴³ Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, p 10

officials, “was turning in our direction.”³⁴⁴ The U.S. felt the Soviets were becoming an increasingly expansionist power and that they were determined to gain a geostrategic advantage over the West. Vladislav M. Zubok captured how the Carter administration felt about this Soviet self-assertiveness. He wrote:

Jimmy Carter’s lack of clear assumptions about the Soviet Union played as much a part in the undoing of détente as Brezhnev beliefs had in conceiving it. Under the influence of Brzezinski and neoconservative critics, the U.S. president began to suspect that the Soviet Union was a reckless, unpredictable power, confusing the aging and reactive Kremlin leadership with the activist rambunctious leadership of Nikita Khrushchev. In May 1978, Carter wrote to Brzezinski that “the combination of increasing Soviet military power and political short-sightedness fed by big power ambitions might tempt the Soviet Union both to exploit local turbulence, especially in the Third World, and to intimidate our friends, in order to seek political advantage, and eventually even political preponderance. This is why I do take seriously Soviet action in Africa, and this is why I am concerned about the Soviet military build-up in Europe. I also see some Soviet designs pointed toward the Indian Ocean through South Asia, and perhaps toward the encirclement of China.”³⁴⁵

Brzezinski regarded the use of Soviet air transport and Cuban soldiers to fight in remote areas of the world as a new type of threat. As Justin Vaisse argued: ‘Moreover, when the team discussed the content of a statement on defense, Brzezinski insisted on a strong America and on the fact that the recent expansion of Soviet military gave the Soviets a strategical and tactical global reach that it had not had before.’³⁴⁶ Brzezinski viewed Soviet actions abroad as part of an overall strategy to promote communism internationally and viewed such adventurism as a serious danger to international security. As Walter LaFeber stated: ‘Brzezinski viewed the world largely in bipolar terms and believed the Soviets posed an immediate global threat.’³⁴⁷

In response to what was seen as a renewed phase in Soviet expansionist policy, the United States provided aid to Somalia in their border war against Marxist Ethiopia,

³⁴⁴ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War* (Oxford, 2007) p. 241

³⁴⁵ Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p. 257

³⁴⁶ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 208

³⁴⁷ LaFeber, *The American Age*, p. 290

receiving in return naval and air facilities. As Fred Halliday observed, Soviet and Cuban collaboration in Angola and Ethiopia ‘seemed to confirm the impression of a concerted Soviet drive through the third world designed to weaken America.’³⁴⁸

The Carter administration was arguably divided over how to respond to these developments. This was especially due to certain contradictions and ambiguities in the president’s posture toward the Soviet bloc. The Soviets perceived a U.S. administration pursuing policies designed to enhance mutual stability in the area of nuclear weapons while, simultaneously stepping up its efforts to exploit the domestic problems of the Soviet bloc. As Brzezinski, and Carter for that matter, understood the U.S.-Soviet relationship to involve a mixture of conflict and cooperation, both were inclined to oppose aggressive Soviet actions abroad while at the same maintaining positive relations with communist states, including Russia itself. As Andrianopoulos stated: ‘believing that the success of revolutionary movements revive Soviet revolutionary expectations, Brzezinski recommended the use of force in areas where local power could not stop communist force, terrorism, and/or guerrilla warfare. He saw no contradiction between peaceful engagement toward some Communist states and a forcible stand against violence by others.’³⁴⁹

The image of a divided administration derives largely from the competing policies put forward by Secretary of State Vance and National Security Adviser Brzezinski. Whereas Vance believed the US should treat the SALT II negotiations as entirely separate from other issues, Brzezinski insisted on ‘linkage’ between American concessions in the arms control talks and Soviet behaviour abroad. When the Soviets airlifted supplies and 13,000 Cuban troops to Ethiopia ‘Brzezinski urged Carter to send a U.S. fleet to the area to tell the Soviets to pull out the Cubans or else U.S.-USSR arms talks would stop. Vance hotly disagreed. He wanted no such “linkage.”’³⁵⁰ The impact of linkage on the process of détente is addressed in the following quote:

Indeed, the United States made clear its determination to link the future of détente with Soviet action in the Horn of Africa (and other regional conflicts.)

While the Carter administration was deeply divided over such linkage – with

³⁴⁸ Fred Halliday, *The Making of the Second Cold War*, p.224

³⁴⁹ Andrianopoulos, *Kissinger and Brzezinski*, p.113

³⁵⁰ LaFeber, *The American Age*, p.655. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, p.844 Herring asserts that by the time of the proxy war in Angola in 1978 ‘the hard-nosed Brzezinski had gained control.’

Secretary of State Cyrus Vance opposing it and National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski proposing to take it further – the crisis in the Horn of Africa only further complicated the prospects for continued détente.³⁵¹

Stuart Eizenstat pointed out that the dispute between Brzezinski and Vance was detrimental to the image of the administration and pulled its policies in opposite directions. The dispute could have been resolved had one of the advisers been given the upper hand, but Carter was receptive to the advice of both men and therefore there was a tug of war dimension to the administration's policy toward the Soviet Union, with the NSC favouring a hawkish approach and the State Department a dovish one. As he stated: 'Vance felt that negotiations were the best way of managing the complex relationship with Moscow. Brzezinski was more of a tough Cold Warrior, in part because of his family's Polish background, but also his keen sense of history and the role of the United States in combating what was at the time an aggressive Soviet Union. Carter paused for a second and said, "I like hearing different opinions. I can handle it." But their ideological differences were far more difficult to reconcile than he realised, and often gave a Janus-like quality to the administration's stance toward the Soviet Union.'³⁵² Significantly, Carter tried to entertain the views of both his National Security Adviser and his Secretary of State. As Nancy Mitchell put it: 'The real problem was not that Carter was torn between Vance and Brzezinski, but the opposite: he held both their viewpoints simultaneously. That is, he believed in patient diplomacy *and* in the dramatic gesture; he saw beyond the Cold War *and* he was a firm Cold Warrior.'³⁵³

This dispute between Vance and Brzezinski over Soviet policy would do damage to the reputation of the administration and the media would focus on it significantly in order to hone in on the image of a divided administration. Concerning linkage, in an interview conducted in 1986, Brzezinski justified this line of thought by stating that 'it seemed to me absolutely counterproductive to the long-range stability of the

³⁵¹ Best, Hanhimaki, Maiolo & Schulze, *International History of the Twentieth Century and Beyond*, p. 302

³⁵² Stuart Eizenstat, *Jimmy Carter*, p.66

³⁵³ Mitchell, 'The Cold War and Jimmy Carter,' in Leffler & Westad, *The Cambridge History of the Cold War Vol. 3*, p. 69

American-Soviet relationship to ignore regional conflicts while single-mindedly pursuing SALT.’³⁵⁴

Odd Arne Westad puts forth a definition of what Brzezinski understood détente to mean. He wrote:

Brzezinski, a Polish émigré intellectual who became a U.S. citizen in 1958, favoured a much more hard-headed approach to the Soviets and to communism in general. Brzezinski was particularly concerned about Moscow’s intentions in the Third World. Already in 1976 memorandum to Carter, the future national security adviser warned the future president that:

The Soviet leaders have openly stated that détente is meant to promote the “world revolutionary process,” and they see American-Soviet détente not only as a means of preserving peace, but also a way of creating favourable conditions for the acquiring of power by the communist parties, especially given the so-called aggravated crisis of capitalism... (We must make) it unmistakably clear to the Soviet Union that détente requires responsible behaviour from them on fundamental issues of global order and it is incompatible with irresponsible behaviour in Angola, the Middle East, and the UN.

Brzezinski considered Soviet and Cuban intervention in the Horn of Africa as ‘a violation of the code of détente.’³⁵⁵ This is debatable. The Soviets would argue they were merely defending an ally from an aggressor and that their actions were not intended to in any way harm détente. Brzezinski’s assertion that their intervention was a violation of détente is therefore seemingly untrue. Brzezinski would later state that “détente lies buried in the sands of the Ogaden” and this is largely true. The Ogaden war reignited hostilities between the Americans and the Soviets and led to a period of increased tensions which lasted until the end of the Cold War. As Cary Fraser has written: ‘If the Vietnam war proved to be a catalyst for the relaxation of cold war tensions by way of détente and the US-PRC rapprochement, it was the decolonisation

³⁵⁴ ‘Interview with Zbigniew Brzezinski,’ *War and Peace in the Nuclear Age*, episode 108, 1986, Brzezinski goes on to say that ‘I felt that there were wider geostrategic concerns that we could not afford to ignore... namely: Soviet expansion to the Horn of Africa, the Soviet strategic build-up, the kind of pressures they were putting on us in various parts of the world, in part exploiting our post-Vietnam malaise. In my judgment, this course of action on the part of the Soviets was not really compatible with what ought to be a reciprocal and a comprehensive détente and not a one-sided and one-dimensional détente.’

³⁵⁵ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 304

of the Portuguese empire in Africa that signalled that détente between the superpowers was ephemeral.’³⁵⁶

Eizenstat believed that having the two men on the same administration was a mistake due to their diametrically opposing views with regards to dealing with the Soviets. As he put it: ‘As I had expressed to Carter during the transition, while each was highly able and agreed on many foreign-policy goals, putting them together on the same team was a mistake, because of their major differences in temperament and worldview, particularly on the Soviet Union.’³⁵⁷ Vance the patrician was a dove whereas Brzezinski was a hawk and having the two of them on the same team pulled the administration in opposite directions, with Vance seeking to continue SALT II negotiations and appease the Soviets for their expansive behaviour abroad whereas Brzezinski sought to delay SALT if necessary in order to punish the Soviets and counteract their Third World policy.

Vance wanted to stabilise the relationship with the USSR and pursue détente and arms control. Brzezinski, however, was cognizant of the fact that the Soviets were on the move geopolitically, engaging in adventurism in the Third World and seeking to exploit the U.S.’s post-Vietnam malaise. As Justin Vaisse wrote: ‘Brzezinski saw things differently. From his standpoint, the USSR, despite its domestic paralysis, was in a phase of geopolitical self-assertion, and he thought that the Soviets could use détente to stabilise the relationship on a bilateral level, in particular with regard to arms control, even as they pressed their advantage elsewhere, especially in the Third World.’³⁵⁸

Brzezinski seems to have been willing to derail SALT for the sake of counteracting the Soviets in the Third World. To him, inflicting damage on the Soviets was more important than maintaining the SALT II process, even if this meant foregoing a reduction in nuclear stockpiles. As Daniel J. Sargent wrote: ‘But Brzezinski believed that the Soviets should be kept on a short leash and that their foreign incursions should be condemned even at the cost of a new SALT treaty; failure could then be blamed on Soviet expansionism.’³⁵⁹ The administration was also divided over how it pursued détente with the Soviet Union. Whereas Brzezinski believed in an optimistic

³⁵⁶ Cary Fraser, ‘Decolonization and the Cold War,’ in Richard H. Immerman & Petra Goedde, *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, p. 478

³⁵⁷ Stuart E. Eizenstat, *Jimmy Carter*, p. 589

³⁵⁸ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 279

³⁵⁹ Stuart E. Eizenstat, *Jimmy Carter*, p. 628

détente whereby the US could use its non-military advantages over the Soviet Union to achieve supremacy Vance sought to stabilise the status quo and pursue arms reductions through the SALT II negotiations.³⁶⁰

Justin Vaisse offered an accurate description of the difference between Brzezinski's and Vance's roles within the administration. He wrote: 'Brzezinski thus served as "chief strategist," the architect of Carter's foreign policy, the one who set its overall directions. Vance, by contrast, appeared as the "chief negotiator," the one who handled America's external relations with excellent results...'³⁶¹ It is important to note however that Brzezinski was clearly the more influential of the two largely due to his domineering personality and the fact that the National Security Council took on a greater role in foreign policy decision-making than the State Department.

In relation to the Ogaden War, it was Brzezinski and the NSC's recommendations for a tough response that won the day. The United States would go on to supply Siad Barre's Somali army with weaponry in their border war against Marxist Ethiopia. As Odd Arne Westad wrote:

Already right after he had taken over as President in 1977, Jimmy Carter had become concerned that the Soviets were positioning themselves to control the West's access to raw materials – and especially oil – through interventions in Africa and the Middle East. Much helped by his National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter began seeing a pattern of Soviet activities that conformed to this picture. While the president remained convinced that an improved Soviet-American relationship in other areas, such as arms control and trade – could prevent what he termed "regional crises" from spilling over on to the superpower relationship, Carter remained sensitive to any Soviet action that would be seen to threaten the Gulf region, directly or indirectly. When the Soviets in 1978 intervened to support Ethiopia, its new ally on the Horn of Africa, in the war against Somalia, the U.S. president had therefore already been primed to see Moscow's decision as a dramatic stepping up of international tension.³⁶²

The Ogaden War was a setback for the United States as Ethiopia claimed victory. However, it was symptomatic of the United States' new policy to oppose Soviet

³⁶⁰ Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, p.266

³⁶¹ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 282

³⁶² Westad, *The Global Cold War*, p. 251

expansion as this policy could be justified as the U.S. could not allow the Soviets to exploit their post-Vietnam malaise and gain strongholds in the Third World. Westad pointed out why exactly the United States chose to support Somalia. He wrote: 'By June (1977) Brzezinski had suggested to the president that the United States might consider giving aid to Somalia in its confrontation with Mengistu's regime. To Brzezinski, the deteriorating Ethiopian human rights record and the consolidation of the Soviet position in the country went hand in hand.'³⁶³ However, it was chiefly down to geopolitics that the U.S. supported Somalia, not Ethiopia's human rights record. The U.S. did not want to see the Soviets gain control over the Red Sea adjacent to Ethiopia and access to a warm water port as this would endanger U.S. interests in the region. This was the chief reason for U.S. support for Somalia.

Concerning U.S. fears that the Soviets were trying to dominate the Horn/Red Sea area... these were validated: 'By early 1976 Ambassador Ratanov and his military attaché also underlined to Moscow the strategic use of Ethiopia for Soviet military purposes. Ratanov stressed the opportunity for the Soviet Union to increase its influence in the whole region (Ethiopia, Somalia, and Sudan) and the operational possibilities for the Red Navy in the Red Sea. He also held up the spectre of greater influence of the United States and China, if Moscow did not respond positively to the Ethiopian leaders overtures.'³⁶⁴ It would therefore seem that Brzezinski was vindicated in giving aid to Somalia in order to counter the Soviets as they were trying to capitalise on the US's weakness and dominate the region therefore a tough response could be seen as necessary. Westad wrote of the significance of this Soviet move for their world position. He stated:

To many Soviet leaders of the World War II generation, it was the successful intervention in the Horn of Africa that established the Soviet Union as a real global power – a power that could intervene at will throughout the world with decisive consequences.³⁶⁵

In 1977-78, events in Angola and Ethiopia immediately convinced Brzezinski of the need to advance progress in the normalization of relations with China and, equally if not more important, to foster an extensive strategic partnership between that country

³⁶³ Westad, *The Global Cold War*, p. 260

³⁶⁴ Westad, *The Global Cold War*, p. 268

³⁶⁵ Westad, *The Global Cold War*, p. 279

and the United States. Zubok wrote of this strategic gambit and stated: ‘In order to contain the Soviets in Africa, Brzezinski and Secretary of Defense Harold Brown came up with a Realpolitick move, a rapprochement with Beijing in order to use “the China card” against the Soviets. Vance opposed such a policy as dangerous for Soviet-American relations, but Carter sided with Brzezinski and Brown. He sent Brzezinski to Beijing with broad authority to normalise relations with the Chinese Communists.’³⁶⁶ Brzezinski felt this was a strategic move of the utmost importance in the Cold War in order to regain the upper hand over the Soviets. In his memoirs he wrote:

I had by then become quite preoccupied with Moscow’s misuse of détente to improve the Soviet geopolitical and strategic position around Saudi Arabia, especially through the Cuban military presence in Ethiopia. I believed that a strategic response was necessary.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁶ Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p. 257

³⁶⁷ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p.202



Fig. 6 U.S. President Carter, National Security Adviser Brzezinski & Secretary of State Vance

Normalization of Relations with China

In moving towards normalization with China the key interest for some in the National Security Council was that of forging a quasi-military alliance with China, directed against the Soviet Union and its allies.³⁶⁸ The aim was to tip the balance of power decisively against the Soviets and bring about a U.S. unilateral advantage over the Communist bloc. There had been rough equality between the Soviets and the Americans prior to this diplomatic move and the subsequent normalization of relations between the People's Republic of China and the United States which was consummated in 1978. Stuart Eizenstat wrote about the purpose of Brzezinski's visit and reaffirms that it was a strategic gambit designed to weaken the Soviet position around the world. He wrote:

Normalising relations with China was pushed by Brzezinski and his China expert, Michael Oksenberg, from start to finish. Brzezinski saw the move as a way to counter Soviet strategy to achieve superiority from Western Europe and the Middle East to Southern Asia and the Indian Ocean, and also to "counter the image of the Carter administration as being soft vis-à-vis the Soviet Union," even at the expense of delaying SALT II. He did so provocatively, going on *Meet the Press* after his first visit to China and blasting Soviet conduct around the world, while Vance was negotiating arms control with them.³⁶⁹

However, President Carter was torn between the proactive policies of NSA Brzezinski and the more precautionary line of Secretary of State Vance. In the end, Brzezinski's views would prevail. Before the end of the Carter presidency, three of Brzezinski's prominent opponents within the administration, including Cyrus Vance, had resigned. The policies they had advocated which placed a premium on the U.S.-Soviet relationship were eschewed and, as one writer observed 'their demises confirmed the rise in influence of the man most actively promoting the Cold War within the Administration, Brzezinski.'³⁷⁰ Carter once noted in his diary that 'Zbig is a little too competitive and incisive' and this may well reflect the fact that Brzezinski strove hard within the administration to ensure that his views became official policy.³⁷¹

³⁶⁸ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p.198

³⁶⁹ Stuart E Eizenstat, *Jimmy Carter*, p. 630

³⁷⁰ Fred Halliday, *The Making of the Second Cold War*, p.218

³⁷¹ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, p.450

The first diplomatic envoy sent to China by President Carter had failed to resolve the issue of Taiwan. Subsequently, Brzezinski was invited to visit the People's Republic in April 1978. This somewhat informal visit was not simply designed to finalise the progress already made by Nixon and Kissinger. Brzezinski had advised Carter to authorise the transferral of 'dual use' military technology to China. In his memoirs, he stated: 'Vance, Brown, and I agreed to give the Chinese some advanced imaging systems as well as some small jets with sophisticated navigational equipment of the type that we would under no circumstances sell to the Soviets.'³⁷²

Prior to his departure, Brzezinski also ordered NATO representatives to brief the Chinese on the strategic dimensions of the U.S.-Soviet contest, whilst he himself would later deliver an overview of the progress that had been so far made in the SALT II negotiations. As preparations got under way, Brzezinski wrote, 'gradually, the trip began to acquire greater strategic significance and more ambitious political goals.'³⁷³ Brzezinski also wrote that: 'My own talks with the Chinese convinced me that I was the top official in the Carter administration in whom they had genuine confidence and whose strategic perspective to some extent they shared.'³⁷⁴

Brzezinski was sent to China in response to aggressive Soviet actions in the Horn of Africa, and furthermore to drive a wedge between China and the Soviet Union, ensuring that the US gained more from its relationship with them than they do from each other.³⁷⁵ The Chinese invited Brzezinski to come to China more than once, showing how eager they were for a visit from him. In the end, President Carter also felt that the impact such a visit would have on US-Chinese relations was worth sending Brzezinski to Peking.

Brzezinski's diplomacy was distinguished from Kissinger's mainly by the fact that he further elaborated upon the geo-strategic imperatives of the new relationship by securing a tangible Chinese commitment to countering Soviet regional advancements. Also, Brzezinski was determined not to allow the Sino-American stalemate over Taiwan detract from their mutual accommodation on other important matters. The Soviet Union was, from this perspective, the preeminent threat to international stability and countermeasures aimed at addressing this 'international menace' took precedence over other issues.

³⁷² Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p.421

³⁷³ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p.206

³⁷⁴ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p.206

³⁷⁵ Memorandum from Brzezinski to the President, February 27, 1978, Brzezinski Donated Materials.

In a memorandum for Brzezinski from Mike Oksenberg, dated April 25, 1978, the nature of Brzezinski's visit to China, Japan and South Korea was revealed: 'In accordance with the Shanghai Communique of February 1972, Dr. Brzezinski will engage in consultations with Chinese leaders. He will also stop in Tokyo and Seoul for consultations with Japanese and South Korean leaders.' It was furthermore stated that the purpose of his visit was: 'In all three countries, to consult about matters of common strategic concern. The President has stated that we consider China to play an important role in the maintenance of the global equilibrium. We believe we have many points in common in the world today. We think it useful therefore to consult with Peking's leaders periodically so that the two sides continue to understand our respective positions on a wide range of issues.'

When Mike Oksenberg was asked why the trip was taking place at this time and was it being carried out in order to play the "China card" against the Russians, he stated: 'Certainly not. Our relations with China grow out of our awareness of the historic and strategic importance of China. We approach each of the communist giants on the basis of our interest involved with each. We do not seek to use one against the other.'³⁷⁶ It is important to note however, in spite of Oksenberg's affirmation of the US as not seeking to play the Chinese off against the Russians, that Woodcock (the US ambassador to China) was seen by the Chinese as being too soft on the Russians. They therefore welcomed a visit by Brzezinski, a known hard-liner, as this would establish a rapport between him and the equally anti-Russian Chinese leadership.

In a Presidential Statement, President Carter made explicit the official policy that the U.S. did not seek to engage with China at the expense of the Russians. However, this was only the official line, adhered for the sake of appearing peaceful. In reality, the U.S. was determined to gain a geostrategic advantage over the Soviet Union and was, as will be shown, playing the "China card." President Carter put it thus: 'We are not normalizing for tactical or expedient reasons.' He stated furthermore that:

The change I am announcing tonight will be of long-term benefit to the peoples of both the United States and China – and, I believe, to all the peoples of the world. Normalization – and the expanded commercial and cultural relations it will bring with it – will contribute to our welfare, to stability in Asia, and to the

³⁷⁶ Memorandum for Zbigniew Brzezinski from Mike Oksenberg, April 25, 1978, Brzezinski Donated Materials.

emergence of a diverse and peaceful community of independent nations. Positive relations with China can beneficially shape the world in which our children will live.

The major obstacle to normalization was the issue of Taiwan. It had been the United States' position to supply that country with defensive weapons since Chiang Kai Shek was forced to set up the Chinese nationalist state there. President Carter sought to pursue normalization while continuing to sell arms to Taiwan, a sticking point for China, but one they would reluctantly accept given their determination to develop their economy and modernise. President Carter thus paid especial attention to this issue and reaffirmed Nixon and Kissinger's position that Taiwan was China's domestic issue and that the U.S. hoped it would be resolved peacefully and the country reintegrated with the mainland in the near future. As he put it:

We will continue to have an interest in the peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue. I have paid special attention to ensure that normalization between the United States and the People's Republic will not jeopardise the well-being of the people of Taiwan.

Finally, the President stated that: 'The normalization of relations between the United States and China has no other purpose than this – the advancement of peace.'³⁷⁷ Although President Carter denied that the normalization of relations with China had no purpose other than the promotion of peace, to some in the National Security Agency the goal was explicitly and deliberately to promote the U.S. position in the Cold War vis-à-vis the Soviets. In a memorandum from Paul B. Henze to Brzezinski, dated May 11, 1978, Henze outlined 'what we want':

Chinese role in South Asia that serves to counter-balance Soviet influence there...

We wish to prevent any outside power from gaining a position of dominance and we support the independence and territorial integrity of all the nations of the region...

Our basic strategic interests in Southeast Asia are to support the independence of friendly states in the area, to protect the freedom of the shipping lanes (which are

³⁷⁷ Presidential Statement from Carter, Brzezinski Donated Materials.

vital to all maritime powers), and to limit opportunities for the Soviets to “fish in troubled waters” – all interests which we share with China...

We will maintain a strong strategic presence in Asia and the Pacific.³⁷⁸

The real purpose of normalization, regardless of President Carter’s assertions to the contrary, was, as Henze’s statement shows, to work to the detriment of the Soviet Union in East Asia and help bolster the U.S. position in the region. That Brzezinski sought to play the “China card” is the view taken by the eminent historian Walter LaFeber, who wrote that ‘Brzezinski became highly infatuated with China and the possibility of using the “China card” against the Soviets.’³⁷⁹ This argument is corroborated by the historian Daniel J. Sargent, who wrote that:

Eager to leverage Beijing against Moscow, Brzezinski advocated a rapid expansion of Sino-American ties. He found a like minded partner in Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping, who emerged in 1977 as China’s dominant leader. Deng calculated that normalizing relations with Washington would advance China’s reintegration into the world economy while consecrating a strategic partnership against the USSR.³⁸⁰

In a conversation with Chairman Hua Kuo-feng, Brzezinski stated that: ‘With regard to the Middle East, I believe that our positions are fundamentally similar. We wish to promote a peaceful settlement in the area and to either reduce or exclude Soviet influence from the area.’ They thus shared a common geopolitical objective with the Chinese; namely, to expel the Soviet Union from the Middle East and, wherever possible, to curtail its influence on the world stage. Brzezinski also made the point that:

We therefore feel that our relationship with China is of historic significance. It is an enduring relationship. It has long-term strategic importance. It is not only a tactical anti-Soviet expedient. If the Soviet Union remains a threat, if it persists in its hegemonistic designs, we want to cooperate with you in resisting them; but if we succeed in accommodation to some extent, if SALT reduces Soviet

³⁷⁸ Memorandum from Paul B. Henze to Brzezinski, May 11, 1978, Brzezinski Donated Materials.

³⁷⁹ LaFeber, *The American Age*, p. 647

³⁸⁰ Daniel J Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, p. 270

strategic danger, we nevertheless feel that for global reasons, for historical reasons, we wish to have a relationship of ever closer friendship and cooperation with China because you are a major, vital force in world affairs, whether the Soviet Union is peaceful or aggressive, friendly or hostile to the United States. My personal guess is that the Soviet Union will remain hostile and aggressive for some time to come.³⁸¹

It is interesting to note that Brzezinski stated that his visit was intended *not only* as a tactical anti-Soviet expedient, implying that it was, in part, designed to weaken the Soviet position in the region and internationally.

In a conversation with Foreign Minister Huang Hua, Brzezinski described the U.S. position in relation to China. He stated: 'I can assure you that the U.S. has made up its mind.' Brzezinski affirmed here that the U.S. was ready to proceed with normalization.

He added: 'We recognise that there is only one China.' Brzezinski was stating here that Taiwan was considered by the U.S. to be a part of China. 'We recognize the resolution of the Taiwan issue is your domestic affair.'... 'We are continuing and will continue our military withdrawal from Taiwan.'... 'We agree that we share much common ground and that we should work together to contain the Polar Bear.'... 'We agree with you that one must not use China as a pawn to divert the Soviet Union against China. That is not our intention.'... 'We do not agree that the main characteristic of the present era is a rivalry for world hegemony. We do not agree because while we are contesting the Soviet Union we are not contesting it to establish hegemony. We believe in a world of diversity composed of different systems and of different ideologies. Our own relationship with you is proof of this. We are opposing an effort to establish world hegemony. We are a world power. But the essence of our effort is not the promotion of hegemony but the opposition of hegemony.'

Brzezinski then stated unequivocally that the US was not a hegemonic power. This was the traditional position maintained from the outset of the Cold War; that the U.S. was in favour of diversity worldwide and not hegemony by a single power. As Stuart Eizenstat put it: 'The announcement referred to mutual opposition by China and the United States to "hegemony" – an incendiary Chinese code word for Soviet global

³⁸¹ Memorandum of Conversation – Summary of Dr. Brzezinski's Meeting with Chairman Hua Kuo-feng, Brzezinski Donated Materials.

ambitions, which Brzezinski had happily agreed should be included as a signal to the Soviets.³⁸² That the U.S. is not in favour of establishing hegemony is an idea that a considerable number of people would be prone to disagree with, especially when considering the military doctrine of Full Spectrum Dominance³⁸³ that has become central to U.S. military thinking in recent years. Arguably the U.S. was and still is a hegemonic power, perhaps bent not just on regional but global hegemony. One could argue that during the Cold War the U.S. was seeking to bring about a world of diversity and however this author would argue that, in the realist tradition, the United States is another great power that seeks hegemony and the maximising of its power for its own ends. However, if the U.S. did seek global hegemony this would surely have not been their official policy as the effect may have been to unite much of the world against them. Brzezinski furthermore made the point that:

We also do not agree with the view that war is inevitable. We believe war is avoidable providing we are strong, determined, and build up sufficient forces on the strategic and conventional level to make certain that anyone who starts a war will perish in such a war. We have the means to accomplish this objective, and I believe that this Administration has the will.' 'Our discussions show mutual or shared understanding of the central issues of this historical time, that the challenge confronting mankind is either that of hegemony or diversity.'³⁸⁴

The primary purpose of Brzezinski's visit was to advance the consultative relationship between the two countries, to ensure they exchange views in a frank and direct manner concerning their resolution of the issue of Taiwan. The second purpose of his going there was to advance the process of normalization. As President Carter himself stated:

My purpose in sending you to China is two-fold:

1. To continue the consultations called for by the Shanghai Communiqué;

³⁸² Eizenstat, *Jimmy Carter*, p. 631

³⁸³ Full Spectrum Dominance: the military doctrine that the US must have complete dominance over the globe through maintaining unrivalled superiority over land, sea, air, space and cyberspace.

³⁸⁴ Memorandum of conversation – Summary of Dr. Brzezinski's meeting with Foreign Minister Huang Hua, Brzezinski Donated Materials.

2. To reassure the Chinese that my Administration is serious in seeking normalization.³⁸⁵

However, despite the limitations President Carter set upon Brzezinski's negotiations with the Chinese, Brzezinski also took it upon himself to establish a tacit anti-Soviet alliance between the Chinese and the United States. In the aforementioned conversation with Huang Hua Brzezinski also mentioned he made 'a series of suggestions as to steps the Chinese might take to assure more effective parallel action in dealing with Soviet designs in various areas.'³⁸⁶ Brzezinski was emphatic that the U.S. did not seek global or regional hegemony and in a speech to Foreign Minister Huang, Madame Huang, Chinese and American friends, he stated the following:

We recognise – and share – China's resolve to resist the efforts of any nation which seeks to establish global or regional hegemony.

Furthermore, in a subtle reference presumably to the Soviet Union, he stated:

Only those aspiring to dominate others have any reason to fear the further development of American-Chinese relations.³⁸⁷

In a memorandum concerning a meeting with Vice Premier Teng Hsiao P'ing, dated May 21, 1978, at the Great Hall of the People in Peking, Brzezinski noted that: 'In our relationships we will remain guided by the Shanghai Communique, by the principle that there is only one China and that the resolution of the issue of Taiwan is your problem.' Brzezinski also referred to the Soviet Union as 'our mutual adversary'. He stated: 'Precisely because we have certain common fundamental interests and because we face the same challenge from the polar bear I think it would be useful to maximise contacts at a high level even if you cannot visit Washington.' Thus, Brzezinski was seeking to establish an alliance with the Chinese because they both share the same enemy. This was a tactical anti-Soviet expedient.

³⁸⁵ President Carter's instructions to Brzezinski, Brzezinski Donated Materials.

³⁸⁶ Message for the President from Zbigniew Brzezinski, Brzezinski Donated Materials.

³⁸⁷ Brzezinski's Speech to Foreign Minister Huang, Madame Huang, Chinese and American Friends, Brzezinski Donated Materials.

In relation to the process of normalization, Brzezinski stated: 'Although my visit here is not to negotiate normalization, I would like to think of it as contributing to a step forward and not to a step backward.'

Brzezinski then alluded to how little he was perturbed by the prospect of offending the Soviet Union: 'I can assure you that my inclination to be fearful of offending the Soviet Union is rather limited.' He added furthermore that: 'As far as being afraid to offend the Soviet Union, I would be willing to make a little bet with you as to who is less popular in the Soviet Union – you or me.'

Brzezinski understood that Moscow sought to drive a wedge between the U.S. and China and keep the two countries from coming together. Brzezinski therefore was determined to unite with China as this would have an enormous impact upon the balance of power between the two blocs. He mentioned what it was the Russians wanted. As he put it: 'I think that it is clear that from the Soviet point of view absence of cooperation between the US and China is desirable. The Soviet Union would like to see a poor relationship between the U.S. and China.' Brzezinski then described the US-Soviet relationship as one involving a mixture of competition and cooperation. He stated:

I personally see no contradiction, and I think I speak for President Carter in this regard, between signing a SALT agreement with the Soviet Union when it is in our mutual interest and at the same time competing effectively when challenged politically or even reacting more directly when that challenge is more aggressive and assertive. We have seen examples of that in Africa. We may see examples of that in the Middle East. In that context, I think it is important that we not only consult but that we also consider in what ways our respectively independent reactions might be complementary.

Brzezinski is almost pleading with the Vice Premier of China for joint action in dealing with the Soviets. Such a move was extremely important in tipping the balance of power. The United States was allied with most of the great powers already. Having the communist giant and former ally of the Soviet Union China join their side was an enormous strategic coup. Brzezinski fragmented the Soviet bloc from within but he also managed to build upon Kissinger's success in turning Moscow's former number one ally against the Soviet Union. He stated furthermore: 'The fact is that in many

parts of the world in different ways we can do things and you can do things the effect of which is to reduce Soviet influence or repel Soviet aggression.’ He also added: ‘We are not naïve in dealing with the Soviet Union. For the last thirty years it has been the U.S. which has opposed Soviet hegemony designs and that is roughly twice as long as you have been doing it, so we have a little bit of experience in this.’

Interestingly, Teng, in responding to Brzezinski, made a prescient remark about the long term consequences of America’s policy of unconditional support for Israel in the Middle East. He stated: ‘If you side with Israel you antagonize yourselves with over 100 million Arab people, then it is impossible to solve the Middle East issue forever.’³⁸⁸ It is important to note that, according to Brzezinski’s message to President Carter, he stated that the Chinese were more than just receptive of his recommendations for joint action in countering Soviet regional designs for hegemony. He stated: ‘In their conversations the Chinese were intensely anti-Soviet, not inclined to debate my firm rejection of the US as appeasing, and quite prepared to speak of “parallel” efforts to prevent the spread of Soviet hegemony.’³⁸⁹

Within the White House, Brzezinski was ready to move ahead with normalization at a quick pace. He advised that Beijing be not only placed on an equal footing to Moscow but that President Carter should actually grant ‘Most Favoured Nation’ status to China and also extend preferential treatment over the Soviet Union, particularly in the areas of advanced scientific and military technology.³⁹⁰ It seems that when an opportunity to strengthen the U.S. position vis-à-vis the Soviets presented itself, though one which conflicted with the administration’s human rights policy, gaining an advantage over the Soviet Union was considered more important. As Walter LaFeber stated: ‘China’s government regularly imprisoned dissidents. But instead of effectively protesting, Carter (at Brzezinski’s urging) sent new technology to the Chinese.’³⁹¹

³⁸⁸ Memorandum – Meeting with Vice Premier Teng Hsiao P’ing, May 21, 1978, Great Hall of the People, Peking, Brzezinski Donated Materials.

³⁸⁹ Message to the President from Zbigniew Brzezinski, Brzezinski Donated Materials.

³⁹⁰ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p.206

³⁹¹ LaFeber, *The American Age*, p.651 ‘Brzezinski, however, used the (human rights) policy more consistently against the Soviets. When they jailed leading dissidents, the White House temporarily stopped the sale of computers to Moscow. The Soviets, who naively believed that Carter was using human rights only as a “bargaining chip” to obtain other concessions from them, became angry and condemned the policy as mere “propaganda.” Such allies as West Germany and France also disapproved. They saw no profit intervening in Soviet internal affairs and disrupting their growing trade with the Russian market.’

Secretary of State Vance argued that an ‘even-handed’ approach ought to be pursued with respect to China and Russia, extending assistance and privileges to both simultaneously. Those who sided with Brzezinski however, pushed for a more ‘balanced’ approach that would favour the Chinese in highly contentious areas, particularly military technology. Brzezinski explained the logic of this argument by stating that:

We simply made the case that since China was so much weaker than the Soviet Union – posing no immediate military threat to us – and since it was helpful to us in various parts of the globe, greater consideration for China was necessary.³⁹²

This marked a significant departure from the policies of the previous two administrations. Kissinger had tried to balance closer ties to China with a firm commitment to détente. Brzezinski realised détente had been “buried in the sands of the Ogaden” and sought to increase hostilities with the Soviet Union and utterly defeat them.

Not only would Brzezinski successfully push for military technology to be transferred to China, but he also opposed the transfer of such technology to the Soviet Union, as he believed any aid given to the Soviets would only serve to perpetuate the Soviet Union, something that he was firmly against. As Andrianopoulos wrote, Brzezinski ‘opposed Soviet access to US credits and technology and the collaborative efforts in space because in his view they helped the Soviet economy and buttressed the Soviet political system, thus, reducing domestic pressures for needed reforms.’³⁹³ Justin Vaisse pointed out that it was Brzezinski who put forth the policy to supply military equipment to the Chinese. He added furthermore that: ‘During the months that followed, China rapidly gained access to a whole gamut of advanced technologies and American military support equipment.’³⁹⁴

After arriving in Beijing in May 1978, Brzezinski would give a presentation to the Chinese Foreign Minister in which he clarified the new position of the Carter Administration. He described how both countries were confronted by the threat posed by the emergence of the Soviet Union as a military power with almost global reach. At

³⁹² Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p.415

³⁹³ Andrianopoulos, *Kissinger and Brzezinski*, p.54

³⁹⁴ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 319

this first meeting, which included several high-ranking Chinese military officials, Brzezinski stated in his memoirs how:

I went on to summarize Soviet strategy as involving an attempt to achieve strategic superiority, to gain political preponderance in Western Europe, to radicalise the Middle East, to destabilise Southern Asia, to penetrate the Indian Ocean region, and to encircle China.³⁹⁵

After this preliminary meeting with the foreign minister, Brzezinski had succeeded in convincing the Chinese to accept proposals for the exchange of trade delegations and military missions. A year later, the delegation sent out to China would become the ‘most high-powered science and technology delegation ever sent by the United States to any foreign country.’³⁹⁶ The wide range of interests embodied in the delegation Brzezinski led is worth noting. It included top ranking officials from the Department of Defense, such as Mort Abramowitz, as well as Samuel Huntington of the National Security Council and Richard Holbrooke of the State Department. Many of the aims of the Chinese Communist Party regarding the ‘four modernizations’ of industry, agriculture, science, and defence were addressed by the respective delegates accompanying Brzezinski. While military hardware was provided to the Chinese, the U.S. stopped short of providing them with weaponry.

Indeed, even after both countries had concluded the signing of the Shanghai Communiqué on the normalization of diplomatic relations, Brzezinski established within the National Security Council several Chinese Committees, including ones for Science and Technology, Economics, and Culture. The Chinese also began to monitor Soviet military activity and provide intelligence on it to the United States. Furthermore, Brzezinski also made sure that the advances being made in Sino-American relations would become practically irreversible. He stated:

An even more important bureaucratic ploy was for Oksenberg and me to schedule a number of trips to China by various members of the Cabinet, thereby involving every key policy maker and every major bureaucracy in a constructive relationship with China.³⁹⁷

³⁹⁵ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p.211

³⁹⁶ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p.226

³⁹⁷ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p.417

Brzezinski finally met with Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping over an informal dinner, where the two men discussed what had hitherto been the major obstacle to normalization, the issue of Taiwan. The greatest success of Brzezinski's trip, many would say, was that he convinced the Chinese to go ahead with normalization whilst the United States continued supplying arms to Taiwan. Brzezinski was aware that Deng could not 'openly' permit the US to supply weapons to Taiwan, but he also knew the urgency that the Chinese leader placed upon economic reform was such that he could no longer allow the issue to obstruct negotiations.

With the issue of Taiwan resolved, the two countries were able to proceed with normalization. Within the official statement the Chinese released concerning normalization it was stated:

As is known to all, the Government of the PRC is the sole legal government of China and Taiwan is a part of China. The question of Taiwan was the crucial issue obstructing the normalization of relations between China and the USA. It has now been resolved between the two countries in the spirit of the Shanghai Communique and through their joint efforts, thus enabling the normalization of relations so ardently desired by the people of the two countries. As for the way of bringing Taiwan back to the embrace of the motherland and reunifying the country, it is entirely China's internal affair.³⁹⁸

This author would argue the greatest success of Brzezinski's trip to China was that the Chinese began to oppose Soviet expansionism and the effect this had upon the balance of power. However, the overcoming of the issue of Taiwan was a major breakthrough and allowed for cordial and constructive relations to be established between the two great powers. When Brzezinski spoke of an eventual reunification occurring sometime in the future, he also reaffirmed that the United States withheld the right to supply defensive weapons to Taipei. Enrico Fardella argued that Brzezinski 'knew how to exploit Chinese willingness to achieve normalization in order to get the best compromise possible.'³⁹⁹

³⁹⁸ Official Statement on "normalization" of relations with the United States, as quoted in Johnathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York, 1999) p. 631

³⁹⁹ Enrico Fardella, 'The Sino-American Normalization: A Reassessment', *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 33 Issue 4 (Sep 2009): p.546

Brzezinski was prepared to offer even more extensive military aid to China than previous administrations had done. By proposing to the Chinese access to American technology beyond what they had anticipated, Brzezinski may have realized that Deng would be even less likely to let the issue of Taiwan inhibit a Sino-American rapprochement. Brzezinski thus managed to draw the Chinese into a quasi-military alliance owing largely to their desire for access to economic aid, yet America's support for Chinese nationalist and anti-communist separatists on the island of Taiwan continued largely unabated.

Within the Chinese political elite many knew Brzezinski and they agreed with the firm and comprehensive measures he recommended for dealing with Soviet regional hegemony. Mike Oksenberg, the Carter administration's specialist on Chinese affairs, made the very significant observation that after negotiations had stalled following Vance's first visit, the Chinese 'turned to the official whose world view more closely corresponded to their own.'⁴⁰⁰ Brzezinski and Deng Xiaoping shared many similar views when it came to the primacy of national interests and the need to check the growing power of the Soviet Union. Their mutual understanding would lead to the establishment of military and diplomatic ties between the world's most powerful state and the world's most populous one.

According to Henry Kissinger, 'for a long time, American policymakers, blinded by ideological preconceptions, failed to appreciate that the Sino-Soviet split represented a strategic opportunity for the West.'⁴⁰¹ That strategic opportunity, made possible by Nixon and Kissinger's diplomacy, was more fully realised following Brzezinski's initiatives. To gain such a *de facto* military partnership with China that would also serve to weaken the Soviet Union was an enormous political breakthrough for the United States. As Enrico Fardella has remarked:

Brzezinski achieved normalization with Beijing at conditions that were considered "unimaginable" previously—that is, the continuation of arms sales to Taiwan —and strengthened the strategic partnership with Beijing, thus establishing an advantage over Moscow that was unprecedented in the history of the Cold War.⁴⁰²

⁴⁰⁰ Roderick MacFarquhar & John King Fairbank, *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 15, Part 2 - The People's Republic of China* (Cambridge, 1991) p.438

⁴⁰¹ Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York, 1994), p.720

⁴⁰² Enrico Fardella, 'The Sino-American Normalization: A Reassessment,' p.577

At this point in history, the United States had firmly rejected strategic parity between itself and the Soviet Union but sought out predominance over its communist foe. This was a policy in line with the views of Brzezinski.⁴⁰³

As a result of Brzezinski's visit to Beijing, China would receive American military technology that was unattainable for the Soviet Union.⁴⁰⁴ J.P.D. Dunbabin remarked how 'the incoming Reagan administration was reportedly 'startled by the depth and breadth' of U.S.-Chinese relations.'⁴⁰⁵ American financial investment and scientific expertise soon began to flow into China helping that country to become the economically dynamic power it is today. The Chinese also began to help counter Soviet regional influence by backing the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia against the Soviet-sponsored North Vietnamese and, indirectly by helping to fund the Mujahedeen against the Soviets in Afghanistan. Furthermore, Brzezinski's visit to China also included a stop-off in Japan, where, according to Keio University Professor Yoshida Soeya, he convinced the Japanese foreign minister to go ahead with the signing of the Peace and Friendship Treaty with China. He asserted that:

The established theory is that after Brzezinski's China visit in May 1977, the U.S. and China moved toward normalization. On his way home from that visit he stopped over in Japan. In his memoirs, Brzezinski wrote that he tried to convince Japanese leaders to move toward the TPF and he also wrote that after his talks, Japan began to move in that direction. There are many in our field in America who espouse this theory.⁴⁰⁶

In his memoirs, Brzezinski spoke of how he was able to convince the Japanese to go ahead with the ratification of the treaty. He was able to bridge the division over the issue by assuring them that 'opposition to regional hegemony,' the controversial clause in the treaty, implied opposition not solely to hegemony by the Soviet Union but by any power. Brzezinski was able to reassure the Japanese on this point and in doing so, helped to end the official 'state of war' that Asia's two foremost powers had been in

⁴⁰³ Andrianopoulos, *Kissinger and Brzezinski*, p.101

⁴⁰⁴ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p.424 'The State Department liberalized regulations for some thirty types of support equipment, including air defence radar, radio, tropospheric communications equipment, transport helicopters, and electronic countermeasure devices.'

⁴⁰⁵ J.P.D. Dunbabin, *The Cold War* (New York, 1994) p.295

⁴⁰⁶ 'Yosuke Nakae Oral History Interview,' conducted by Yoshihide Soeya (Keio University) and Koji Murata, February 22, 1996 (<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/japan/nakaeohinterview.htm>)

since World War II. In a memorandum summarising Brzezinski's meeting with Ambassador Ch'ai Tse-min, Brzezinski stated:

I am pleased with the signing of the Peace and Friendship Treaty with Japan. After leaving Peking, I talked to the Japanese leaders about this issue and encouraged them to move ahead. This was different from the previous Administrations, which adopted a posture of non-involvement. We believe this treaty will help secure peace and prevent the appearance of domination or hegemony by other countries.⁴⁰⁷

When Secretary of State Henry Kissinger had first visited China in 1972, the USSR seemed almost on a par geopolitically with the United States. As a result of Brzezinski's East Asian trip, China had sided decisively with the United States against the Soviets and also undertook to establish peaceful relations with Japan. Brzezinski's diplomacy would go a considerable way toward tipping the balance of power in favour of the United States and its allies. The 'triangular-diplomacy' Kissinger advocated, involving China, Russia and the United States, was to a certain degree being replaced by Brzezinski's 'pacific triangle' which aimed at closer cooperation between Japan, China and the United States, to the exclusion of the Soviet Union.⁴⁰⁸ As Andrianopoulos stated:

Emphasising Moscow's desire to derail the PRC's modernization to preclude the emergence of another modern power in the Far East and stressing that a rapidly modernizing PRC could assist in preventing Moscow's domination of Eurasia, Brzezinski recommended that the US and Japan actively support the PRC's economic modernization and quietly expand the scope of informal security consultations with Peking in order to establish an informal geopolitical triangle in the Far East.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁷ Memorandum – Summary of Dr. Brzezinski's Meeting with Ambassador Ch'ai Tse-min, Brzezinski Donated Materials.

⁴⁰⁸ Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, p. 855 'The 1980 tilt toward China ended any semblance of balance in U.S. relations with the two Communist powers.'

⁴⁰⁹ Andrianopoulos, *Kissinger and Brzezinski*, p.211

George C. Herring provided a seemingly accurate account of Brzezinski's control over the Carter administration's normalization policy with China as well as its significance. He wrote:

With Brzezinski in the driver's seat, the Carter administration in 1979 moved full throttle toward closer ties with China built around mutual opposition to the Soviet Union. The NSC ignored Vance's continued calls for balance and shut the State Department out of China policy. The administration stopped short of the alliance Deng apparently preferred but collaborated closely to thwart Moscow's perceived hegemonic aspirations. The USSR had become Vietnam's closest ally and chief benefactor after the fall of Saigon, arousing fears in Beijing. Even before normalization was consummated, Carter appears to have given Deng the green light to invade Vietnam – an ironic twist in that a decade earlier the United States had gone to war there to stop Chinese expansion in Southeast Asia. China became a major outpost for snooping on the Soviet Union. The United States removed export controls and sold China modern technology and eventually weapons. In a move of enormous symbolic importance, the administration in the summer of 1979 ignored the Jackson-Vanik amendment, winked at China's human rights violations, and offered most-favoured-nation status and Export-Import Bank Credits. Normalization was an obvious move, but in taking it the administration lost a necessary sense of balance and was enticed into a connection that compromised its ideals and damaged broader global interests. Mutual antipathy toward the Soviet Union proved a flimsy basis for a lasting Sino-American relationship.⁴¹⁰

Daniel J. Sargent argued that the major consequence of the Sino-American rapprochement was to set back Soviet-American relations. He wrote: 'Rather than liberalising China, the major consequence of the Sino-American rapprochement of 1978-79 would be to exacerbate the deterioration in U.S.-Soviet relations.'⁴¹¹ However, while this is true, it is arguable that it was a price worth paying in order to cause damage to Soviet international standing and drive a wedge between the former giant communist allies.

⁴¹⁰ Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, p. 840

⁴¹¹ Daniel J. Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, p. 272

Finally, Brzezinski reveals the extent to which he envisaged Sino-American military cooperation would go when he proposed in January 1980, following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan that:

We use the Soviet invasion of a country in a region of strategic sensitivity to Asia as a justification for opening the doors to a U.S.-Chinese defence relationship.⁴¹²

⁴¹² Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p.431



Fig. 7 U.S. National Security Adviser Brzezinski & Vice Premier of the People's Republic of China, Deng Xiaoping, Beijing, 1978

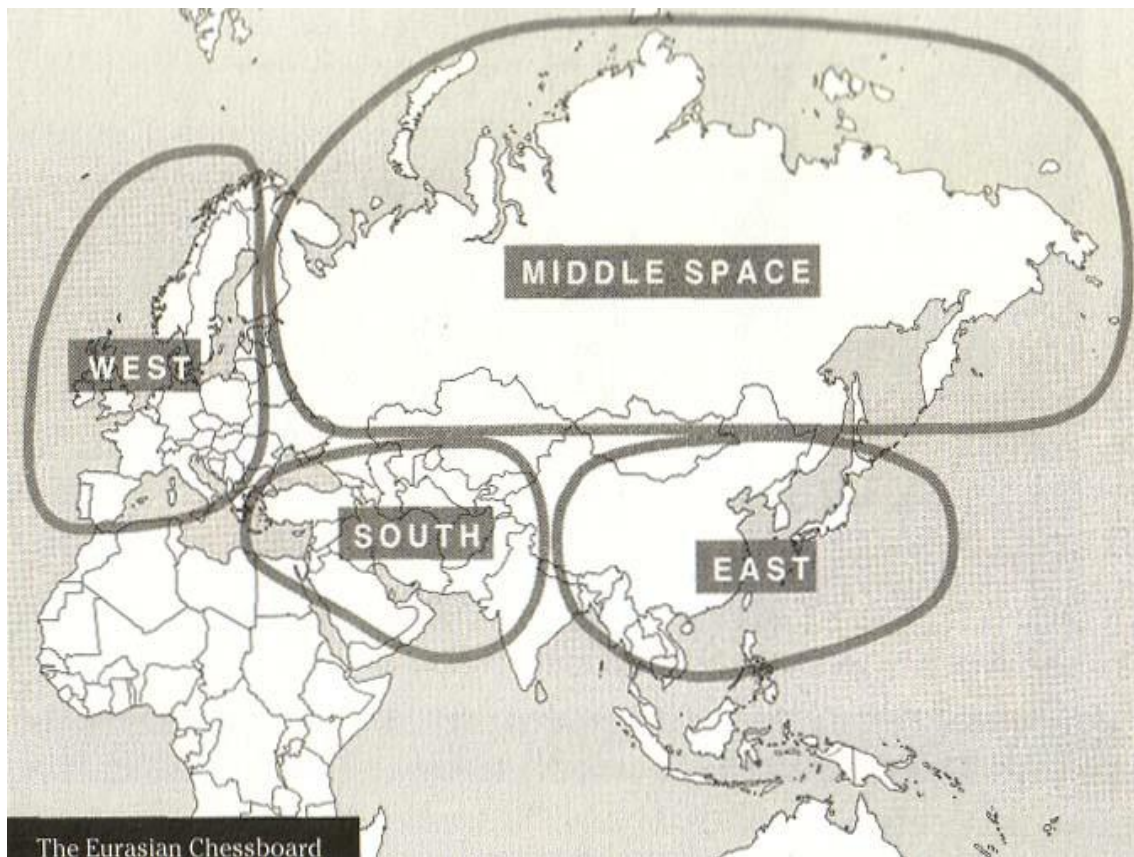


Fig. 8 The Eurasian Chessboard.

The Soviet-Afghan War

In Brzezinski's landmark work, *The Grand Chessboard*, he described how the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan ushered in a new geo-strategic engagement for the US military:

In the Cold War's final phase, a third defensive "front" – the southern – appeared on Eurasia's map. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan precipitated a two-pronged American response: direct U.S. assistance to the native resistance in Afghanistan in order to bog down the Soviet army; and a large-scale build-up of the U.S. military presence in the Persian Gulf as a deterrent to any further southward projection of Soviet political or military power. The United States committed itself to the defence of the Persian Gulf region, on a par with its western and eastern Eurasian security interests.⁴¹³

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was regarded by President Carter as possibly the greatest threat to international peace since the Second World War.⁴¹⁴ Within hours of the event, a decision was made by a number of countries, informally led by the United States, to arm and fund the Mujahedeen. The Afghan resistance was trained and equipped to fight a protracted war, providing the United States, in Brzezinski's calculation, the 'opportunity of giving to the USSR its Vietnam War.'⁴¹⁵ The Soviet-Afghan officially ended the period of détente between the superpowers and ignited the Second Cold War which renewed hostilities until the conflict's close in 1991. The invasion brought forth a tough response from President Carter. As Westad wrote:

For hardliners in the Carter administration, and especially for the National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan provided much welcome proof of Soviet aggressive intentions in the Third World. In his report to Carter on the day of the invasion, Brzezinski noted that "both Iran and Afghanistan are in turmoil" and that "the age long dream of

⁴¹³ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard* (New York, 1997), p.7

⁴¹⁴ 'Carter's State of the Union Address,' January 23, 1980 Quoted in Edward H. Judge & John W. Langdon, *The Cold War: A History through Documents*, p.203 'The situation demands careful thought, steady nerves and resolute action – not only for this year, but for many years to come.'

⁴¹⁵ Vincent Jauvert, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 15–21 January 1998; Steve Coll *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York, 2004) p.50 'Zbigniew Brzezinski, Jimmy Carter's most determined cold warrior... hoped the Soviets could be punished for invading Afghanistan, that they could be tied down and bloodied the way the United States had been in Vietnam.'

Moscow to have direct access to the Indian Ocean” was in the process of being fulfilled. While the president himself had been sliding toward a more alarmist interpretation of Soviet actions at least since the Horn of Africa crisis, it was Brzezinski’s portrayal of Brezhnev’s Afghanistan policy as a naked act of aggression and as a first step in challenging US positions in the Gulf area that won Carter over to seeing the Soviets as implacable enemies and the invasion of Afghanistan as the gravest threat to world peace since 1945. When the National Security Council met to discuss US countermeasures, the president surprised even his National Security Adviser by supporting all proposals that were on the table including a prohibition on U.S. grain exports to the Soviet Union and a boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics, both measures that would do little good to the embattled president’s chances of re-election. But for Carter, the need to get back at the Soviets and, as he saw it, deter further Soviet aggression was stronger than even his political survival skills. “Soviet actions over the next ten to twenty years will be coloured by our behaviour in this crisis,” the president said. “We should... try to do the maximum, short of a world war, to make the Soviets see that this was a major mistake.”⁴¹⁶

For the Soviet Union it marked the first and the last time its military forces would advance beyond the borders of the Warsaw Pact. Whilst not the primary cause for the disintegration of the USSR, the war in Afghanistan was a devastating conflict reminiscent of the American experience in Vietnam, in that it sapped the resources of the Red Army. The foregoing shall therefore include an analysis of both the causes of the Soviet-Afghan war as well as the impact it had upon the decline of the Soviet Union and the rise of American regional hegemony.

Prior to the Carter Administration the United States had not considered Afghanistan a critical security issue. Of greater concern to the two previous administrations were the reorientation of Egypt toward the West and efforts to establish relations with China. Afghanistan was of little economic value to the United States; its significance for a great power derived mostly from its proximity to the Middle East, Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent. It can be seen to occupy the centre of the Eurasian chessboard. It was especially in this context that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was considered by the United States to be a major threat to regional stability. As Mike Oksenberg stated in a memorandum to Brzezinski:

⁴¹⁶ Westad, *The Global Cold War*, p. 328

If the newspaper accounts are reliable, the coup in Afghanistan is a significant development with major implications for Iran, Pakistan, and China. As you know, the major trading routes in that part of the world cross Afghanistan and provide access, therefore, into the troublesome border regions of all three countries.⁴¹⁷

The United States was concerned above all that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan would be a stepping stone to possible control over Afghanistan's southern and western neighbours, Iran and Pakistan and, by extension, would lead to Soviet control of the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean. This is how the invasion was regarded by the Carter administration. As Zubok wrote:

President Jimmy Carter and his national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, concluded that the invasion of Afghanistan could only be the beginning of a strategic thrust toward the Persian Gulf, the largest oil pool in the world. This meant a clear and imminent danger to the most vital interests of the United States. In a series of punitive sanctions, the White House froze and suspended most détente agreements, talks, trade, and cultural relations with the Soviets. Carter even imposed an embargo on profitable grain sales to the USSR and appealed to the world to boycott the Olympic Games scheduled to take place in Moscow that summer.⁴¹⁸

In a memorandum for the President, written by Brzezinski and dating from the day after the Soviet invasion, Brzezinski stated: 'If the Soviets succeed in Afghanistan, and if Pakistan acquiesces, the age-long dream of Moscow to have direct access to the Indian Ocean will have been fulfilled.' Brzezinski sought to use the invasion of Afghanistan as a justification for uniting the Muslim world against the Soviets. He stated: 'World public opinion may be outraged at the Soviet intervention. Certainly, Moslem countries will be concerned, and we might be in a position to exploit this.' Brzezinski therefore sought to galvanise the Muslim world against the Soviet invasion and would encourage the President to recruit militants to the Afghan Mujahedeen

⁴¹⁷ Memorandum for Zbigniew Brzezinski from Michel Oksenberg, May 1, 1978, National Security Affairs, Brzezinski Material.

⁴¹⁸ Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p. 227

from countries right across the Muslim world, especially from Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Brzezinski also recommended encouraging the Chinese to help the rebels, launching a propaganda campaign in Muslim countries to foster support for the Afghan rebels and also to gain financial support for them. Finally, he recommended going to the UN to elicit a condemnation of Soviet action as a threat to the peace.⁴¹⁹

The first half of the Carter administration was characterised by a greater deference to Soviet involvement in Third World countries. However, more frequently in the second half Secretary of State Vance's views were overruled by those of National Security Adviser Brzezinski and thus the United States took on a more hard-line approach toward Moscow. Brzezinski did not wish to see the State Department's preoccupation with the conclusion of the SALT II treaties take attention away from expansive Soviet behaviour abroad. In 1979, President Carter decided to go ahead with the deployment of Pershing II and Cruise missiles in Europe and the United States also increased its naval presence in the Persian Gulf, particularly in response to Soviet involvement in Ethiopia and Angola. A Rapid Deployment Force was established as a means to resolve a regional conflict before it would escalate. This was an initiative which Brzezinski proposed. As he stated: 'The President also approved my idea for developing a very small rapid intervention force, capable of very quick reaction, for the purpose of helping a friendly government under a subversive attack.'⁴²⁰ With the Soviet Union having lost sway in Egypt and much of the Middle East, and with China gravitating toward the West, Moscow became determined to prevent Afghanistan from falling outside of its political ambit.

The Carter administration felt that not to do prevent the expansion of the Soviet Union into Afghanistan would set a dangerous trend. As Marshall Brement of the National Security Council put it in memorandum to Brzezinski: 'If the Soviets manage a successful counter-insurgency effort, it will lead almost inevitably to further "adventurism" in the years ahead.'⁴²¹

Brzezinski was the one who got the United States military permanently involved in the Middle East through establishing a Rapid Deployment Force in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. As Daniel J Sargent wrote:

⁴¹⁹ Memorandum for the President from Zbigniew Brzezinski, 'Reflections on Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan,' December 26, 1979, Brzezinski Donated Materials.

⁴²⁰ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p.450

⁴²¹ Memorandum from Marshall Brement of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Brzezinski) and the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (Aaron), Washington, December 21, 1979. *FRUS*

Zbigniew Brzezinski's role in the Arab-Israeli peace process was peripheral, but the national security adviser was not disengaged from the Middle East. Far from it, he became in 1979 the architect of a strategic reorientation that turned on events in Iran. In late 1978, Brzezinski adopted the idea that an "arc of crisis" spanning Aden to Chittagong – a crescent atop the Indian Ocean – was the source of "our greatest vulnerability." In this arc, Brzezinski explained, a "political vacuum" arising from "fragile social and political structures" might "be filled with elements more sympathetic to the Soviet Union." Eager to pre-empt that eventuality, Brzezinski began to envisage a "consultative security framework" for the region. It would involve consolidating alliances with Egypt, Israel, and Turkey and an enhanced "special" relationship with Saudi Arabia. Brzezinski proposed development assistance, invoking the Marshall Plan, but his regional framework presumed a hard-defensive shell. "We shall have to augment our military presence," Brzezinski wrote. He envisaged the permanent deployment of US forces, even the establishment of "an East-of-Suez Command entity of some sort." Now that the shah had dropped the responsibilities for regional security that Britain had forsaken in the late 1960s, the United States, Brzezinski implied, would have to assume that hegemonic role itself.⁴²²

Brzezinski was thus the one who devised a hegemonic role for the U.S. in the Middle East. The Rapid Deployment Force and bases acquired in the Persian Gulf would evolve into Central Command and was the initiative which gave birth to a domineering presence for the United States throughout the region, which the United States particularly fulfilled following the withdrawal of the Soviets from the region and which continues to the present day.

While some observers in the United States viewed the invasion as part of a broader imperial design for Soviet southward expansion, the Russian leadership justified its intrusion as necessary in order to assist a legitimate Communist government against an externally supported insurrection. As Leonid Brezhnev stated in January 1980, Afghanistan 'encountered an external aggression, rude interference from outside into its internal affairs. Thousands and tens of thousands of insurgents, armed and trained

⁴²² Daniel J. Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, p. 286

abroad, whole armed units were sent into the territory of Afghanistan.’⁴²³ That the invasion was not part of some broad imperialistic design to advance toward the Persian Gulf has now been confirmed. As Best, Hanimaki, Maiolo, and Schulze put it: ‘In reality, the Soviets probably launched the invasion of Afghanistan not to threaten Western access to oil, but in order to prevent the rise of another fundamentalist Islamic regime on their own doorstep.’⁴²⁴

It has now been conclusively proven that the Soviets were in fact not acting aggressively but were defending a legitimate communist government from an insurrection. As Sargent has written: ‘Soviet motives were in fact more defensive than aggrandising: some Kremlin leaders hoped to pre-empt the rise of Islamist influence; others worried about Afghanistan’s defection from the East Bloc’⁴²⁵ Thus, the invasion of Afghanistan was a defensive move and brought part of some broad regional thrust toward the Persian Gulf. Zubok commented on how the Soviets were determined at all costs to prevent the Americans from winning the allegiance of Afghanistan as this would bring them dangerously close to the soft underbelly of the Soviet Union. As he put: ‘As a former senior KGB officer recalls, he viewed Afghanistan as a Soviet sphere of interest and believed that the Soviet Union “had to do whatever possible to prevent the Americans and the CIA from installing an anti-Soviet regime there.”’⁴²⁶ The Carter administration, Brzezinski in particular, nonetheless cleaved to a maximalist interpretation of Soviet goals and seized the opportunity to implement its regional security framework.’⁴²⁷ Such a maximalist interpretation provided the justification for funding the Mujahedin and, equally if not more important, for establishing the RDF and acquiring military bases in the region, thus establishing U.S. hegemony over the Persian Gulf/Middle East region, to the detriment of the Soviets. Westad discussed Brzezinski’s role in garnering support for the Mujahedeen from Pakistan. Brzezinski would travel throughout the country and visit a military training facility in the Khyber Pass. He wrote:

In February 1980, barely six weeks after the Soviet invasion, Zbigniew Brzezinski went to Pakistan, where he discussed an expanded covert action

⁴²³ ‘Brezhnev’s explanation of the Soviet role in Afghanistan,’ January 12, 1980. Quoted in Edward H. Judge & John W. Langdon, *The Cold War: A History through Documents*

⁴²⁴ Best, Hanimaki, Maiolo, & Schulze, *International History of the Twentieth Century*, p. 304

⁴²⁵ Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, p. 288

⁴²⁶ Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p. 259

⁴²⁷ Daniel J. Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, p. 288

program with General Zia and travelled to the Afghan frontier, where he was photographed waving a khalashnaov rifle roughly in the direction of the border line. On his way home, Brzezinski stopped in Saudi-Arabia, where he agreed a Saudi matching contribution for the Mujahedeen to anything the Americans would provide. Well before Carter had been defeated by Ronald Reagan in the U.S. presidential election in the fall of 1980, there was agreement within the administration that Afghanistan could, and should, be made into a “Soviet Vietnam.”⁴²⁸

It is clear that the Soviet leadership, following the Iranian revolution, was also fearful that radical Islamic ideologies would spill into Soviet controlled territories. This would pose a major threat to the communist leadership as Islam would provide alternative rallying cry to communist ideology and allegiance to the communist government. As the Soviet Union had suppressed religions in its satellites, their revival would pose a threat to the authority. As Andrew Hartman noted: ‘the sweeping gains being made by Islamic fundamentalism, including the Iranian revolution that placed Ayatollah Ruholla Khomeini in power, were as much a warning to the Soviets as they were to the Americans.’⁴²⁹

The Soviets were concerned above all that fundamentalist Islam would spread into the Central Asian Republics. As Best, Hanimaki, Maiolo and Schulze put it: ‘First, the Soviets were clearly concerned about the possible rise of fundamentalist Islam, which formed the major opposition to the PDPA’s rule, as it presented a latent threat to Soviet control over its Central Asian Republics.’⁴³⁰ That the Soviets were afraid of such a prospect is confirmed by the following quote: ‘The Soviet nightmare was that the United States would support the rise and spread of anti-Soviet fundamentalist Islam to the southern belly of the USSR.’⁴³¹ Indeed, this had been Brzezinski’s intention all along: to foment radical Islam in the soft underbelly of the Soviet Union in order to fragment the Soviet Union and bring about the secession of the Central Asian Republics. This was carried out by several means, including exporting Korans to the region in order to radicalise its inhabitants.

⁴²⁸ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War*, p. 328

⁴²⁹ Andrew Hartman, ‘The red template: US policy in Soviet-occupied Afghanistan’, *Third World Quarterly* 23, no. 3 (2002): p.470

⁴³⁰ Best, Hanimaki, Maiolo & Schulze, *International History of the Twentieth Century and Beyond*, p. 304

⁴³¹ Best, Hanimaki, Maiolo & Schulze, *International History of the Twentieth Century and Beyond*, p. 304

In a letter to President Carter dating from December 29, 1979, Brezhnev stated: 'I want to once more stress that the limited Soviet contingent in Afghanistan has only one goal – to provide assistance in repulsing the acts of external aggression, which have been taking place for a prolonged period of time and have now assumed even greater scale.'⁴³²

Brezhnev, reacting to the Islamic extremists supported by the United States and its allies who sought to topple the Afghan communist regime, promised that once this threat was neutralised the Soviet forces would be withdrawn. Little did he know at the time that, thanks to Brzezinski and others in the Carter administration, the aid to the Mujahedeen would be stepped up to such an extent that the Soviet military would be effectively bogged down in a war that it could not decisively win and from which it would not be able to withdraw.

President Carter asserted that the USSR was deceiving the world by portraying its actions as defensive and by claiming it was invited into Afghanistan to give support to a faltering communist regime. He stated: 'The Soviets claim falsely that they were invited into Afghanistan to help protect that country from some unnamed outside threat. But President Amin, who had been the leader of Afghanistan before the Soviet invasion, was assassinated – along with several members of his family – after the Soviets gained control of the capital city of Kabul.' President Carter emphasised the geopolitical threat posed by the Soviet Union, claiming its offensive actions were designed not merely to save communism in Afghanistan but were part of a regional thrust to dominate the Persian Gulf region. He stated: 'This invasion is an extremely serious threat to peace – because of the threat of further Soviet expansion into neighbouring countries in Southwest Asia, and also because such an aggressive military policy is unsettling to other peoples throughout the world.'

Vaisse noted that Brzezinski was right in asserting that the invasion of Afghanistan was part of a broader objective to advance toward the Persian Gulf and establish a warm water port, in addition to dominating the region. This, indeed, had been a goal of the Russians, dating back to the Great Game of the nineteenth century. It would appear that while the Russians claim that they were protecting a faltering communist regime in Afghanistan appears valid, it is also true that one of their long-term objectives was to advance toward the Indian Ocean and establish a warm water port

⁴³² Brezhnev to President Carter, 29 December, 1979, Brzezinski Donated Materials.

and thus going into Afghanistan may have been part of a broader move to advance toward the Indian Ocean, despite of Russian claims to the contrary. Or, to put it more precisely, while the reason for going into Afghanistan may have been to prop up a faltering communist regime, it was a long-term goal of the Russians to advance toward the Persian Gulf and the invasion would have intrinsically furthered this interest.

Carter also justified US opposition to the Soviets by referring to the invasion as an act contravening international law. He stated: 'It is a callous violation of international law and the United Nations charter.' He also portrayed the act in religious terms, emphasising that the allegedly godless Soviet Union was attempting to overthrow a, by comparison, devoutly religious Islamic state. He said: 'It is a deliberate effort of a powerful atheistic government to subjugate an independent Islamic people.' President Carter then went on to mention the quintessentially benevolent nature of the U.S. opposition to the Soviet Union in light of the fact that the United States, he claimed, did not desire to gain hegemony over the region and had the sovereignty of the Middle Eastern nations in mind when moving to counteract Soviet influence in Afghanistan and the Middle East more generally. He stated: 'The United States wants all nations in the region to be free and to be independent. If the Soviets are encouraged in this invasion by eventual success, and if they maintain their dominance over Afghanistan and then extend their control to adjacent countries – the stable, strategic and peaceful balance of the world will be changed. This would threaten the security of all nations including, of course, the United States, our allies and friends.' Citing this threat to the freedom of independent regional states Carter then asserted: 'Therefore, the world cannot stand by and permit the Soviet Union to commit this act with impunity.' It is interesting to note that President Carter's position drew popular support from a large number of nations, as evidenced by the fact that 40 nations petitioned the UN to condemn the Soviet invasion and to demand the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. President Carter, at the end of this speech, then urged all nations to cease doing business with the Soviet Union until it withdraws from Afghanistan. He stated: 'In the meantime, 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.'

That the process of détente came to an end following the invasion is stated by John Lewis Gaddis, who wrote: 'that first use of Red Army troops outside the Soviet Union

and Eastern Europe since the end of World War II left the administration little choice but to withdraw the SALT II treaty from the Senate, and to call a halt, for the time being, to any further steps in the direction of détente.⁴³³

Finally, in reference to the enormity of the impact of the U.S. response to the Soviet invasion the President maintained that the U.S. reaction would be proportionate to the scale of the Soviet invasion. He declared: 'The response of the international community to the Soviet attempt to crush Afghanistan must match the gravity of the Soviet action.'⁴³⁴

The United States did not begin to officially support the Mujahedeen with military aid until after the Soviet Army had crossed the Afghan border. In an interview with a French reporter in 1998, published in the newspaper *Le Nouvel Observateur*, Brzezinski admitted however that non-military aid to the Mujahedeen began six months prior to the Soviet invasion. He stated that:

It was July 3, 1979 that President Carter signed the first directive for secret aid to the opponents of the pro-Soviet regime in Kabul. And that very day, I wrote a note to the president in which I explained to him that in my opinion this aid was going to induce a Soviet military intervention.⁴³⁵

Brzezinski appeared to believe the covert aid begun by the CIA had actually caused the Soviets to intervene. It is now understood that this covert aid did in fact precipitate the Soviet intervention.⁴³⁶ Brzezinski described how 'that secret operation was an excellent idea. It had the effect of drawing the Russians into the Afghan trap.'⁴³⁷ The presidential finding signed in July 1979 by President Carter financed Mujahedeen propaganda and provided radio equipment as well as cash (used to purchase arms) and other non-military supplies.⁴³⁸

Justin Vaisse defended Brzezinski, quoting him as having said that it was not his intention to draw the Russians into a quagmire. He stated: 'Brzezinski himself

⁴³³ Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, p. 348

⁴³⁴ President's Address to the Nation, January 4, 1980, Brzezinski Donated Materials.

⁴³⁵ Vincent Jauvert, *Le Nouvel Observateur* Brzezinski explained how 'we didn't push the Russians to intervene, but we knowingly increased the probability that they would.'

⁴³⁶ Shlomo Avineri, 'Preface,' in Lubowski, *Zbig*, p. xiii 'It is now fairly clear that the CIA operations against the Moscow-supported regime in Kabul precipitated the direct Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and can be viewed, in retrospect, as a not totally unjustified response to what the Kremlin viewed as an American provocation.'

⁴³⁷ Jauvert, *Le Nouvel Observateur*

⁴³⁸ Gates, *From the Shadows*, p.146

explains that he had not sought to draw the Soviets into a trap, with the underlying idea that Afghanistan would end up digging the grave of the USSR, but that he simply wanted to create difficulties for them, to heighten the dilemma they were going to have to face.⁴³⁹ This however is contentious. It seems beyond a doubt that they were deliberately trying to lure the Soviets into intervening, so they could create for them their “Vietnam war.”

Here is a quote from Brzezinski explaining what the Americans were doing in Afghanistan: ‘We didn’t really trap them, but we knew what they were doing. And what we knew is that they were injecting themselves into Afghanistan... But anyway, what happened is we knew they were injecting their forces into Afghanistan, already in the summer, we also knew that the Mujahideen were resisting. So, we first started to give them money, about six months before the Soviets went in. When we started to give them money, I told Carter that I think they’ll go in, and they’ll probably use that as an excuse in practice, but that they’re going in anyway, because they are taking over the regime. So, we didn’t suck them in but we knew what we were doing, namely we were in a sense engaging them in a preliminary skirmishing, prior to the more overt intervention.’⁴⁴⁰

Brzezinski evidently wants us to believe that he was not enticing the Soviets to intervene; that it was not his intention to lure them into a protracted military conflict, this despite what was said in the *Nouvel Observateur* interview. If Brzezinski were to admit that it was his intention to lure them in he could claim credit for having defeated the Soviets and helped bring the Cold War to an end. However, he would appear as the aggressor and this would no doubt do damage to his reputation and legacy. However, this author would argue that he was merely saving face by claiming it was not his intention and that in reality he was deliberately luring the Soviets into Afghanistan (or the “Afghan trap” as he said himself) so as to bog them down militarily and hasten the breakdown of the USSR. It is therefore chiefly due to Brzezinski that the Soviets went into Afghanistan and he indeed can be accredited with having played a primary role in ending the Cold War. This point is contentious. However, there are many in the US who believe that the Soviet Afghan War was the principle cause of the breakup of the Soviet Union, as it was the decisive military defeat that precluded the Soviet Union’s collapse. Brzezinski was responsible for the

⁴³⁹ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 308

⁴⁴⁰ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 308

decision to fund the Mujahedin, therefore he can be credited with the policy which brought the Soviets to their knees and ultimately led to the collapse of their empire.

This explanation is justified; the fact of the matter is that the whole purpose of funding the Mujahideen in July 1979 was to draw the Soviets into the country, create problems for them in their own backyard, and bog them down militarily, in the hope that this would hasten the breakdown of the USSR. Deliberately inciting the Soviets to intervene is what all the evidence points to. It was Brzezinski's intention from the time he became National Security Adviser to inflict maximum damage upon the Soviet Union and Afghanistan provided him with the opportunity he longed for; namely, to sink them into a morass and sap the strength of their military.

It does not seem unreasonable to suggest that this aid given by the CIA to the Mujahedeen in July 1979 was perhaps the main reason behind the Soviet decision to intervene militarily. The very use of the term 'trap' by Brzezinski implies a deliberate attempt to lure the Soviets into a protracted military conflict. This view is corroborated by Tom Hanahoe who wrote that:

President Carter's national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, subsequently revealed that the Soviet invasion had been deliberately orchestrated by Washington, beginning on 3 July 1979, almost six months before the Soviet invasion, when President Carter authorised the provision of covert U.S. aid to opponents of Afghanistan's pro-Soviet ruling regime.⁴⁴¹

Stuart Eizenstat also corroborated this argument. He stated: 'Since the spring Brzezinski had been pressing the president to start a covert program to help the mujahideen. In July, in a decision almost unknown to this day, Carter approved the supply of communications devices and medical and other non-lethal supplies. Fully six months *before* the Soviet invasion, Washington began helping the rebels in the hope of improving their chances of holding Soviet proxy forces at bay.'⁴⁴²

It was not so much concern for the people in Afghanistan but rather the prospect of inflicting severe damage on Soviet forces which impelled the CIA to cultivate the Mujahedeen from across the Pakistani border and through the conduit of the Inter-Services-Intelligence (Pakistani Secret Service).

⁴⁴¹ Tom Hanahoe, *America Rules: US Foreign Policy, Globalization and Corporate USA* (Dingle, 2003), p.124

⁴⁴² Stuart E. Eizenstat, *Jimmy Carter*, p.637

Without involvement from the CIA as well as MI6, it is still quite certain that opposition to the pro-Soviet government would have increased. The reforms that were being implemented by the Afghan Communist Party had antagonised most native Afghans and were to a large degree responsible for spawning the counter-revolutionary movement. The party lacked popular support and its ideology was increasingly at odds with the more traditionalist outlook of the local population. As John Lewis Gaddis remarked, 'it was a meaningful moment in the history of Marxism-Leninism: an ideology that had claimed to know the path to a world proletarian revolution found itself confronting a regional religious revolution for which its analytical tools were wholly inadequate.'⁴⁴³

The resurgence of Islam as a unifying political force was inimical to Soviet designs for Afghan society. The atheistic nature of the Soviet Union was a factor which helped galvanise support amongst the Afghan people for resistance to the Soviet invasion. This was noted by Brzezinski in a memorandum to the Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, on March 30, 1979, three months after Soviet troops had crossed the Afghan border. Brzezinski stated:

It is clear that the Afghan people fear the policies of their government. Not least of all, they fear the imposition of atheism from an avowedly Marxist regime supported by the power of the Soviet Union – which has ruthlessly oppressed Islam and all religions. The Afghans do not want to become central Asian republics of the Soviet Union nor should they have to. The Soviet Union must allow the people and government of Afghanistan to work out their own problems and find a solution that meets the needs of the country.⁴⁴⁴

However, though there had already been animosity between the Soviet Union and native Afghans, it is also quite clear that without the support the Mujahedeen received from the CIA and Islamic soldiers recruited from abroad – the Afghan Mujahedeen could not have endured a war lasting almost ten years against an occupying superpower. On December 26, the day after the invasion, in a discursive memo to President Carter, NSA Brzezinski authorised the expansion of U.S. aid, including military equipment, to the Mujahedeen:

⁴⁴³ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War* (London, 2005), p.210

⁴⁴⁴ Memorandum for the Secretary of State from Zbigniew Brzezinski, March 30, 1979, National Security Affairs, Brzezinski Material.

It is essential that Afghanistan's resistance continues. This means more money as well as arms shipments to the rebels, and some technical advice. To make the above possible we must both reassure Pakistan and encourage it to help the rebels. This will require a review of our policy toward Pakistan, more guarantees to it, more arms aid, and, alas, a decision that our security policy toward Pakistan cannot be dictated by our non-proliferation policy.⁴⁴⁵

In order to secure the compliance of the ISI in supporting the Mujahedeen, Brzezinski advised the U.S. not to make military aid to them contingent upon their adherence to nuclear non-proliferation. This marked the beginning of a guerrilla war code named 'Operation Cyclone'. Steve Coll described vividly how 'disguised KGB paramilitaries were still chasing Hafizullah Amin through the hallways of his Kabul palace, Soviet tanks had barely reached their first staging areas, and Brzezinski had already described a CIA-led American campaign in Afghanistan whose broad outlines would stand for more than a decade to come.'⁴⁴⁶ Indeed, not only was it Brzezinski's strategy which was pursued throughout the Reagan administration, but according to Tom Hanahoe Brzezinski himself was 'the person who had precipitated the 1979 Soviet invasion and ensuing war in Afghanistan.'⁴⁴⁷ Thus it has been conclusively proven that Brzezinski instigated the Soviet-Afghan War which was the military defeat that brought down the Soviet Union. He is thus to be credited with a primary role in ending the Cold War, which is a title he has not yet been given and which this thesis seeks to accredit him with.

When Brzezinski visited the Mujahedin in Pakistan he told them 'God is on your side' thus invoking their common religiosity as an element of their solidarity and shared opposition to the Soviet Union. Diane Kirby wrote about how this tactic was useful for uniting the Christian world with that of the Muslim one in their common struggle against atheistic communism. She wrote: 'Western propaganda in the region used Soviet atheism and repression of religion to suggest that the Christian West and the Muslim East confronted a common global foe opposed to religious faith.'⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁵ Memorandum for the President from Zbigniew Brzezinski, 'Reflections on Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan,' December 26, 1979, Brzezinski Donated Materials.

⁴⁴⁶ Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars*, p.51

⁴⁴⁷ Hanahoe, *America Rules*, p.124

⁴⁴⁸ Dianne Kirby, 'The Religious Cold War,' in Richard H. Immerman & Petra Goedde, *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, p. 551

What began as a Soviet attempt to prop up a communist regime soon descended into a protracted guerrilla war which ultimately cost the lives of over one million Afghans and approximately thirty thousand Soviet troops.⁴⁴⁹ Brzezinski believed strongly that punitive measures should be taken against the Soviets in response to their invasion of Afghanistan. He was supported in this regard by his subordinates in the National Security Council, who also believed maximum pressure ought to be brought to bear on the Soviets in consequence for their actions. In a memorandum for Zbigniew Brzezinski and David Aaron from Robert Blackwill on December 28, 1979 it was stated: 'We believe that it is essential that we make this action as politically costly as possible to the Soviet Union and to that end will be approaching a number of governments, particularly the non-aligned and the Muslim countries to speak out.'⁴⁵⁰ Furthermore, in a memorandum for Zbigniew Brzezinski from Stephen Larrabee entitled 'Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan', dated December 31, 1979, Brzezinski's approach to the situation was given additional support. It was stated:

If the Soviets are successful, Pakistani security and the balance of power in Northeast Asia will be seriously affected.....The Soviet intervention requires a firm, measured and forceful response on the part of the Administration, particularly the President. The President must take the initiative and show leadership in coordinating a response with our allies and the non-aligned. If he does, he can help himself considerably, both domestically and internationally. If he doesn't, the U.S. will be perceived as sitting idly by as the Soviets marched into a neighbouring country, just as Hitler marched into Austria in 1938. Our prestige – and that of the President – will erode further, particularly in the eyes of those countries most directly affected by Soviet actions, who will draw the conclusion that they have no choice but to accommodate themselves to Soviet power.....The Soviets cannot have détente and military intervention in foreign lands at the same time.⁴⁵¹

Several other international developments had also prompted the Soviets to intervene. The stalling of ratification of the SALT II negotiations, Carter's decision in December

⁴⁴⁹ Milton Bearden, 'Afghanistan, Graveyard of Empires', *Foreign Affairs*, 80, no. 6 (2001): p.20

⁴⁵⁰ Memorandum for Zbigniew Brzezinski and David Aaron from Robert Blackwill, 'The President's December 28 Telephone Calls to European Leaders,' December 28, 1979, Brzezinski Donated Materials.

⁴⁵¹ Memorandum for Zbigniew Brzezinski from Stephen Larrabee, 'Soviet Intervention in Afganistan', December 31, 1979, National Security Affairs, Brzezinski Material.

1979 to go ahead with the deployment of Pershing II missiles in Europe and Brzezinski's policies to implement punitive measures against the Soviets for their aggressive behaviour abroad - had all alarmed leaders in the Kremlin and helped to bring hardliners to the fore. The Soviets became convinced that the United States was unwilling to settle for strategic and military parity with the USSR, as it had ostensibly promised during the period of détente. As Minton Goldman remarked, the Soviets:

suspected, as the 1970's were drawing to a close, that the United States was bent on re-establishing its military superiority vis-à-vis the USSR. What other reason could there be, from the Kremlin's vantage point, for the Carter Administration's decisions to construct the new MX missile system and to increase defence spending by five percent for each of the next four years.⁴⁵²

Following the assassination of Afghan president Taraki and his replacement by Hafizullah Amin, whom the Soviets suspected of having ties to the CIA, Soviet military intervention was imminent. The Kremlin worried that Amin would switch allegiance to the American side, as President Sadat had previously done in Egypt. This would bring Americans ever closer to the politically sensitive borders of Soviet Central Asia. However, apart from the geo-strategic importance of Afghanistan to an occupying power, the United States also worried about the security of vital resources, especially oil. As President Carter said in his address to the nation on 4th January, 1980: 'A Soviet-occupied Afghanistan threatens both Iran and Pakistan and is a steppingstone to possible control over much of the world's oil supplies.'⁴⁵³

The importance of Afghanistan as a bridgehead for further expansion toward the oil-rich regions of the Persian Gulf was understood by the United States, and helps explain why President Carter reacted quickly and decisively to the invasion by giving support to the Mujahedeen, imposing trade embargoes upon the USSR, curtailing its fishing privileges in American waters, and boycotting the Moscow 1980 Olympics. Brzezinski was in agreement with these punitive measures taken against the Soviets and believed

⁴⁵² Minton F. Goldman, 'Soviet Military Intervention in Afghanistan: Roots & Causes', *Polity*, 16, no. 3 (1984): p.398

⁴⁵³ Jimmy Carter, *Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan Address to the Nation*. January 4, 1980. Quoted in Edward H. Judge & John W. Langdon, *The Cold War: A History through Documents*, p.200

that the bilateral relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union must necessarily suffer as a result of Soviet actions in Afghanistan.⁴⁵⁴

Brzezinski feared that if the United States did not exude strength and determination in reaction to Soviet aggression other countries would be faced with the grim prospect of having to submit to Soviet influence. Brzezinski believed that by the United States showing resolution in opposing Soviet designs for regional hegemony the countries of the Middle East would be reassured that their independence would be safeguarded. In a memorandum for the President entitled 'Possible Steps in Reaction to Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan,' dating from 2 January 1980, Brzezinski stated:

As you know, I believe that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan requires a firm and tangible response on our part, including our bilateral relationship with Moscow, and that we must show forceful leadership with our allies and other countries if we are to bring them to agree to punish this Soviet aggression. If the U.S. is perceived as passive in the face of this blatant transgression of civilized norms, our international credibility and prestige will be seriously eroded, particularly in the eyes of those countries most vulnerable to Soviet intervention, either directly or indirectly. Without firm U.S. action, some of these countries may draw the conclusion that they have no choice over the long run except to accommodate themselves to Soviet power.⁴⁵⁵

The Soviet Union, in deciding to send troops into Afghanistan, was mobilizing troops beyond the borders of the Soviet Union for the first time since the end of the Second World War. Brzezinski recalled then how the U.S. failed to act decisively in response to the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, when the Soviet Union was virtually given a free hand to forcibly subjugate those countries to control from the Kremlin. He stated: 'In effect, because we did not overreact to their previous acts of assertiveness, they have discounted the likelihood of a genuinely punitive reaction on our part to this extraordinary application of Soviet military power.' Brzezinski was adamant that the Soviet Union not get off lightly for its invasion of Afghanistan and pressured President Carter into spearheading a

⁴⁵⁴ Memorandum for the President from Zbigniew Brzezinski, 'Our Response to Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan,' 29 December, 1979, Brzezinski Donated Materials.

⁴⁵⁵ Memorandum for the President from Zbigniew Brzezinski, 'Possible Steps in Reaction to Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan,' 2 January, 1980, Brzezinski Donated Materials.

regional coalition willing to oppose it and thus protect U.S. economic interests in the Middle East.⁴⁵⁶

Brzezinski asserted that President Carter must correspond with the other countries in the region to ensure their compliance and possible assistance in opposing Soviet regional hegemony. He stated: 'Finally, we need to do something to reassure the Egyptians, the Saudis, and others on the Arabian peninsula that the U.S. is prepared to assert its power, and that requires a visible military presence in the area now. You might consider consulting with Sadat about military deployment to an Egyptian base of a U.S. brigade for joint manoeuvres. This would be an impressive demonstration of U.S. determination to contest, if necessary, Soviet military pre-eminence in the region.' Brzezinski then reminded the President that the opportunity thus afforded in taking a firm stand against the Soviets was reminiscent of the Truman doctrine whereby the United States committed itself to opposing subversive Soviet influence around the world by protecting vulnerable governments from armed insurrection.⁴⁵⁷

On February 6, 1980, in a memorandum for the President, Brzezinski stated the following:

Since the Pakistanis have basically decided to stand up to the Soviets, we need to increase our military assistance. In addition to whatever we can raise from others (and the Saudis promised to make a substantial contribution), we may eventually have to go beyond the \$200 million if we want them to be effective in responding to a low-level threat. Their military position is really deplorable: poor equipment, no infrastructure, little effective communications.

Furthermore, Brzezinski's role in establishing the RDF and an effective US military presence in the Middle East is attested to in the following statement from the same memorandum:

As soon as practicable and welcomed by host Middle Eastern countries, some amphibious marine landings and a joint exercise with a U.S. airborne brigade

⁴⁵⁶ Memorandum for the President from Zbigniew Brzezinski, 'Strategic Reaction to the Afghanistan Problem,' January 3, 1980, Brzezinski Donated Materials.

⁴⁵⁷ Memorandum for the President from Zbigniew Brzezinski, 'Strategic Reaction to the Afghanistan Problem,' January 3, 1980, Brzezinski Donated Materials.

would provide a credible and impressive display of our ability – and therefore will – to project effective American power into the region.⁴⁵⁸

In a letter written to Secretary of State Cyrus Vance from Soviet Minister for Foreign Affairs Andrei Gromyko, the Soviet case for invading Afghanistan was explicitly made. In it Gromyko defended the Soviet action as necessary to prop up a legitimate communist government facing an externally supported insurrection. Firstly, Gromyko stated that the worsening of US-USSR relations did not begin with the invasion of Afghanistan, but rather much earlier. The deployment of the MX mobile ICBM system in the United States after SALT II had been concluded led to an increase in tensions, according to Gromyko. Also, The Rapid Deployment Force was seen by Gromyko as an aggressive act. He stated: ‘There is the long-range program of permanent defense spending increases and arms build-up imposed by the U.S. on its NATO allies.’ He then added: ‘Finally, there is the decision to deploy new U.S. missiles on the soil of Western Europe, which creates a serious threat to the security of the USSR and its allies.’ Gromyko complained that the United States was embarking on an arms build-up while stalling ratification of the SALT II Treaty. He stated furthermore: ‘Try to see all this through our eyes. Can these facts be seen in any way other than as a departure by the U.S. from the principle of equality and equal security which was reconfirmed in Vienna, as evidence of a policy line now pursued by the U.S. to break out of the existing military and strategic parity between the USSR and the U.S., to rush ahead in an effort to gain military superiority for itself?’ Gromyko believed the United States was bent upon achieving strategic superiority and that the invasion of Afghanistan is being used as a pretext for an increase in US defence spending and nuclear arms production and deployment of nuclear weapons inside Western Europe. Gromyko stated: ‘No references to events in Afghanistan can conceal this turn in US policy – a turn from détente to a new aggravation of international tensions, to a new round of the arms race.’

Gromyko believed that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was a legitimate response to a government in need of assistance. He stated: ‘Facts do not cease to be facts because the US side does not want to admit that acts of aggression against Afghanistan have been and continue to be committed from the territory of Pakistan. Also indisputable is the fact that

⁴⁵⁸ Memorandum for the President from Zbigniew Brzezinski, ‘Summary Report and Recommendations Pakistan/Saudi Arabia’, February 6, 1980, Brzezinski Donated Material.

in aiding Afghanistan to repel external aggression, the USSR has acted in full accordance with the UN Charter and the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between the USSR and the DRA.’ Concerning the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, Gromyko observed: ‘if the US really wanted this to occur sooner, it could, of course, take measures to stop the aggression against Afghanistan. So far, the practical actions of the United States go exactly in the opposite direction: everything is being done to expand armed incursions into the territory of Afghanistan.’

Gromyko also believed that the U.S. was intent upon installing a government in Kabul that would be hostile to the Soviet Union, despite its official rhetoric to the contrary. He wrote: ‘You say in your letter that the U.S. has no interest in seeing a government in Kabul hostile to the Soviet Union. In fact, however, the United States is exerting every effort toward uniting counterrevolutionary Afghan groups under foreign auspices and even toward the virtual establishment of an illegal Afghan “government in exile” in the territory of Pakistan.’ It is also interesting to note that Gromyko claimed that the USSR has no intention to dominate the countries of the Middle East. He made the point: ‘We have no “designs” whatsoever upon Iran or any other countries of this region.’ Gromyko considered the United States to be rather arrogant in asserting that events in Afghanistan are occurring within a region that is to be considered as part of its ‘vital interests’. He stated: ‘It is clear that an approach whereby the U.S. arbitrarily declares regions of the world thousands of kilometres away from it to be a sphere of its “vital interests” and reduces everything only to securing its own narrow egoistic interests without wishing to take account of the legitimate interests of others, cannot lead to anything good.’ Gromyko does not wish to see the Cold War escalate and wants the United States to return to a policy of strategic parity between the two countries. He stated: ‘We would be prepared, if the United States is also willing, to seek opportunities to return to the path of cooperation between our two countries and with other states for the sake of improving the international situation, strengthening peace and universal security.’

This was obviously not to be as Brzezinski and other hardliners within the administration were bent upon exploiting the situation in Afghanistan, embarking on an arms build-up and an increase in defence spending, along with a general thrust towards decisively winning the Cold War. Finally, Gromyko reaffirms that the Soviet Union desired to proceed along the path of Détente and peaceful coexistence. He stated: ‘If, as your letter says, Soviet-US relations are now at a “critical juncture,” then the choice of which way to proceed is up to the US. Our choice is clear. We would like to hope that the

US will also make the only sensible choice – in favour of détente and peaceful coexistence.’⁴⁵⁹

Those in favour of pursuing a confrontational policy with the Soviet Union, involving giving massive sums of military aid to the Afghan Mujahedeen, as opposed to those who would have preferred to remain uninvolved in the conflict, gained the upper hand in U.S. policymaking following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Brzezinski argued that President Carter must act immediately and used his influence as National Security Adviser to ensure that he responded firmly and vigilantly to what was perceived as a major threat to U.S. interests in the region. In a memorandum for the President dated January 9, 1980, Brzezinski gauged the significance of the Soviet invasion in a broad geopolitical context. He stated: ‘You have stressed – rightly so – that the Soviet action has created consequences which cannot be dealt with in only a few weeks or with a series of short-term measures. The Soviet action poses a test involving ultimately the balance of power between East and West. Our response will determine how several key states will adjust their foreign policy and particularly whether they will accommodate themselves to the projection of Soviet military power.’

Brzezinski was one of the main US officials responsible for the creation of the Rapid Deployment Force and encouraged the President to formulate a ‘Carter Doctrine’. He stated: ‘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”.’ Brzezinski urged the President to act immediately, fearing the grave consequences upon U.S. security and economic interests should the president fail to do so. He stated:

We will never know whether any of this could have been averted, but we do know one thing: if we do not respond in a timely fashion, the consequences of an inadequate response will be even more horrendous because our vital interests in the Middle East will soon be directly affected.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁹ Letter from Gromyko to the Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, February 17, 1980, Brzezinski Donated Materials.

⁴⁶⁰ Memorandum for the President from Zbigniew Brzezinski, ‘A Long-Term Strategy for Coping with the Consequences of the Soviet Action in Afghanistan’, January 9, 1980, Brzezinski Donated Materials.

A day after this memorandum was received by President Carter, on January 10, 1980, the President gave a speech denouncing Soviet involvement in Afghanistan and establishing beyond any reasonable doubt that the United States would meet this act of aggression vigilantly. He stated: 'A brutal act of Soviet aggression against Afghanistan, and continuing Soviet efforts to hammer a small but sovereign country into the new shape of a captive state, has called forth from America a firm response.'

That the United States would meet this act of aggression with a proportionate response was also stated by the President: 'In Southwest Asia, and in other threatened areas of the world, we will stand by our commitments and by our friends. We will provide levels of assistance equivalent to the threats they face.' President Carter also claimed that the US was not responsible for an escalation in tensions between the two powers, particularly in the sphere of nuclear weapons (this in spite of Soviet claims to the contrary) when he stated that: 'We will maintain our policy of refusing to be the first to introduce new levels of sophisticated weapons or to fuel unnecessary arms races.'⁴⁶¹

In another speech, made the following day, 11 January, 1980 Carter made the point that the increase in defence spending by 5% in real terms was done in order 'to begin compensating for more than a decade's steady growth in Soviet military spending in both strategic and conventional forces.' The President also referred to the fact that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan would potentially put in jeopardy Western access to Middle Eastern oil. He stated: 'Whatever its (the Soviet Union's) motives for invading Afghanistan, it is now consolidating a strategic position that is gravely threatening to the security of Middle East oil.'⁴⁶²

On February 12, 1980, in a memorandum from Brzezinski for the Secretaries of State, Treasury, Commerce, the Director of Central Intelligence and the Director of the International Communication Agency, entitled 'The US Response to Afghanistan' Brzezinski laid out the official position to be taken by the Administration:

The President has asked that officials be reminded that the State of the Union speech contained our basic assessment of Soviet motives and actions in Afghanistan as well as a description of how we intend to meet this Soviet threat in an area of vital interest to us. He thinks it is particularly important in this

⁴⁶¹ Speech from Carter, 10 January, 1980, Brzezinski Donated Material.

⁴⁶² Speech from Carter, 11 January, 1980, Brzezinski Donated Material.

context for U.S. officials dealing with this and ancillary problems to be supportive on three points: First, that the Soviet action has broad strategic significance and that it challenges us in an area of vital interest to us. Second, that it takes place against the backdrop of the steady growth and increased projection of Soviet military power beyond their own borders. Third, that there will be no quick return to “business as usual” for the foreseeable future and that our response will remain firm, measured, and for the long haul.⁴⁶³

According to Fred Halliday, the anti-Soviet stance Carter took during the second half of his term ushered in the ‘second Cold War,’⁴⁶⁴ or the period in which the military contest of the Cold War would be revived. The Iranian revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Halliday wrote, ‘more than any other events of this wave of third world defiance, were to become the supposed reasons for justifying a new assertion of US power in the third world.’⁴⁶⁵

The United States, departing from détente, became fully committed to the cause of the Afghan resistance in the hope of draining the Soviet army’s resources.⁴⁶⁶ Milton Bearden, who was the director of the CIA’s operation to arm the Mujahedeen, stated that ‘the agency would deliver several hundred thousand tons of weapons and ordnance to Pakistan for distribution to the Afghan fighters.’⁴⁶⁷ Weapons manufactured within the Soviet bloc were also acquired and during the course of the conflict the United States supplied over three billion dollars in funding to the Mujahedeen; a covert operation of a size that was unprecedented in the history of the CIA.

The expeditionary force initially sent by the Soviet Union was soon reinforced by more than one hundred and twenty thousand troops. The fighting sharply intensified until the turning point of the war came about in 1986, when the U.S. decided to supply the Mujahedeen with Stinger anti-aircraft missiles. Only shortly before this decision was

⁴⁶³ Memorandum from Zbigniew Brzezinski for the Secretaries of State, Treasury, Defence, Commerce, the Director of Central Intelligence and the Director of the International Communication Agency, ‘The U.S. Response to Afghanistan’, February 12, 1980, National Security Affairs, Brzezinski Material

⁴⁶⁴ Fred Halliday, *The Making of the Second Cold War*, p.224 ‘If a date for the onset of Cold War II has to be set, it is 1979.’

⁴⁶⁵ Fred Halliday, *The Making of the Second Cold War*, p.91

⁴⁶⁶ Warren I. Cohen, *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relation*, p.214 ‘the Soviets gave Carter an opportunity to act assertively, to assume the mantle of greatness Brzezinski held out for him, at the cost of détente.’

⁴⁶⁷ Milton Bearden, ‘Afghanistan, Graveyard of Empires,’ p.20

made, Mikhail Gorbachev had described the conflict as ‘a bleeding wound’.⁴⁶⁸ From this time onward, the Soviets lost an average of one or two aircraft per day.⁴⁶⁹ Although the United States expressed a desire to see the Soviets negotiate terms for withdrawal, the Reagan Administration annually increased funds as well as weapons supplies to the Mujahedeen. The United Nations representative, Diego Cordovez, who was designated the task of trying to broker a peace settlement, tellingly commented that ‘both the US and Pakistan took the line of deception on Afghanistan with a public posture of negotiating a settlement while privately agreeing that military escalation was the best course.’⁴⁷⁰

The war was cumulatively a huge expense for the Soviet Union, particularly at a time when movements for political reform were gathering momentum in Eastern Europe and when Mikhail Gorbachev’s efforts to restructure and open-up the Soviet Union were running contrary to Russian interests by encouraging dissidents to further push for national independence. The Soviet-Afghan war is not often cited as a major factor in causing the collapse of the Soviet Union. Yet, Andrew Hartman claimed that ‘many in the USA credit the eventual fall of the Soviet Union to the covert war in Afghanistan.’⁴⁷¹ Indeed, as early as 1980, Stansfield Turner, then Director of Operations at the CIA, observed ‘how assertive the Soviets will be in the future will very likely depend upon how ‘successful’ the Soviet leadership views their intervention in Afghanistan to have been.’ Robert Gates, on this prediction commented ‘Turner had it exactly right.’⁴⁷²

Several other considerations should also be taken into account to explain why the war in Afghanistan helped to bring down the Soviet Union. Soviet forces were confronting a well-armed resistance that was supported by over thirty-five thousand foreign troops recruited from across the Muslim world. Within the Soviet Army there was also rampant corruption and a staggeringly high rate of desertion. As news of the growing stalemate began to reach the populations within the Soviet bloc, the military establishment came under heavy criticism. This played into the hands of those who advocated *perestroika* and *glasnost*; the war being cited as a striking example of unwarranted Soviet control over foreign countries. Even amongst the leadership of the Soviet military some began to question the capacity of the Red Army to suppress movements for independence. As Rafael Reuveny and Aseem Pakash have stated, the war caused Soviet military

⁴⁶⁸ Milton Bearden, ‘Afghanistan, Graveyard of Empires,’ p.20

⁴⁶⁹ Milton Bearden, ‘Afghanistan, Graveyard of Empires,’ p.21

⁴⁷⁰ Diego Cordovez, as quoted in Andrew Hartman, ‘The red template: US policy in Soviet-occupied Afghanistan,’ p.476

⁴⁷¹ Andrew Hartman, ‘The red template: US policy in Soviet-occupied Afghanistan,’ p.482

⁴⁷² Robert M. Gates, *From the Shadows*, p.148

commanders to doubt the ‘efficacy of using force to keep non-Soviet nationalities within the Union.’⁴⁷³

The eventual success of the Mujahedeen in driving the Soviets from Afghanistan would reverberate throughout the Soviet bloc, conveying to dissident groups the message that the Soviet army was not invincible. Many believed by the end of the war the Soviet Union was in a state of ‘imperial overstretch’ and they were therefore encouraged to exploit this situation and ‘push for independence with little fear of a military backlash.’⁴⁷⁴ Brzezinski’s policy to arm and train the Mujahedeen could arguably be seen as one part of a larger endeavour to propagate Islamic fundamentalism in the Soviet Union’s soft underbelly, Central Asia, and in doing so incite revolution against the communist governments installed in the region. Peter Kuznick is certainly of this view, writing that ‘Brzezinski understood the Soviets’ fear that the Afghan insurgency would spark an uprising by the 40 million Muslims in Soviet Central Asia.’⁴⁷⁵ Popular movements for national independence and secession from the Soviet Union seemed no longer impeded by the traditional fear of a Soviet military intervention. Unlike events in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, the Soviet-Afghan war demonstrated that such courses of action could not afford to be repeated. The central role of the Soviet military in safeguarding the borders of the Communist bloc had been severely undermined. As Reuveny and Prakash have pointed out ‘since the Soviet Army was the glue that held the diverse Soviet Republics together, its defeat in Afghanistan had profound implications for the survivability of the Soviet Union.’⁴⁷⁶

The fact that the Kremlin leadership had tried to downplay the significance of the troubles in Afghanistan meant that attacks from non-Russian Soviet soldiers would become more vociferous. The Central Asian troops protested being forced into combat against their ethnic kin in Afghanistan. When Moscow would not acknowledge their dissent, more and more began to desert the army and offer their support to the Mujahedeen. The reports of brutality against innocent Afghan civilians spread throughout the Communist bloc and the non-Russian Soviet nationalities increasingly galvanised around the issue of the Soviet-Afghan war. In 1989 many refused to join the Soviet army

⁴⁷³ Rafael Reuveny, & Aseem Prakash, ‘The Afghanistan war and the breakdown of the Soviet Union,’ *Review of International Studies*, 25, no. 4 (1999): p.694

⁴⁷⁴ Rafael Reuveny, & Aseem Prakash, ‘The Afghanistan war and the breakdown of the Soviet Union,’ p.694

⁴⁷⁵ Stone & Kuznick, *The Untold History of the United States*, p. 413

⁴⁷⁶ Rafael Reuveny, & Aseem Prakash, ‘The Afghanistan war and the breakdown of the Soviet Union,’ p.698

during call-ups in Lithuania, Georgia and Latvia and instead openly protested with anti-war banners denouncing Soviet involvement in Afghanistan.⁴⁷⁷ In Armenia, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan anti-war riots broke out, signalling to the Russian leadership that condemnation of the war was so pervasive throughout the Union that it would be impossible to use military force to subdue both the European and Central Asian nationalities along Russia's vast borders. The media also played an important role in disseminating the news of atrocities committed against Afghan civilians.

The eminent political scientist Charles Tilly, while acknowledging the many factors that led to the breakup of the Soviet Union, nonetheless considered the war in Afghanistan as reminiscent of the traditional military defeats that precede the collapse of an empire. He stated that: 'the costly stalemate in Afghanistan, itself a product of a hugely expensive Cold War with the United States, provided the *closest equivalent* to those earlier empire-ending wars.'⁴⁷⁸ The war has been cited by historian Vladislav M. Zubok as an example of an empire over-extending itself. He wrote: 'In retrospect, the invasion of Afghanistan, despite its initial military success, presents itself as one of the first signs of Soviet imperial overstretch.'⁴⁷⁹

According to Tom Hanahoe, Brzezinski himself appeared to have believed that the Soviet-Afghan War was responsible for the collapse of the Soviet Union. The effect of drawing the Russians into the "Afghan trap," he wrote, was 'giving the Soviet Union its own ten-year Vietnam-type war that ultimately, he (Brzezinski) claimed, resulted in the breaking up of the Soviet empire.'⁴⁸⁰ The Soviet economy, unable to endure a renewed arms race, suffered further as the war in Afghanistan dragged on for nearly a decade. The military parity between Moscow and Washington achieved during the early 1970s could not be maintained throughout the 1980s as the Soviet economy remained far behind that of the United States. Furthermore, the conflict in Afghanistan helped to dissipate the idea that the Soviet bloc was bound to eventually triumph over the United States and its allies.

The decline of Soviet influence in Afghanistan following the war coincided with the rise of American military hegemony in the region. The United States became committed to repelling Soviet forces from Afghanistan, but it also sought for itself a 'decisive

⁴⁷⁷ Rafael Reuveny, & Aseem Prakash, 'The Afghanistan war and the breakdown of the Soviet Union,' p.699

⁴⁷⁸ Charles Tilly, *European Revolutions, 1492-1992* (Oxford, 1993), p.231

⁴⁷⁹ Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p. 228

⁴⁸⁰ Hanahoe, *America Rules*, p.124

arbitration role' in Middle Eastern affairs.⁴⁸¹ The Gulf War which followed the withdrawal of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan, as well as the consolidation of ties with Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and with several of the leading figures of the Afghan Mujahedeen, were in various ways symptomatic of a broader geopolitical strategy to protect vital security and economic interests on the 'third strategic front'.

However, the war in Afghanistan, although celebrated by some for the damage it caused to Soviet forces, was not without negative repercussions for the United States. Afghanistan descended into civil war after Soviet troops pulled out in 1989. Islamic extremists who had cooperated with the CIA in fighting the Soviet Union were still well armed and began to impose their rule upon the rest of the Afghan population. Out of this period of turmoil, often simply referred to as 'anarchy', emerged the Taliban, whose extremist and corrupted brand of Islam, that is closely related to Saudi Wahhabism, now endangered the traditions and livelihood of the already war-torn Afghan population.

The CIA, in giving billions of dollars to the Mujahedeen 'freedom fighters' perhaps failed to anticipate that when their role as cannon fodder expired they would before long turn hostile to the United States. The American success in humiliating the Soviet armed forces had come at the cost of sponsoring Muslim extremists - the forerunners to Al Qaeda. Brzezinski has been termed the "Godfather" of Al Qaeda as it was his decision to arm and train the Mujahedeen, out of which Al Qaeda would subsequently emerge. Shlomo Avineri has pointed out that 'one cannot escape the conclusion that by encouraging the Islamist motivation of militarily opposing the Soviets... it (the United States) greatly helped turn anti-Western fundamentalist Islam from an ideology into an armed force.' Furthermore, Andrew Hartman observed that the United States'

decision to finance and arm the most fundamental and dangerous Muslims that could be rounded up – is a decision that continues to shake the world. The possibilities of the resulting 'blowback' – in the form of well documented terror and the not so well known heroin trade – were ignored in the drive to support those who would struggle against Soviet-dominated communism.⁴⁸²

⁴⁸¹ Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard*, p.98 "The most immediate task is to make certain that no state or combination of states gains the capacity to expel the United States from Eurasia or even to diminish significantly its decisive arbitration role."

⁴⁸² Andrew Hartman, 'The red template': US policy in Soviet-occupied Afghanistan, p.467

The war in Afghanistan therefore served the geopolitical purpose of countering Soviet southward expansion but, in hindsight, had seriously detrimental consequences to US national security. However, from the perspective of Zbigniew Brzezinski, it was a price worth paying in order to bring about the collapse of the Soviet Union. When asked by a French reporter in the aforementioned interview, if he regretted having given support to Islamic fundamentalists, Brzezinski's reply was: 'what is most important to the history of the world, the Taliban or the collapse of the Soviet empire? Some stirred-up Muslims or the liberation of Central Europe and the end of the Cold War?'⁴⁸³ Brzezinski's somewhat dismissive attitude towards "stirred-up Muslims" seems to indicate a belief that 'the end justifies the means,' that is, in spite of the harmful repercussions that the arming of the Mujahedeen would later have for American national security; it was a decision worth taking in order to achieve the overarching goal of liberating Eastern Europe from Soviet rule. Peter Kuznick pointed out that: 'Brzezinski saw more opportunity than danger in the growing Islamic fundamentalism.'⁴⁸⁴

The role of the CIA in inciting a Soviet intervention may seem ambiguous, unless one is to believe Brzezinski's opinion as expressed in the interview with *Le Nouvel Observateur*. Whilst the Soviets claim to have been restoring to power a legitimate Communist government after its leader was murdered, the United States asserted that Soviet expansionism was the real motive for invading. What might have been a relatively brief intervention became, owing to substantial commitments from the United States, China, Egypt, Britain, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, a drawn out war which wreaked enormous damage upon the Soviet armed forces and discredited its leadership. In this regard, the Soviets experienced their 'Vietnam war'.

Though the war itself was not primarily responsible for the collapse of the Soviet Union, it was still a considerable factor, despite the scant attention the war has received from many historians.⁴⁸⁵ The decline of Soviet influence in Afghanistan following the war served the interests of American foreign policy by weakening what was then the arch-nemesis of the United States and its allies. However, the 'blowbacks' of this military success for America and its allies came in the form of Islamic extremists who were both well armed and increasingly hostile to the Western

⁴⁸³ Jauvert, *Le Nouvel Observateur*

⁴⁸⁴ Stone & Kuznick, *The Untold History of the United States*, p.413

⁴⁸⁵ Rafael Reuveny, & Aseem Prakash, 'The Afghanistan war and the breakdown of the Soviet Union,' p.698 'Surprisingly, the extant explanations on the Soviet breakdown underemphasise the impact of the Afghanistan war.'

world. Brzezinski turned the political phenomenon of Islamic fundamentalism into an armed force. As Dianne Kirby has written: 'Indeed, the support of America and its allies in the region, most notably, Saudi Arabia, helped create a situation in which otherwise unpopular and unrepresentative versions of Islam were able over time, to secure a power and influence they would have been otherwise unlikely to attain.'⁴⁸⁶ Islam was thus turned into a "fifth column" inside the Soviet Union, thanks to the policies implemented by Brzezinski. Islam was turned into a weapon, one could argue cannon fodder, in the larger military contest against the Soviet Union. Diane Kirby wrote furthermore that:

Right wing Islamism had been an ideological tendency with small and scattered numbers. Out of power, it had neither the aspiration of drawing the strength from popular organization nor the possibility of marshalling strength from any other source. This changed following the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski saw an opportunity to export a composite ideology of nationalism and Islam to the Muslim majority central Asian republics with a view to destroying the Soviet system.⁴⁸⁷

The policy of arming Islamic extremists continues to haunt the U.S. today for, as Shlomo Avineri has observed 'This policy also brought about, among other things, the murky connection between Al Qaeda (and the Taliban) and the Pakistani ISI security service which is still an enormous burden on US policy in the region, and will not easily go away.'⁴⁸⁸ The Soviet-Afghan war can be said to mark the opening of a 'third strategic front', according to Zbigniew Brzezinski, whereby the United States has committed its military forces to a regional security framework, including both the Persian Gulf and Afghanistan. Therefore, as has been argued, the Soviet-Afghan war is central to a period of history in which the rise of American regional hegemony is intimately related to the decline and fall of the Soviet Empire, and Brzezinski's role in orchestrating these inter-related events is quite significant.

⁴⁸⁶ Dianne Kirby, 'The Religious Cold War,' in Richard H. Immerman & Petra Goedde ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, p. 552

⁴⁸⁷ Dianne Kirby, 'The Religious Cold War,' in Richard H. Immerman & Petra Goedde ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, p. 553

⁴⁸⁸ Shlomo Avineri, 'Preface,' in Lubowski, *Zbig*, p.xiv

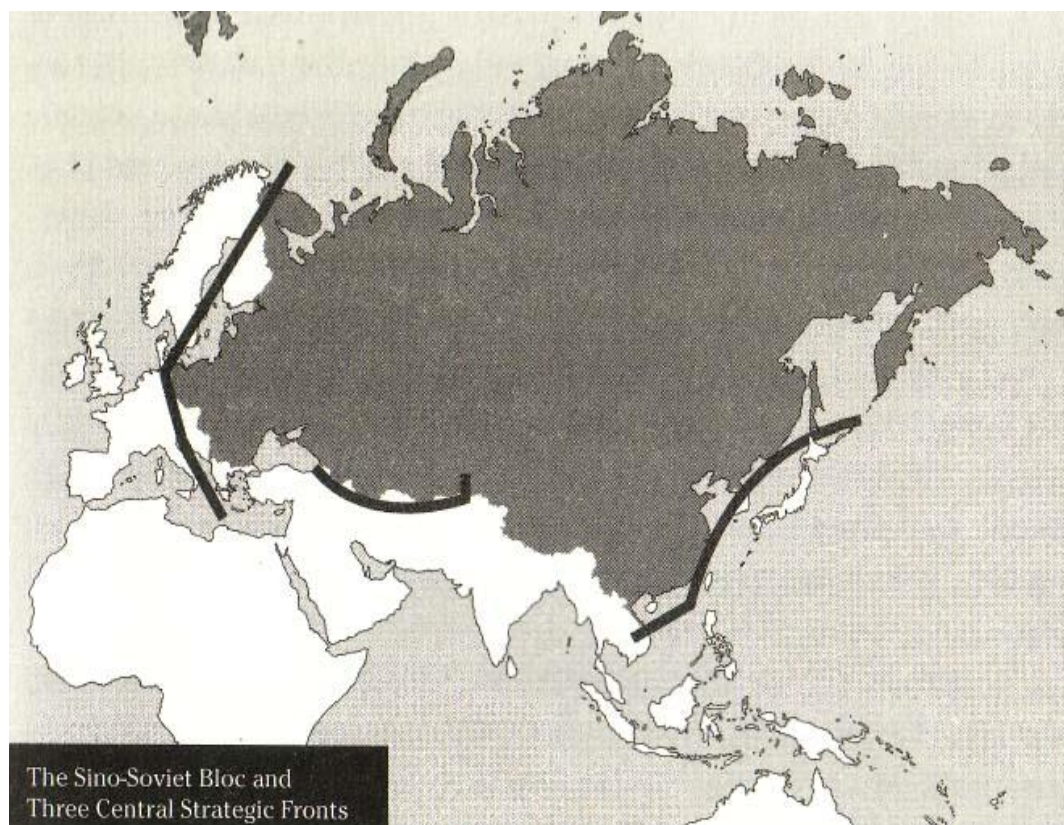


Fig. 10 The Sino-Soviet Bloc and Three Central Strategic Fronts



Fig. 11 Loss of Ideological Control and Imperial Retrenchment

Assessment

Although the Carter Administration has been depicted by some historians and members of the Republican Party as rather weak in the realm of defence, there was actually a steady rise in military expenditure throughout the entire term⁴⁸⁹ and a number of significant developments in US strategic capabilities.⁴⁹⁰ Brzezinski stated in a speech given before the School of International Affairs Alumni Association in Washington, D.C., on September 27, 1979, that: 'For the past decade, there has been a steady decline in the level of the defense budget in real terms. We began to reverse that trend in the first three budgets of the Carter administration, and President Carter is the first president since World War II to succeed in raising defense spending for three straight years in peace time.'⁴⁹¹ Brzezinski was a firm advocate of deploying the new MX missile and believed the United States should not allow the Soviet Union at any cost to gain strategic superiority over the United States, which was something he feared the lenient position of the United States in the SALT II talks might engender, given that the United States was making significant concessions to the Soviets considering the danger posed by their advanced ICBMs.⁴⁹²

The 'Carter doctrine' stipulated that:

Any 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.⁴⁹³

⁴⁸⁹ Halliday, *The Making of the Second Cold War*, p.123 'far from having continued to 'dismantle' US defences as his critics allege, Carter presided over a steady increase in expenditure that covered his whole Administration and not just the period, from 1978 onwards, when he called for a real rise in military outlays.' LaFeber, *The American Age*, p.665 'After cutting \$36 billion in domestic spending, Carter added \$47 billion in new weapons systems. The Pentagon budget jumped from \$170 billion in 1976 to \$197 billion in 1981 (in 1986 dollars). To buck up both the allies and the stumbling U.S. economy, Carter also nearly doubled arms sales between 1977 and 1980 to \$15.3 billion. Historian Gaddis Smith calls Carter's policies in 1979-1980 the "return to militarism."'

⁴⁹⁰ Presidential Review Memorandum 32 (September 1977), Presidential Directive 22 (October 1977), and PD 41 (September 1978) were the first moves undertaken during the Carter Administration to modernise U.S. strategic doctrine prior to PD 59

⁴⁹¹ Zbigniew Brzezinski 'SALT and National Security,' in Marin Strmecki ed., *In Quest of National Security*, p.115

⁴⁹² Andrianopoulos, *Kissinger and Brzezinski*, p.184

⁴⁹³ 'Carter's State of the Union Address,' January 23, 1980. Quoted in Edward H. Judge & John W. Langdon, *The Cold War: A History through Documents*, p.204

It was Brzezinski who insisted that the threat to use force to repel the Soviets be included in the doctrine. Peter Kuznick pointed out that ‘the final sentence, which became enshrined as the Carter Doctrine, was interpreted by the Kremlin as a clear threat of war – even nuclear war. Vance attempted to remove it from the address, striking it from the draft that the State Department submitted to the White House. Brzezinski fought to keep it in, convincing Press Secretary Jody Powell that without it the speech was devoid of content. Powell persuaded Carter that his national security advisor was right.’⁴⁹⁴ Indeed, Carter was won over to the idea of formulating a doctrine in the first place by Brzezinski.

Concerning the Carter doctrine: ‘It was really a Brzezinski doctrine. The national security adviser relentlessly promoted the idea of a regional security framework for the Middle East, which he saw as the centre of a crisis zone in which the Soviets were on the offensive, in military and political terms. Following the State of the Union address, Brzezinski worked tirelessly to turn the document into reality, by multiplying agreements with regional allies (Egypt, Somalia, Kenya, Oman, and so on) for naval or air bases, arms and equipment supply depots, and joint exercises. He was also at the origin of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force, consisting in 100,000 men capable of autonomous deployment on short notice in the Gulf region, to come to the aid of an ally undergoing a subversive attack.’⁴⁹⁵

The establishment of the Rapid Deployment Force as well as naval and air facilities acquired off the Somali coast were pressed upon Carter by many in his administration, including Brzezinski, to enhance U.S. war-fighting capabilities in the Middle East and South West Asia.⁴⁹⁶

Brzezinski has stated on several occasions that Soviet involvement in the Horn of Africa necessitated such a strategic response. Yet, former Professor of International Relations at the London School of Economics, Fred Halliday, contended that the United States was also partly to blame for the escalation of Cold War tensions at the end of the 1970’s. He stated that:

Changes in the third world were ascribed to Soviet ‘expansionism’ to provoke widespread chauvinistic mobilization in the USA. The fact that the USSR was

⁴⁹⁴ Stone & Kuznick, *The Untold History of the United States*, p.414

⁴⁹⁵ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 311

⁴⁹⁶ ‘Interview with Zbigniew Brzezinski,’ *War and Peace in the Nuclear Age*

not responsible for instigating any of these upheavals, and that it was in many cases inactive, was irrelevant in a context where a demonic Soviet threat was imagined by most of Congress and the US press to be stalking the world.⁴⁹⁷

The Ogaden War which took place in 1977-78 was cited by Brzezinski as one of the main reasons for the shortcomings of SALT II and more generally of détente. By coining the phrase ‘SALT lies buried in the sands of the Ogaden’, Brzezinski explained how ‘in my judgment, Soviet behaviour in the Third World, particularly in the African Horn, contributed to the eventual demise of our efforts to obtain a significant and constructive arms control agreement.’⁴⁹⁸ However, Professor Halliday argued that Soviet involvement in Ethiopia did not amount to a contravention of international law. The Russians and the Cubans ‘were acting in quite a legal fashion, as they had been in Angola, by assisting a sovereign state to repel invasion. They also complied with US requests to limit the impact of the war by preventing Ethiopian counter-attacks into Somalia.’⁴⁹⁹ Furthermore, Halliday wrote that *because* President Carter ‘had encouraged the Somalis to believe the West would support them if they seized the Ogaden, part of Ethiopia’s territory which they claimed as theirs’... *therefore*... ‘the war there was something for which Carter himself was partly responsible.’⁵⁰⁰ Peter Kuznick noted the role of Brzezinski in instigating U.S. support for the Somalis and stated that ‘Carter responded mildly at first, sharing Soviet leaders’ sense that détente and arms control were the top priorities. Brzezinski, however, urged the president to stop being “soft” and stand up to the Soviets.’⁵⁰¹

Prior to the Iranian revolution, when it became clear that the Shah’s regime was in danger of being overthrown, Secretary of State Vance as well the U.S. Ambassador to Iran William Sullivan, urged President Carter to establish contacts with the opposition. However, Brzezinski argued that the U.S. should remain steadfast in its support of an old ally and advised the President to encourage the shah to use force to put down the opposition. Not only did Brzezinski encourage Carter to support the

⁴⁹⁷ Halliday, *The Making of the Second Cold War*, p.222

⁴⁹⁸ ‘Interview with Zbigniew Brzezinski,’ *War and Peace in the Nuclear Age*

⁴⁹⁹ Halliday, *The Making of the Second Cold War*, p.222

⁵⁰⁰ Halliday, *The Making of the Second Cold War*, p.222. Stone & Kuznick, *The Untold History of the United States*, p.406. Concerning Soviet intervention in the Ogaden War:

‘Most African nations applauded the Soviet intervention, viewing it as a legitimate response to Somali aggression.’

⁵⁰¹ Stone & Kuznick, *The Untold History of the United States*, p.406

unpopular and oppressive shah, he attempted to have U.S. military forces deployed in Iran should the shah be toppled.⁵⁰²

Brzezinski feared that the fall of the shah could make Iran susceptible to Soviet intervention. In retrospect, it seems that the shah, due to his brutal oppression of all opposition groups within Iran, was doomed to failure as he was widely opposed inside the country and seen as a puppet of the US government. Therefore, Brzezinski's advice to prop up a popularly despised dictator would not seem morally right and would appear to contradict his adherence to promoting human rights around the world. On the other hand, it could perhaps be argued that Brzezinski was advocating this policy because he believed it essential that the United States not only support an ally during a time of crisis but that failure to do so would provide an opening in the geopolitically critical region which the Soviets could then exploit. Indeed, Brzezinski had hoped 'that a military coup would save the day.'⁵⁰³ When it became clear that the shah would have to flee Iran and seek refuge in the United States, Brzezinski was of the belief that the United States should allow him entry because the 'U.S. reputation for strength and loyalty to an ally hung in the balance.'⁵⁰⁴ Following the hostage crisis, Brzezinski again urged Carter to pursue the military option and launch a rescue mission to save the hostages.⁵⁰⁵

Although the rescue mission was a dismal failure, to Brzezinski's credit, attempting to rescue the hostages was without doubt the right thing to do. It was just unfortunate that the mission was unsuccessful, for the sake of freeing the hostages earlier, salvaging America's reputation and of course, boosting Carter's chances of getting re-elected. Once again pursuing the military option, when the Sandinistas took control of Nicaragua in 1978, Brzezinski implored President Carter to put down the rebellion as not to do so would make the U.S. look "incapable of dealing with problems in our own backyard."⁵⁰⁶ In El Salvador when the FMLN insurgents were about to topple a corrupt dictatorship loyal to the United States 'Carter, pressured by Brzezinski, opted to restore military aid to the dictatorship.'⁵⁰⁷ As usual, Brzezinski encouraged Carter to opt for the military solution and take a forcible stand against the Soviets.

⁵⁰² Stone & Kuznick, *The Untold History of the United States*, p.409

⁵⁰³ Hunt, *Crises in U.S. Foreign Policy: An International History Reader*, p. 378

⁵⁰⁴ Hunt, *Crises in U.S. Foreign Policy: An International History Reader*, p. 379

⁵⁰⁵ Hunt, *Crises in U.S. Foreign Policy: An International History Reader*, p. 380

⁵⁰⁶ Quoted in Stone & Kuznick, *The Untold History of the United States*, p.412

⁵⁰⁷ Stone & Kuznick, *The Untold History of the United States*, p.412

In June 1980, Brzezinski was closely involved in devising Presidential Directive 59, which further developed James Schlesinger's selective targeting policy and Harold Brown's *countervailing strategy* designed to pre-empt a nuclear attack with minimal civilian casualties, particularly by focusing on key military targets.⁵⁰⁸ These developments were significant in that they provided the United States with greater strategic versatility in the event of an outbreak in nuclear warfare while (theoretically) minimizing civilian casualties. Brzezinski, along with General William Odom, was particularly influential in devising this new approach, which 'stated that a nuclear war might not be simply a short, spasmodic apocalypse that could best be deterred by a posture based on the doctrine of MAD, but that it might entail engagements at varying levels of intensity and over an extended period of time.'⁵⁰⁹

According to Raymond L. Garthoff, while enhancing American strategic doctrine, PD 59 was also perceived in Moscow as an attempt to gain strategic superiority over Soviet nuclear forces. He stated that, 'while that concept may also be conceived as a deterrent, the Soviet leaders were prone to see it as U.S. pursuit of a war-waging capability to support intimidation or even the initiation of war.'⁵¹⁰ Despite how the Soviets actually felt about it, PD 59 was symptomatic of a more general collapse in the policy of *détente*. Concerning the overall strategic renewal... it was largely 'inspired by Brzezinski.'⁵¹¹

It is also worth noting that at the end of the four-year term Brzezinski and Carter successfully managed to deter the Soviets from intervening in Poland to quell the Solidarity movement. This had important ramifications for the end of the Cold War as it nullified the Brezhnev doctrine by which the USSR felt it had the right to intervene in Soviet countries to put down dissent. Daniel J. Sargent described the significance of this when he stated:

When an East Bloc summit decided to defer military intervention, U.S. officials declared a quiet victory. The "reason for the postponement," Brzezinski explained, "was the effectiveness of the Western counter propaganda campaign." This did not mean that Poland's crisis would be resolved peacefully: having lost control, the Warsaw government would declare martial law one year later,

⁵⁰⁸ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Game Plan* (New York, 1986) p.160

⁵⁰⁹ Brzezinski, *Game Plan*, p.161

⁵¹⁰ Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American Soviet Relations From Nixon to Reagan* (Washington, 1994), p.870

⁵¹¹ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 312

turning its tanks on its own people. By recoiling from invasion, the Soviet leadership nonetheless retreated from the implications of the Brezhnev Doctrine, according to which the Soviet Union reserved the right to intervene with force to reverse “the development of some socialist country toward capitalism.” The costs of further aggravating East-West estrangement, which a Soviet invasion of Poland would have done, looked at the end of the 1970s to outweigh the benefits of maintaining discipline within the bloc.⁵¹²

The United States thus managed to ensure that Soviet countries could from here on out press ahead with their separatist and reformist movements without fear of a Soviet military intervention. This was an important coup in the Cold War as later during the Reagan administration Gorbachev would not act to put down separatist movements but rather allowed them to press ahead at the cost of dismantling the Soviet Union. As Andreas Etges wrote: ‘Gorbachev also pursued a new policy toward the communist allies by renouncing the Brezhnev doctrine, which had been formulated by the Soviet leadership to justify the violent end of the Prague Spring in 1968. Instead of threatening to crush independence movements, the Soviet Union allowed its East European allies to go their own way.’⁵¹³ Brzezinski and Carter’s efforts to inhibit a Soviet intervention in Poland in 1980 ensured that the Soviet Union would no longer intervene to quash separatist movements within the Soviet Union. Brzezinski’s role in orchestrating the events in Poland is not to be underestimated for, as Zubok, pointed out: ‘Zbigniew Brzezinski and Pope John Paul II were named as the most dangerous instigators of Polish events.’⁵¹⁴

Paul Kennedy wrote about how the Carter administration revamped U.S. defences at the end of his term and the impact this had upon the Soviets. He stated:

Moreover, even in the closing years of the Carter administration the United States had resumed a defence build-up which – continued at a massive pace by the succeeding Reagan government – threatened to restore U.S. military superiority in strategic nuclear weaponry, to enhance U.S. maritime supremacy, and to place a heavier emphasis than ever before upon advanced technology. The annoyed Soviet reply that they would not be outspent or outgunned could not

⁵¹² Daniel J. Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, p. 294

⁵¹³ Andreas Etges, ‘Western Europe,’ in Richard H. Immerman & Petra Goedde, *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, p. 170

⁵¹⁴ Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p. 266

disguise the awkward fact that this would place increased pressure upon an economy which had significantly slowed down and was not well positioned to indulge in a high –technology race. By the late 1970s, it was in the embarrassing position of needing to import large amounts of foreign *grain*, not to mention technology. Its satellite empire in Eastern Europe was, apart from the select party cadres, increasingly disaffected; the Polish discontents in particular were a dreadful problem, and yet a repetition of the 1968 Czech invasion seemed to promise little relief. Far to the south, the threat of losing its Afghan buffer state to foreign (probably Chinese) influences provoked the 1979 coup d'état, which not only turned out to be a military quagmire but had a disastrous impact upon the Soviet Union abroad.⁵¹⁵

The Cold War historian Warren Cohen, in his distinguished work *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations*, seemed to offer a fair and balanced report of Brzezinski's aims within the Carter Administration.

To defeat the Soviet Union the United States had to strengthen itself and its allies and maintain relentless pressure on the Soviets, revitalizing NATO, enlisting the Chinese on the side of the United States, weakening Soviet Control over Eastern Europe, promoting dissent within the Soviet empire, and countering Soviet interventions anywhere in the world. [Brzezinski] insisted that the competition between the United States and the Soviet Union was ordained by history and geography, as well as conflicting political cultures. The United States could only play to win.⁵¹⁶

Especially in the latter half of Carter's term Brzezinski came to play a more prominent role on many foreign policy and national security issues.⁵¹⁷ This is partly attributable to the prevailing mood of the American public which favoured a higher level of commitment from Washington to winning the Cold War, sentiments which were usually congruent with the stance Brzezinski was inclined to take vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. John Orman asserts however that Brzezinski's strong and exceptionally

⁵¹⁵ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, p. 531

⁵¹⁶ Warren I. Cohen, *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations*, p.209

⁵¹⁷ Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, p.833 'With the resurgence of Soviet-American tensions late in Carter's term, the national security adviser gained the upper hand.'

influential position at the helm of the Carter administration for four years was partly due to the President's routine of meeting almost every day with his National Security Adviser. Owing to his unrivalled access to the President and seamlessly authoritative views in most areas of foreign policy, John Orman observed that 'Carter's national security advice was dominated by one person, Zbigniew Brzezinski, who probably was the most active national security adviser since Dr. Henry Kissinger.'⁵¹⁸ By the end of the Carter administration, it would be fair to say that Brzezinski had contributed substantially to laying the foundations for a renewed U.S. commitment to combating Soviet forces around the globe.⁵¹⁹ As Patrick Vaughan wrote: 'Brzezinski's appointment as Carter's national security adviser provided a turning point in the Cold War.'⁵²⁰

It seems clear from the evidence thus far presented that Brzezinski was the main man responsible in the Carter administration for the deterioration of U.S.-Soviet relations. The Soviets certainly held Brzezinski responsible for the worsening of relations between the two countries. In an article written in *Pravda*, the official paper of the communist party, the conclusion was drawn that: "The main source of this worsening of the situation is the increasing aggressiveness of Carter administration policies and the increasingly sharp tone of statements by the president himself and his closest colleagues – above all Brzezinski."⁵²¹ Justin Vaisse concurred with this and wrote that: 'In this connection, it is important to mention the challenge brought to one aspect of Brzezinski's personal political scorecard by liberals, contemporaries, and historians alike: the national security adviser was accused of having, at the very least, helped to precipitate a new Cold War through his hard-line toward the USSR.'⁵²² Brzezinski was at the forefront of the anti-Soviet hardliners who sought to reignite the Cold War. As Zubok stated: 'In June 1978, Brezhnev complained at the Politburo that Carter "is not simply falling under the usual influence of the most shameless anti-Soviet types and leaders of the military industrial complex of the USA. He intends to struggle for re-election for the new term as president under the banner of anti-Soviet policy and return to the Cold War."⁵²³

⁵¹⁸ Orman, *Comparing Presidential Behaviour*, p.41

⁵¹⁹ Dunbabin, *The Cold War*, p.331 'By 1980 most of the components were in place for the United States policy of the next few years.'

⁵²⁰ Patrick Vaughan, 'Brzezinski and the Bear,' *Krakow Post*

⁵²¹ *Pravda*, June 17, 1978, Quoted in Lubowski, *Zbig*, p.167

⁵²² Justin Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 343

⁵²³ Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p. 258

The historian Peter Kuznick wrote that Brzezinski had an ultimately detrimental impact upon the Carter presidency: 'Carter's lack of foreign policy experience would come back to haunt him, and his growing reliance on Brzezinski and other hawkish advisors would doom his progressive agenda, leaving the administration's foreign policy awash in a sea of Cold War orthodoxy.'⁵²⁴ Michael H. Hunt was of a similar view when he wrote that 'Carter, instructed by Brzezinski in the complexities of the Russian mind (It "tended to respect the strong and had contempt for the weak") responded by abandoning efforts to get Soviet ratification of the SALT II agreement, increasing his own arms budget, and imposing a grain embargo on the Soviets. So much for détente and arms control.'⁵²⁵

It could indeed be said that, owing largely to Brzezinski's policy recommendations, the United States had revamped its long-term objective to acquire a decisive military and geo-strategic advantage over the Soviet Union. In 1980, President Carter gave an appraisal of his National Security Adviser's immense contribution to American national security and foreign policy, stating:

Zbigniew Brzezinski served his country and the world... an author and architect of world affairs, his strategic vision of America's purpose fused principle with strength... Above all, he helped set our nation irrevocably on a course that honours America's abiding commitments to human rights.⁵²⁶

President Carter had brought the Cold War to the Soviet home-ground and, in doing so, essentially changed the methods through which the superpower conflict would be won. As Lubowski pointed out, Carter 'was the first president of the United States to publicly and consistently question during the Cold War, the legitimacy of the Soviets' rule in their own country.'⁵²⁷ In a speech addressed to the United Nations on March 17th, 1977 Carter stated that 'No member of the United Nations can claim that mistreatment of its citizens is solely its own business.'⁵²⁸ Carter became the first American president to invoke the right of the U.S. to intervene, when believed to be necessary, in the internal affairs of sovereign nations that fail to adhere to specific

⁵²⁴ Stone & Kuznick, *The Untold History of the United States*, p.405

⁵²⁵ Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, p.186

⁵²⁶ Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter. Book 1, 1980-81, p.2923

⁵²⁷ Lubowski, *Zbig*, p.225

⁵²⁸ 'Carter's Address to the United Nations,' March 17, 1977. Quoted in Edward H. Judge & John W. Langdon, *The Cold War: A History through Documents*, p.179

standards of international conduct. The impact of President Carter's human rights policy made the managing of internal affairs increasingly problematic for the Soviets and indeed 1979 can be said to mark the onset of a slow fall for Moscow. As Warren Cohen remarked:

The glorious achievement of parity with the United States, the exhilarating sense that the correlation of forces in the world favoured the Soviet Union, the joy of travelling the road to world leadership, had hardly been savoured before the foundations of the Soviet empire began to give way.⁵²⁹

Historians may argue as to which features of Carter's foreign policy were or were not responsible for an escalation in Cold War tensions. Brzezinski's insistence that arms negotiations must be considered in connection with geopolitical issues can be argued as having served to enhance U.S. national security by making it clear that America would not tolerate on any level Soviet control of regions that were strategically and economically vital, such as the Horn of Africa and the Persian Gulf. On the other hand, the 'linkage' Brzezinski was advocating essentially implied that punitive measures be taken against the Soviets in the arms talks should they fail to change their behaviour abroad and this was seen by some leaders in Europe as being in large measure responsible for the escalation in hostilities. French President Giscard d'Estaing stated that 'the balance of power in Europe is a separate issue' and German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt apparently 'did his best to persuade Carter to dismiss Brzezinski (who was commonly seen as the initiator of the new hardline).'⁵³⁰

The Carter presidency is commonly held to have been a failure while that of Reagan is considered a success. Yet this is not historically justified, as has been shown. Robert Gates wrote that "I believe historians and political observers alike have failed to appreciate the importance of Jimmy Carter's contribution to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War."⁵³¹ Furthermore, he pointed out that, "In fact, Carter prepared the ground for Reagan. He took the first steps to strip away the mask of Soviet ascendancy and exploit the reality of Soviet vulnerability." When Reagan did come into office in 1981, the American military budget began to soar in response to a perceived increase in the Soviet threat, and it became clear the Cold War

⁵²⁹ Cohen, *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations*, p.215

⁵³⁰ Dunbabin, *The Cold War*, p.332

⁵³¹ Robert Gates, quoted in Lubowski, *Zbig*, p.226

struggle would be fought with even greater determination, further building upon the strategies laid down by Carter and in particular, Brzezinski.



Fig. 12 President Reagan's statement on aid to Nicaraguan rebels, February 15, 1985. In the background are former National Security Adviser Brzezinski, former U.N. Ambassador Jean Kirkpatrick, former Defence Secretary James Schlesinger and Vice President George H. W. Bush.

Conclusion

It has thus been proven that the Carter administration helped to end the Cold War. They were responsible for the initiatives which reignited superpower hostilities and began the initial stages of the downfall of the Soviet Union. The cumulative impact of Carter's anti-Soviet policies have been assessed and these previously unrelated facts have been brought to light as a set of policies which did irreparable damage to the Soviet Union and set the stage for the Reagan onslaught. When Carter came into office the U.S. and USSR were on a par geo-strategically. By the time Carter left office, the balance had been tipped in favour of the United States and the Reagan and Bush administrations would capitalise upon this, helping to bring the conflict to a close.

Brzezinski was the President's right-hand man and, as has been discussed, his ideas were implemented over the four years during which he was National Security Adviser. His life had been dedicated to bringing about the collapse of the Soviet Union as he felt it was an inhumane political system which fundamentally threatened the world and he was also committed liberating his native Poland. With utter determination and verve, he carried out this grand objective and is to be considered a key figure in bringing about the downfall of the USSR.

Jimmy Carter achieved considerable breakthroughs on the three strategic fronts: Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. It was in these three arenas that he, under the influence and guidance of Brzezinski, would do serious and irreparable damage to the Soviet Union and bring about a qualitative shift in the balance of power from parity to U.S. predominance. That Jimmy Carter had great success on these three fronts is attested to by Nancy Mitchell, who wrote that: 'during the Carter presidency, the United States normalized diplomatic relations with China, excluded the Soviet Union from the Middle East peace process, and saw a grave challenge to Soviet control over Poland. Yes, there were setbacks in the Third World, but there were huge gains in Asia, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe.'⁵³²

In his writings there are several themes which are important to waging the Cold War. Firstly, there is the inhumane nature of totalitarianism which partly provided him with the impetus and resolve to bring about the system's collapse. There is the

⁵³² Mitchell, 'The Cold War and Jimmy Carter,' in Leffler & Westad, *The Cambridge History of the Cold War Vol. 3*, p. 67

promotion of nationalism as a solution to the spread of the Communist empire and his conviction, as propounded in his MA thesis, that nationalism would be the death knell of the Soviet Union. Brzezinski, along with Carl Friedrich, helped to define and enhance the understanding of totalitarian political systems. In doing so, he laid bare their uglier aspects and by contrast, the inherent superiority of the Western political system. An important theme in his writings is the promotion and strengthening of unity amongst Western states. This was for standing strong against the Soviet Union in the context of the Cold War and for promoting the Western socio-political system as well as Western values worldwide. Brzezinski consistently argued for fortifying and augmenting America's defences and this is something he adhered to upon becoming National Security Adviser. He also sought to transcend the Cold War and usher in the technetronic era and he was a firm proponent of the establishment's envisioned new world order.

His policy of peaceful engagement was uniquely his own and was an adroit and sophisticated way of dismantling the communist bloc given that the military situation had practically reached a stalemate and the threat of nuclear war meant neither side could engage in direct hostilities with the other. Through enticing the Soviet satellites to identify with the West, through economic aid and cultural exchange, Brzezinski felt he could wean away the Eastern European states from Moscow's control.

Brzezinski moved from the academic world to policy-making in the late 1950s and became involved in Kennedy's and then Johnson's administrations, though in a marginal role, serving on the Policy Planning Staff. He became a prolific writer, not just as a Sovietologist but as one who wrote on the major issues of the day, with a focus on those that dealt with the Cold War and international affairs. He wrote many academic articles during these years and in the 1970s following his post as a Columbia professor, he would travel to Japan to write *The Fragile Blossom* and subsequently would also write *Between Two Ages*. These two books would broaden his horizons and gain for him expertise as an international analyst.

In forming the Trilateral Commission, Brzezinski was working specifically with the goal in mind of further enlarging the West and its stewardship of the global commonweal. Brzezinski was very much an elitist, not just because of his background as the son of an Ambassador, but because he mixed with the WASP establishment and the top American academics. He and David Rockefeller sought to establish an organization comprised of the top echelons of the capitalist world that would, in

effect, mould the governmental policies of their respective regions and bring about a more integrated and strengthened West which would spearhead the process of modernization and help develop the less advanced regions of the world. The Trilateral Commission would go on to become eminently successful and would earn serious notoriety owing to its appellation as a “rich man’s club” and its secretive meetings. Brzezinski nonetheless had a clear view in mind in forming the Commission; namely, to coordinate the policies of the three most advanced regions of the world so that they may usher in the technetronic era. Thus, mankind would transcend the industrial epoch and reach the post-industrial era wherein the predominance of the services sector and the use of cutting-edge technology to guide the lives of the masses would distinguish this age from previous ones.

Upon entering office Brzezinski and Carter would play a significant and now more fully appreciated role in ending the Cold War. They helped to expose the vulnerabilities of the Soviet Union and most important of all, exploit its weaknesses in order to gain advantage over them. In addition to this, they were effective in revamping the American military and utilising hard power to roll back the Soviet Union. This was carried out by countering Soviet advancements in the Third World and particularly by funding counter-revolutionary groups opposed to communism.

Concerning the issues dealt with in this thesis, Carter was the first U.S. president to champion human rights and ensure they became an accepted norm to be upheld by governments throughout the world. More specifically, they served their purpose in highlighting the blatant inadequacies of the Soviet socio-political system and its oppression of its own citizens, in particular dissidents. The human rights campaign lent ample support to Soviet citizens and helped to increase the impact of the international human rights movement as well as boost its standing. The human rights campaign of the Carter administration would spur the formation of related movements inside the Soviet bloc and would assist in the internal erosion of communism, thus helping to bring about the collapse of the system. Stuart Eizenstat described the enormous impact the human rights campaign had as follows:

The administration’s public advocacy of human rights also weakened the Soviet empire by attacking its soft underbelly – its domestic repression. No less than Anatoly Dobrynin, the long-time Soviet ambassador to Washington, conceded that Carter’s human rights policies “played a significant role in the... long and

difficult process of liberalisation inside the Soviet Union and the nations of Eastern Europe. This in turn caused the fundamental changes in all these countries and helped end the Cold War.” First enshrined during the Ford administration – even as he soft pedalled them – in the Helsinki Final Act in 1975, human rights have been established as an essential element of American and international diplomacy. Although several later presidents have given less emphasis to human rights, because of Carter they were not free to ignore them totally, without risking public criticism.⁵³³

The human rights campaign, aside from its altruistic motives, was a full-frontal assault on the internal legitimacy of the Soviet Union, undermining the very fabric of Soviet society by highlighting its human rights abuses. Brzezinski and Carter both believed that by supporting human rights activists and dissidents in the Soviet Union serious damage could be carried out to the Soviet leadership. Brezhnev himself was aware of the threat posed by Carter’s human rights campaign and Barbara Keys and Roland Burke highlighted this: ‘By 1978 Brezhnev would lament that human rights constituted the West’s “main line of attack against Socialist countries.”’⁵³⁴ Carter thus began the process of sponsoring human rights for the purpose of inflicting damage on the Soviet Union, as well as for idealistic motives, and this would culminate in the Reagan and Bush years in the system’s overthrow, human rights advocacy and dissident movements being one of the key factors which led to the Soviet Union’s downfall.

In normalising relations with the People’s Republic of China, the United States scored a major coup against the Soviet Union which helped tip the strategic balance in favour of the U.S. and alter the “correlation of forces” in favour of the democratic West. Brzezinski was the main man responsible for this diplomatic and strategic coup, and he consummated the process begun by Nixon and Kissinger in 1972. The Chinese began to assist the United States in its counterrevolutionary activities by financially supporting the Mujahedin and by opposing the North Vietnamese. The United States’ enlistment of the Chinese on the side of the West, most important of all, resulted in a seismic shift which helped to end the period of relative strategic parity and bring about Western domination over the Soviet bloc. Importantly for both countries, it led

⁵³³ Stuart Eizenstat, *Jimmy Carter*, p.9

⁵³⁴ Barbara Keys & Roland Burke, ‘Human Rights,’ in Richard H. Immerman & Petra Goedde ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, p. 495

to diplomatic relations between the two great powers and their concomitant economic accretions which saw them both prosper because of this mutually advantageous bilateral relationship. For smoothing the way to normalization, Brzezinski deserves the credit, and in the context of the Cold War, this was a significant victory for the West and a serious setback for the Soviet Union.

The Soviet-Afghan War is arguably the real key to ending the Cold War and for this Brzezinski is to be applauded. The Soviet Union was bogged down for almost ten years in an intractable conflict which sapped their strength and ultimately cost them victory in not only Afghanistan but in the superpower conflict. Following their defeat in Afghanistan, citizens within the communist bloc refused to enrol in the Soviet military and as it was a defeat for the Soviets, rebellious nations within the bloc felt encouraged to press ahead for independence from Moscow. Brzezinski was the one who decided upon the policy to fund the Mujahedin in 1979 and this policy was carried on by the Reagan administration who increased funding for the Afghan rebels and ultimately saw to it that the Soviets engaged in their last military conflict and that the Soviet Union was buried in the “graveyard of empires” that is Afghanistan. Therefore, it can be said that Brzezinski set the trap for the Soviets which cost them victory in the Cold War. The costly defeat in Afghanistan did irreparable damage to the Soviet military’s reputation, as it was the defeat which caused recalcitrant Soviet republics to press ahead with their separatist movements. Brzezinski thus played a seminal and, this author would argue, crucial role in ending the Cold War. That Brzezinski was the initiator of the conflict and that the conflict was in significant measure responsible for the downfall of the Soviet Union has been proven. Brzezinski therefore played a major role in defeating the Soviet Union and bringing about victory for the West.

Justin Vaisse maintained that Brzezinski is not to be credited with ending the Cold War through initiating the conflict in Afghanistan. He wrote:

What would have happened if Brzezinski had claimed that he had anticipated everything and calculated everything in advance. This would amount to crediting himself with a key role in the downfall of the USSR. Such a position would not be compatible with the archives. For example, on December 26, 1979, the day when Brzezinski purportedly rejoiced that the Soviets had “taken the bait,” he wrote to Carter: “we should not be too optimistic about Afghanistan becoming a

Soviet Vietnam,” for the historical analogy did not work out in favour of the mujahideen. The latter were poorly organised and poorly led; they had no territorial refuge, no formal army, no state, and no external support; they were going to face a degree of Soviet brutality that could not be compared to the American hesitations in Vietnam.⁵³⁵

This author would challenge such an assertion and would argue that Brzezinski deliberately drew the Soviets into Afghanistan and that the war there played a crucial role in bringing down the Soviet Union, as Reuveny and Prakash have shown. This thesis has provided the evidence to substantiate such an assertion. Vaisse noted that Brzezinski tried to open dialogue with the Soviets to encourage them to withdraw from Afghanistan and that this undermines the “trap” theory. However, it is the view of this author that Brzezinski deliberately wanted to cause as much damage to the Soviets to bring about the downfall of the Soviet Union. He sought, as the many historians cited in this thesis attest to, to give the Soviets their “Vietnam”. Nicholas Guyatt makes the point that: ‘(Historian John Lewis) Gaddis himself made much of the fact that, militarily at least, the Soviet Union had not been defeated.’⁵³⁶ While the Soviet Union had not been defeated militarily vis-à-vis the U.S., it lost a major victory in Afghanistan which proved to be an important factor in ending the Cold War.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan gave Brzezinski the upper hand in the administration as a tough response was needed and this served the interests of the hardliners. Brzezinski would press ahead with a whole host of initiatives to do damage to the Soviet Union. Justin Vaisse commented on this. He wrote:

The invasion of Afghanistan marked a turning point in American perceptions, and particularly for the president, whose approach to the USSR hardened considerably. This explains why the last year of Carter’s administration was marked by a triumph of the “Brzezinski line” over Vance’s, thus accentuating the entry into the new Cold War. Several of Brzezinski’s recommendations in favour of firmness in dealings with the USSR were implemented in 1980. The three principal measures in this shift were sanctions against the USSR, the Carter

⁵³⁵ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 308

⁵³⁶ Nicholas Guyatt, ‘The End of the Cold War,’ in Richard H. Immerman & Petra Goedde ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, p. 606

doctrine, and the new American nuclear strategy, all accompanied by a posture of firmness in Europe.⁵³⁷

Concerning the fact that many have written off the Carter administration as a failure, it is to be said that in the context of the Cold War the administration was in fact a success. However, his domestic policies along with the Iranian hostage crisis were what was said to be the cause of his not getting re-elected. Nancy Mitchell commented on this. She wrote:

On Christmas Day, 1979, when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, Carter foreswore complexity and embraced old-fashioned dualism. But his inability to free the hostages in Iran made it impossible for him to free himself from the aura of weakness that had come to define him. Paradoxically, 1980 – that *annus horribilis* when the administration seemed unable to do anything right – was, in Cold War terms, a very good year for the United States: the Soviets were sucked into the quagmire of Afghanistan and defied by the success of Solidarity in Poland. But in 1980, Americans, struggling at home with stagflation and humiliated by an Iranian rabble – were not able to penetrate the fog of war: the administration joined its domestic rivals in decrying the rising threat posed by the resurgent Soviet Union and set in motion the largest increase in defense spending the Korean War.⁵³⁸

The public at the time were unable to perceive that the country was doing well in the Cold War. Preoccupied by the dismal taking of the hostages and the aura of failure surrounding Carter because of this, they did not perceive that Brzezinski's luring the Soviets into Afghanistan and revamping of the U.S. defence would, in the long term, prove to be a major coup and a key determinant in ending the Cold War.

With regards to the strategic upgrading of the United States during the Carter administration, Brzezinski was at the forefront in promoting the MX missile, the Pershing II ICBM and Presidential Directive 59 which he, along with Defence Secretary Harold Brown, had devised. Brzezinski also encouraged Carter to increase defence spending and in the final days of the Carter administration he had totally

⁵³⁷ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 310

⁵³⁸ Nancy Mitchell, 'The Cold War and Jimmy Carter,' in Leffler & Westad, *The Cambridge History of the Cold War Vol. 3*, p. 70

revamped the American military and prepared for a period of increased tension and hostility with the Soviet Union. The Reagan administration furthered this strategic build up and this was one of the chief causes of the downfall of the Soviet Union. Brzezinski was the guiding light in the Carter administration concerning the upgrading of U.S. defences and Reagan would carry this forward substantially, continuing Carter's massive defence budget increases which would serve to financially exhaust the Soviets, who failed to keep up while maintaining the living standards of their citizens and thus lost the Cold War as a result. Stuart Eizenstat described how the Carter administration was the one that put in place the upgrading of U.S. defences and how it was then built upon by the Reagan administration and helped lead to the end of the Cold War. He wrote:

Despite his campaign promise to cut defense spending, he in fact increased it by an annual average of almost 3 percent in real terms, and proposed further increases after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Major new weapons systems such as the MX missile and the Stealth bomber were green-lighted, thus providing the foundation upon which Ronald Reagan built the strong U.S. defense posture that his supporters claim as the principal cause of the Soviet Union's collapse. But it was Carter, not Reagan, who reversed the post-Vietnam decline in military spending and began upgrading America's defences. "The Reagan revolution in defense spending began during the later years of the Carter Administration," concludes the Pentagon's authorised history of the tenure of Carter's Defense secretary Harold Brown.⁵³⁹

When Carter began his term, he sought to transform the international system from a bipolar conflict to an integrated West that would accommodate the Soviet Union. He hoped to usher in the technetronic era and promote trilateral cooperation while the Soviets would be forced to relinquish their goal of world communism and settle for coexistence and cooperation with the West. The Ogaden War and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan changed these views and resulted in a return to the traditional policy of containment and increased tension between the superpowers. Carter would then press ahead with efforts to defeat the Soviets once and for all through supporting the Mujahedin and upgrading U.S. defences. This was a policy promoted by Brzezinski,

⁵³⁹ Stuart Eizenstat, *Jimmy Carter*, p.9

who always felt determined to defeat the Soviets and was not in favour of settling for peaceful coexistence. As Justin Vaisse wrote:

The gradual decline of the USSR notwithstanding, starting in 1974-1975 it became obvious that the Soviets were beginning to reassert their international power, both in terms of strategic weapons and in terms of their presence in the Third World. They were apparently convinced that the “correlation of forces” was shifting in their favour. In fact, they had achieved strategic (nuclear) parity by the early 1970s. The result of that shift was a return to a more classical strategy of containment, which was sharply accentuated starting in 1978, leaving more room for playing the “Chinese card” and for tactics that included harassing the Soviet empire, most notably the support for the mujahedeen in Afghanistan through the intermediary – Pakistan.⁵⁴⁰

The scholarly consensus is that following the Vietnam War the Soviet Union was an expansionist power bent upon exploiting America’s defeat. They sought to further the spread of communism and this was carried out by promoting client states throughout the Third World and acquiring military bases to enhance Soviet geopolitical influence. Brzezinski gauged this and acted accordingly to nullify Soviet expansionist tendencies through stepping up support for counter-revolutionaries throughout the world.

Brzezinski had a nuanced view of the Soviet Union and did not fear that it was in any way a serious rival of the United States, except in the military sphere. He believed the West could triumph over the Soviet Union and did everything he could to bring this about with the specific goal of liberating Eastern Europe. As Justin Vaisse wrote: Brzezinski ‘knew that the Soviet Union was too weak economically and not attractive enough politically to become a substitute for the United States.’⁵⁴¹

After assuming his role as national security adviser, Brzezinski implemented his ideas for dismantling the Soviet Union and exercised a domineering influence over the Carter administration. The NSC was dominant over the State department, particularly in the latter half of the term as the president tended to side more often with the advice of his National Security Adviser, though he did try to follow the advice of both the National Security Council and the State Department. Brzezinski’s influence however was predominant. As Justin Vaisse put it: ‘Overall, Brzezinski

⁵⁴⁰ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 259

⁵⁴¹ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 268

exercised an exceptional degree of control. Not only was he present at all these meetings, but he presided over the SCC, which allowed him to control a significant portion of the foreign policy agenda.⁵⁴² Carter was deferential to Brzezinski throughout the entire four years in office as he was the overarching formulator and coordinator of foreign policy and the grand strategist of the administration. As Justin Vaisse wrote: 'Brzezinski won most of his battles on fundamental issues, given the clear hardening of the political line under Carter during the last year of his presidency.'⁵⁴³

The perception of the Carter administration as a failure needs to be remedied, and the book released by Stuart Eizenstat entitled *Jimmy Carter: The White House Years* goes some way toward doing that. This thesis aimed to take it a step further and argue that the Carter administration was in fact crucial in ending the Cold War, Brzezinski in particular. Justin Vaisse pointed out that the Carter administration did in fact achieve quite a lot during the four years in which it was in office. He stated: 'However, few administrations have so many tangible successes (Panama, Camp David, China) in only four years.'⁵⁴⁴ One might add Afghanistan, human rights, and soft power in Eastern Europe.

The strategic modernization of the Carter administration needs to be reemphasised, as the U.S. military was substantially revamped during his term in office, a build-up which was then continued by the Reagan administration. Carter thus laid the groundwork for ending the Cold War. The numerous policies in this area he implemented, all of which were promoted by Brzezinski, are described by Justin Vaisse as follows:

These included the pursuit of the cruise missile program, the deployment of the MX missile, the decreased importance attributed to the Minutemen missiles, the modernization of the Trident submarine and their SLBM missiles, and, most important for the wars to come in the 1990s and 2000s, the decision to finance the next generation of stealth bombers (the B-2, which explains the decision to cancel the B-1), and the new directive concerning the nuclear deterrent (PD-59), the Carter doctrine for the Middle East, and the Rapid Deployment Force. All of these decisions were either unknown to the public at the time or else deliberately

⁵⁴² Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 286

⁵⁴³ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 288

⁵⁴⁴ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 339

minimised by the hawks and Ronald Reagan during the 1980 campaign, thus contributing to the image of Carter as a weak leader who had endangered the security of the United States.⁵⁴⁵

While Brzezinski was the guiding light of the Carter administration and the one responsible for its overall strategic vision, it has to be pointed out that Carter had the ultimate authority and the final say in all matters. As Justin Vaisse put it: ‘Brzezinski was powerful enough to have substantial influence on Carter, and he could dissuade him from following the path recommended by Vance, but he was not powerful enough to force him to make a decision or to adopt his own recommendations wholesale.’⁵⁴⁶

It needs to be added also that the punitive economic sanctions Carter took against the Soviets following the invasion of Afghanistan had a seriously detrimental effect upon the Soviet Union and assisted in the process of fragmenting the communist bloc. As Zubok put it:

The economic sanctions placed on the USSR by President Carter after the invasion of Afghanistan exacerbated economic tensions inside the Soviet bloc. No longer could the Soviet leaders force their client Central European regimes to share the economic burdens of the renewed Cold War. At a meeting in Moscow in February 1980, the party secretaries of these countries informed their Kremlin comrades that they could not afford any reduction of economic and trade relations with the West. The economic dependency of Warsaw Pact member states on NATO countries, previously the problem of only the GDR, had now become the case for Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria as well. Essentially, the Communist allies told Moscow that plugging the holes in the “socialist community” would be exclusively a Soviet expense.⁵⁴⁷

The Carter administration thus sowed the seeds of Soviet decline, putting in place the policies that would be carried on by Ronald Reagan and which helped bring the Cold War to an end. As Odd Arne Westad wrote:

⁵⁴⁵ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 340

⁵⁴⁶ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p. 352

⁵⁴⁷ Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p. 268

The election of Ronald Reagan to the presidency of the United States in 1980 signified a change in method rather than aims in American Third World policies. Jimmy Carter's last two years in office, especially, had pointed directly to the key priorities of the new administration – stepping up the pressure against radical regimes and gaining new allies among indigenous anti-Communist movements.⁵⁴⁸

It was Zbigniew Brzezinski who was one of chief strategists to architect the downfall of the Soviet Union, as has been proven, and his underappreciated role in ending the Cold War has now been given the credit it deserves. Odd Arne Westad confirmed that it was indeed Brzezinski who set the stage for the Reagan onslaught. He wrote:

The Reagan approach was in many ways a continuation of the policies and methods developed by Carter's National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski and his staff. Already well before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Brzezinski had, with Carter's consent – begun implementing what some referred to as a "counter-force strategy" in the Third World meaning an emphasis on supporting whatever opposition could be mustered to Soviet allies in Africa and Asia.⁵⁴⁹

It was therefore really Brzezinski and Carter who put the policies in place which began the initial stages of the downfall of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was defeated in 1991 however the beginning stage of this downfall was initiated during the Carter administration. The period of détente came to an end and Brzezinski reignited a period of increased hostility and confrontation between the two superpowers. The Carter administration thus sowed the seeds of Soviet decline and this would lead to the Second Cold War and the conflict's final denouement in 1991.

⁵⁴⁸ Westad, *The Global Cold War*, p. 331

⁵⁴⁹ Westad, *The Global Cold War*, p. 331



A Contemporary Photo of Zbigniew Brzezinski

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