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In Response to Totalitarianism: The Hawkish Cold War Foreign Diplomacy of the Europeans Kissinger and Brzezinski during American Détente

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In Response to Totalitarianism: The Hawkish Cold War Foreign Diplomacy of the Europeans
Kissinger and Brzezinski during American Détente

A Thesis

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Abstract

Despite historians describing the 1970s as a time of détente, both National Security Advisors that dominated America's foreign policy pursued harsh stances against the Soviet Union. Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski sabotaged peace talks in order help the United States keep its edge against the other world superpower. Most historians point to the similarities between these two men, but what is most often left out of the narrative is that both men witnessed persecution at the hands of totalitarian governments: Kissinger by the Nazis and Brzezinski by both the Nazis and the Soviets. This influence is strong in their first works written at Harvard University, where they met Dr. Carl J. Friedrich and Hannah Arendt, both German émigrés. This paper will explore how European intellectuals, as well as their own European heritage, predisposed both Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski in their hawkish stances against the Soviet Union.

Keywords: Cold War; Kissinger; Brzezinski; Hannah Arendt; American foreign policy; nuclear disarmament

Introduction

In his memoir about being National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski wrote how he openly told President Jimmy Carter, “You first have to be a Truman before you are a Wilson.”¹ This frank statement sums up his beliefs about what American foreign policy should be during the Cold War. Only by showing extreme force, as American President Harry S. Truman did when he dropped both atomic bombs on Japan to end World War II in 1945, can peace exist, which Brzezinski equates with Woodrow Wilson, the architect of the League of Nations. However, as this paper shows, Brzezinski was not the only person in Washington who took such a hard stance when it came to the Soviet Union. Henry Kissinger shared these sentiments, expressing multiple times throughout the years his own hawkish plans for dealing with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

From 1947 until 1991, during the Cold War, many Americans viewed this as a time when the United States stood up to the ideologically corrupt Soviet Union. Wanting capitalism to stomp out communism, many Americans believed that it was “Better Dead than Red,”² with red of course being the associated color of communists. This belief dominated American foreign policy throughout much of the early years of the Cold War. However, this marked hostility did not sustain itself. By the beginning of the 1970s, most Americans wanted détente, a relaxing of tensions between the two superpowers. Exhausted by the conflict in Vietnam overseas and the Civil Rights Movement at home, Americans wanted peace in the world.³ However, despite the

¹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977 – 1981* (New York: Farrar, Straus Giroux, 1983), 176.

² Oswald Garrison Villard, ed. "Work and Play," *The Nation* 131, no. 3392 (July 9, 1930): 32.

³ Frank Newport and Joseph Carroll, “Iraq versus Vietnam: A Comparison of Public Opinion: Gallup Reviews Public Opinion during the Vietnam War and the Current War in Iraq,” Gallup, August 24, 2005, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/18097/iraq-versus-vietnam-comparison-public-opinion.aspx>. A Gallup poll conducted in August and September, 1968 found that 61% of Americans believed that the war in Vietnam was a mistake. This is the height of public dissent. However, there would not be a significant drop in the percentage of people against the conflict. Anti-war sentiment would remain around 60% for the remainder of the war.

country seeming to be weary of conflict, two of the most powerful men in the United States government wanted the exact opposite. From 1969 until 1980, Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski actively fought against the easing of tensions between the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, to the point of advocating the possibility of nuclear war. As they transformed the office of National Security Advisor, a position both men held, into the primary manager of American foreign policy, both Kissinger and Brzezinski were in a position to sabotage peace talks, such as the strategic arms limitation treaties, with the Soviet Union in an effort to keep the United States on top.

Many historians postulate that the reason these men took such an uncompromising stance was due to their desire to fit in with the Washington establishment.⁴ Up until this point, almost all men working in high positions for the government were white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants; therefore, in order for the German Jew and the Polish Catholic to be accepted, they believed they had to be more pro-American than traditional East Coast establishment Americans. However, this paper will argue that rather than a need to want to fit in, these men acted from a desire more personal to them. Both men were émigrés from Europe who had grown up in Europe during a time of turmoil and discontent. They witnessed the advent of totalitarianism in the 1930s, both under the guise of National Socialism as well as Communism, which haunted them well after they left Europe. Evidence suggests that it was their European experience, and the witnessing of their homelands torn apart by war and totalitarian regimes, that influenced their diplomatic

⁴ Jeremi Suri, *Henry Kissinger and the American Century* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 4, 10-11. Suri describes how Kissinger felt excluded due to his Jewish faith. However, Kissinger was able to exploit his German heritage, touting his special insight, in order to go from outsider to informed insider; Justin Vaïsse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski: America's Grand Strategist*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 3, 117-156. Vaïsse illustrates how Brzezinski was part of an educated, non-WASP group of academics who wished to make their mark on America's political landscape. For more information, see Chapter Three.

decisions during the 1970s. Although to date most scholars opt to write about Kissinger, it was not he alone who influenced America's foreign policy during the Cold War. Zbigniew Brzezinski's hawkish views on United States-Soviet Union relations was long-lasting and just as influential. Both men took a harsh stance because, to them, the Cold War was "not an abstract phenomenon – it created a personal sense of peril."⁵ Based on personal memoirs, Cold War strategic writings, and documents from *Foreign Relations of the United States*, this paper will trace the hawkish Cold War policies of these two immigrants from Central Europe. This paper will also contribute to American Cold War intellectual and strategic history.

Birth to Harvard

In order to understand why these men were so adamant in their harsh stance against the Soviet Union, one may only look to their upbringing and education. Born Heinz Alfred Kissinger on May 27, 1923, in Fürth, Bavaria, Germany, he enjoyed life as a middle class boy in a family that valued education. Along with other Jewish families living in this area, the Kissingers saw themselves as multicultural, identifying as both Jewish and German culturally and nationally.⁶ However, this view of themselves would not safeguard them against persecution for Fürth is not far from Nuremberg, one of the early strongholds of the Nazi Party.⁷ In Nuremberg, newspaper publisher Julius Streicher coordinated efforts with Hitler to increase Nazi support among German citizens; this culminated in the 1935 headline splashed across Streicher's newspaper *Der Stürmer* stating, "The Jews are our misfortune!"⁸ As Nazism and anti-Semitism took hold in Nuremberg, Kissinger noticed several societal changes, from family friends

⁵ Suri, 138.

⁶ Ibid., 26.

⁷ Niall Ferguson, *Kissinger. Vol.1, 1923 – 1968: The Idealist* (New York: Penguin Press, 2015), 64-65.

⁸ Suri, 34-35.

disappearing without a trace to his own expulsion from school and even his father losing his job.⁹ It seemed as if the Nazi Party began controlling every aspect of his life. This is how Kissinger and his family viewed the changes in his life because he often states that it was his dislike of the Nazis, not his love of being Jewish, that still resonated with him.¹⁰ No longer allowed to play with his neighborhood friends, confined indoors for fear of persecution, Kissinger welcomed his move to the United States at the age of fifteen, in 1938.¹¹ Setting up in Washington Heights in New York City, Heinz changed his name to Henry and pursued his education.

However, Kissinger would not spend the entirety of World War II in the United States. In 1943, he received his draft notice into the Army. Although not wanting to interrupt his studies, he dutifully packed his bags and went to war. Kissinger hoped to show his patriotism by serving his new country.¹² While in boot camp, Kissinger met a German-American mentor. Fritz Kraemer, born in Essen, Germany, enjoyed taking long walks with Kissinger so that the two men could philosophize about how their homeland no longer existed.¹³ It was through these talks that Kraemer discovered how much seeing atrocities orchestrated by a totalitarian dictator affected his friend stating, “Kissinger is a strong man, but the Nazis were able to damage his soul ... It made him seek order.”¹⁴ Eventually, with the war over and the Allied victory secured, Henry Kissinger was able to return home and continue his studies. Thanks to the GI bill, he was able to attend Harvard University for both his undergraduate and graduate careers.¹⁵

⁹ Ibid., 65.

¹⁰ Ferguson, 80-81.

¹¹ Suri, 25.

¹² Philip Taubman, *The Partnership: Five Cold Warriors and Their Quest to Ban the Bomb* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2012), 122.

¹³ Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger: A Biography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 44.

¹⁴ Ibid., 121-122.

¹⁵ Suri, 45.

It was at Harvard that Henry Kissinger first met Zbigniew Brzezinski. Brzezinski was born in Warsaw, Poland on March 28, 1928. His father, Tadeusz Brzezinski, was a Polish consular official.¹⁶ From 1931 until 1935, Brzezinski's father held a diplomatic post in Leipzig, Germany. While in Germany, Tadeusz Brzezinski helped with efforts to rescue European Jews from Nazi concentration camps; Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin would officially recognize his father's role in 1978.¹⁷ Then, from 1936 – 1938, Tadeusz Brzezinski lived in the Soviet Ukraine while his family remained in Warsaw. While representing Poland in Ukraine, Tadeusz Brzezinski witnessed Joseph Stalin's Great Purge where hundreds of Ukrainian dissidents faced arrest and execution, all in order to stamp out the Ukrainian Nationalist Movement. He would share stories of the horrors he witnessed with his wife and son upon returning to Warsaw.¹⁸ In late 1938, Tadeusz Brzezinski moved his family to Montreal, Canada.

While in Montreal, Zbigniew Brzezinski attended McGill University for his undergraduate and master's degrees. It was in his master's thesis on Russo – Soviet nationalism that Brzezinski's hawkish views towards the Soviet Union first became apparent. It was in this thesis where he stated that the Soviet Union struggled with unity and therefore, "the Western world has at its disposal all the means to create a multi-national anti-Soviet version of the Comintern [Communist International] – and its appeal would be exceedingly powerful."¹⁹ With these words, Brzezinski stated that Communism in the Soviet Union was easy to topple, for all the United States needed to do was exploit the differences between the various satellite states both within and adjacent to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. This interest in the Soviet

¹⁶ It is of interest to note that Zbigniew Brzezinski's father fought against the Bolsheviks in the Polish – Soviet War of 1919 – 1920. Clearly, his father was not a fan of the new regime in charge of Russia and he probably shared his feelings with his son, like he did after witnessing Stalin's Great Purge.

¹⁷ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski: America's Grand Strategist*, 15.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

Union coincided with the emerging field of Sovietology, the study of the society and politics of that country as well as its satellite states. Therefore, to expand his horizons for his doctoral work, he applied for and accepted admission to Harvard University, where he could specialize in his field of choice. Brzezinski chose to attend this university because it was where researchers in the field exchanged ideas with politicians, so that theories could be put into action.²⁰ It was at Harvard where Brzezinski actively worked at the Russian Research Center, where he not only studied contemporary Soviet policy, but also tried to predict future Soviet threats to American interests.

Historians do not point out that both these men attended Harvard University, yet it was here that their future foreign policies started to form. As Justin Vaïsse writes, “They were trailblazers in a profoundly transformed landscape of international policy making, the pioneers of a new model of American foreign policy elite.”²¹ During the early Cold War years, Harvard wanted to prepare its students for life in the postwar world. In order to do this, many professors worked to make this university a center for formulating the nation’s strategic concept to guide American foreign policy. Kissinger and Brzezinski played a role in this by creating Harvard’s Center for International Affairs, where they worked closely with Professor Carl J. Friedrich.²² A German immigrant himself, Friedrich, who was a leader of Harvard’s Government Department, supervised both men and their writings on American-Soviet relations.²³ It was during this time that Friedrich introduced both Kissinger and Brzezinski to noted political theorist Hannah Arendt and her first major work, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Arendt, a student of Martin

²⁰ Vaïsse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski: America’s Grand Strategist*, 47.

²¹ Justin Vaïsse, “Zbig, Henry, and the New U.S. Foreign Policy Elite,” in *Zbig: The Strategy and Statecraft of Zbigniew Brzezinski*, ed. Charles Gati (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 5.

²² *Ibid.*, 8.

²³ Isaacson, 63.

Heidegger's, was another German émigré in the United States. After her book's publication in 1951, the idea of totalitarianism received such intense reviews that the American Academy of Arts and Sciences sponsored a conference on the topic at the Russian Research Center, chaired by Friedrich.²⁴

The reason that this new concept fascinated scholars was because Arendt puts forth the idea that totalitarianism was a new form of government never seen before. Although this type of government borrowed heavily from other political systems, such as Fascism, authoritarianism, and military dictatorship, for Arendt what sets totalitarianism apart was, "mass organizations of atomized, isolated individuals."²⁵ She also added, "Compared with all other parties and movements, their most conspicuous external characteristic is their demand for total, unrestricted, unconditional, and unalterable loyalty of the individual member."²⁶ In order for totalitarianism to become successful, and take over a nation-state, society had to become a classless mass, subjected to constant propaganda upholding the organization running the country. In Germany, the Nazis used propaganda in an effort to bolster the master race while in the Soviet Union, the Bolsheviks used propaganda to illustrate class struggles.²⁷ The goal of totalitarian rule was to break society apart, smashing not only interest groups but family units as well.²⁸ Although starting in Italy under Mussolini, it was in Hitler's Germany that politics invaded, and quickly encompassed, all private spheres in an individual's life, which would eventually lead to

²⁴ Abbott Gleason, *Totalitarianism: The Inner History of the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 123.

²⁵ Hannah Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism* (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1951), 323.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 323.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 375.

²⁸ Carl J. Friedrich, ed., *Totalitarianism: Proceedings of a Conference Held at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences March 1953* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954), 76.

totalitarianism's conquest over society.²⁹ Another factor which aided totalitarianism's triumph was the denationalization occurring after World War I, which happened via the forced removal of Europeans from their established homelands back to their ancestral lands, leading many people feeling disconnected and alone.³⁰ The League of Nations estimated that between 1917 and 1924, Germany alone accepted upwards of 700,000 refugees from all over Europe.³¹ Both the Nazi Party and the Bolsheviks exploited this loneliness, welcoming members and indoctrinating them, "to the point of complete loss of individual claims and ambition ... extinguishing individual identity permanently."³² It was this loss of identity, and the need to feel included, of which both Hitler and Stalin took advantage. Most historians before Arendt proposed that these men became leaders of their respective political parties because of their rhetorical and manipulation skills. Arendt disagrees, stating that Hitler and Stalin were not mere demagogues, but master organizers. These two men attracted the masses because of their "visible reality and [the] power of a 'living organization,'" which was in stark contrast to the 'dead' bureaucracies which forced these people from the places they called home for generations.³³ Arendt goes on to argue that it was the faith which these men inspired from their loyal party members which allowed them to seek "total domination and global rule."³⁴

In order to start down the path of total world domination, both Hitler and Stalin took the same course of action. First, instead of writing laws and making order, power came from their will. They accomplished this by always expanding the ranks of people loyal to them, while at

²⁹ Gleason, 20-22.

³⁰ Arendt, 269.

³¹ Robert W. Ditchburn, "The Refugee Problem." *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 28, no. 110 (1939): 278.

³² Arendt, 314.

³³ *Ibid.*, 361.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 389.

the same time strictly limiting the number of elite, high ranking officials allowed within the party.³⁵ This kept people from questioning their authority. Nazism and Stalinism both emphasized politics over everything else in society, including economics, in order to bolster the state.³⁶ Next came the implementation of the leader's ideology; for Hitler, it was success of the master race and for Stalin, it was eliminating social classes in order to empower the workers of the world. This step was important because, as Arendt states, "the 'totalitarian state' is a state in appearance only, and the movement no longer truly identifies itself even with the needs of the people."³⁷ She would go on to say, "The Movement by now is above state and people, ready to sacrifice both for the sake of its ideology."³⁸ This sacrifice came in the final step taken by both Hitler and Stalin in order to solidify their totalitarian regimes – mass liquidation of dissenters. In both Germany and the Soviet Union, millions lost their lives in purges for being political dissidents. After this was done, "those who were not among the many millions of dead or the millions of deported slave laborers had learned 'who is master here,' and realized that their lives and the lives of their families depended not upon their fellow-citizens but exclusively on the whims of the government,"³⁹ the physical embodiment being Hitler for Germany and Stalin for the Soviet Union. Although both the Nazi and the Soviet totalitarian states created different origin myths, with Germany's resting on racial superiority and the Soviet Union's relying on elimination of social classes, both ended in the same place – the government needed to control every aspect of a person's life in order for the country to become the perfect state.⁴⁰

³⁵ Ibid., 365-366.

³⁶ Gleason, 31.

³⁷ Arendt, 266.

³⁸ Ibid., 266.

³⁹ Ibid., 320.

⁴⁰ Gleason, 37-38.

Arendt also viewed totalitarian governments as self-perpetuating. To her, the only reason the Nazis did not continue ruling Germany was due to the Allies winning the war. After World War II, in the early years of the Cold War the West increasingly connected Stalinism with totalitarianism “as they witnessed the Soviet takeover of Eastern Europe, they linked its expansionism to its autocratic, centralized, internal structure and its relentless invasiveness.”⁴¹ Even after Stalin’s death, Arendt and other scholars did not see an end to the totalitarian regime in the Soviet Union. Since all dissidents were killed, any leader who took control after Stalin would most likely be in lockstep with his ideals. Later, once Nikita Khrushchev came to power and did not completely undo the ideology started by his predecessor, despite condemning the ‘Stalin cult,’ it became clear that totalitarianism would become the “great mobilizing and unifying concept of the Cold War.”⁴² Arendt’s book profoundly influenced Kissinger’s thinking, a subject most historians neglect to mention.

Kissinger – Post Harvard

While at Harvard, Kissinger realized he wanted his writings to influence more than just his fellow academics. As stated above, Kissinger worked with the German-American Dr. Friedrich, allowing Friedrich to mentor Kissinger as he started the academic journal *Confluence* in an effort to influence policymakers. Kissinger asked many people to contribute to the journal, personally meeting with all writers in order to discuss their contributions, Hannah Arendt being one of them. Despite not editorializing within the pages of *Confluence*, we know that Kissinger at least had a professional relationship with Arendt because he made it a point to sit down with all of his journal’s contributors.⁴³ Although the journal only lasted for six years, it helped

⁴¹ Arendt, 72.

⁴² Gleason, 3.

⁴³ Isaacson, 72-73.

Kissinger solidify his harsh stance against the Soviet Union. Of note is the time frame in which these two intellectuals met. While Kissinger was writing his doctoral thesis entitled “A World Restored,” he stated, “Diplomacy cannot be divorced from the realities of force and power.” This notion rings true of Arendt’s views on the Soviet Union.

Henry Kissinger wrote his doctoral thesis while working with his Harvard mentor, William Yandell Elliott. Elliott and Friedrich were “twin pillars of the Government Department” at Harvard University, both influencing their young mentee.⁴⁴ Although not German, Elliott believed in the teachings of German philosopher Immanuel Kant, who wrote extensively about the intrinsic nature of freedom. Before taking Kissinger under his tutelage, Dr. Elliott had him write an extensive research paper on the philosopher. William Yandell Elliott only agreed to the tutelage of Henry Kissinger after he showed a deep understanding of Immanuel Kant, as showcased in his undergraduate thesis.⁴⁵ Between the German influences of Kraemer, Friedrich, and Kant, as well as Elliott’s specialization in European political theory and relations, the foundation of Kissinger’s future hawkishness began to form. Elliott even noticed the heavy German influence on Kissinger’s thinking in a letter he wrote to Phi Beta Kappa on his mentee’s behalf describing Kissinger as having an “[in] depth and philosophical insight ... Teutonic in its systematic thoroughness.”⁴⁶ Even as early as his doctoral thesis, “A World Restored,” Kissinger wrote, “Whenever peace – conceived as the avoidance of war – has been the primary objective of a power or group of powers, the international system has been at the mercy of the most ruthless

⁴⁴ Ibid., 63.

⁴⁵ Isaacson points out that Kissinger’s undergraduate thesis, coming in at 383 pages, is the longest one ever submitted by a senior at Harvard University. In this thesis, not only does Kissinger discuss Immanuel Kant, but he also explores the works of Oswald Spengler and Arnold Toynbee. He explores the concept of free will, questioning whether humanity actually has it. Eventually, Kissinger settles on yes, humans do have free will. While he believes this to be true, Harvard decided to put a check on free reign. Thanks to Kissinger’s magnum opus, the government department now limits undergraduate theses to a third the length that the future Secretary of State submitted.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 63.

member of the international community.”⁴⁷ His opinion, that peaceful nations are at the mercy of aggressive ones, seem to be a result of the influence of Elliott and the Harvard community, for it was there that academics postulated that President Eisenhower’s defense plans at the time were too soft and accommodating.⁴⁸ The atomic bomb existed. Therefore, it needed to be included in America’s foreign policy. Eisenhower’s efforts to curb military spending in order to prevent the exhaustion of the financial resources of the United States seemed too drastic once it was common knowledge that the Soviet Union built their own nuclear weapons. Kissinger would even state outright that it was these Harvard community discussions “from which my thinking evolved,” namely his hawkishness toward the Soviet Union.⁴⁹

Also during this time, the Council on Foreign Relations asked Henry Kissinger to head a project which looked at nuclear weapons as they pertained to foreign policy.⁵⁰ This led to the publishing in 1957 of Kissinger’s harshest critique of the Soviet Union with *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*. In this work, Kissinger actively supported limited nuclear strikes against the Soviet Union. With the 1950s being marked by the policies of mutually assured destruction (MAD) and massive retaliation, Kissinger believed that nuclear war was inevitable. To him, in order for the United States to ensure victory the country must act now, before the Soviet Union drew first blood.⁵¹ Growing up in the shadow of appeasement, the realist Kissinger saw a weak government as unacceptable. Therefore, in order to ensure peace and to keep the Soviet Union at bay, nuclear weapons were necessary. This allowed America to act proactively, instead of

⁴⁷ Henry Kissinger, *A World Restored* (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1957), 1.

⁴⁸ Taubman, 124.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 124-125.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁵¹ Henry Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1957),

reactively, to Soviet threats.⁵² To Kissinger, the United States should have trounced the Soviet Union from the beginning of the Cold War. He believed that the Soviet Union would never stop fighting the United States because communist ideology believed that achieving peace could only happen once capitalism became extinct.⁵³ Since the United States was not aggressive enough when it had nuclear superiority, two things happened: one, the Soviets gained the psychological upper hand by making Americans think the United States was too heavily armed, and two, the Soviets achieved nuclear parity by being able to build their own atomic bomb.⁵⁴ Although the Kremlin often conjured up images of nuclear war to shame the White House, this did not stop them from starting a stockpile.⁵⁵ Once the Soviets were on the road toward nuclear parity, Kissinger believed it was only a matter of time before the communists launched their nuclear weapons.

Therefore, in order to limit the number of casualties, Kissinger supported the concept of a limited war which, “with proper tactics, nuclear war need not be as destructive as it appears when we think of it in terms of traditional warfare ... Limited nuclear war represents our most effective strategy against nuclear powers or against a major power which is capable of substituting manpower for technology.”⁵⁶ Kissinger would go on to state that “no diplomatic program can be a substitute for an adequate retaliatory power.”⁵⁷ Although it seems horrific to accept limited nuclear strikes, growing up in Nazi Germany showed Kissinger early on that violence is endemic to international politics – it made him into a realist. It also taught him that in

⁵² Daniel J. Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed: The Remaking of American Foreign Relations in the 1970s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 59.

⁵³ Henry A. Kissinger, "Nuclear Testing and the Problem of Peace," *Foreign Affairs* 37, no. 1 (1958): 6.

⁵⁴ Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*, 16–34.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 146, 166.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 168.

order to lead successfully, one must always be “anticipating inevitable tragedies in the course of legitimate foreign policymaking.”⁵⁸ Kissinger took a firm stance against the Soviet Union, and against most people’s judgment, by advocating limited nuclear war. He believed his strategy was the best way to cripple the Soviet Union because, by launching small nuclear weapons, the United States could just take out Soviet factories and military bases strategically. By using smaller weapons, allowing for control of the blast force, this limited war would only throw the Soviet Union into a state of chaos and panic, and therefore not destroying half the world.⁵⁹ To Kissinger, this was compromise.

Once this nuclear treatise became a best seller, Harvard University’s dean of faculty McGeorge Bundy, who would go on to become President John F. Kennedy’s National Security Advisor, offered Henry Kissinger a professorship. Kissinger readily accepted with his eye on tenure. The late 1950s was a highly competitive time for professors vying for tenure. Beating out fellow classmate Zbigniew Brzezinski, Henry Kissinger accepted the permanent position in July 1959.⁶⁰ He remained at Harvard for the next decade, and during these years Kissinger published work after work condemning the Soviet Union for its nuclear buildup and challenging American hegemony. Five years after *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*, Kissinger wrote *The Necessity for Choice: Prospects of American Foreign Policy* in 1962. In this volume, Kissinger warned that as the Soviet Union keeps adding to their stockpile of weapons, the United States’ power on the world stage keeps diminishing. Illustrating his point was that starting in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Soviet Union began expanding its influence into developing nations in South America, Asia, and Africa. Kissinger believed this expanding of Communist

⁵⁸ Suri, 57.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 153.

⁶⁰ Isaacson, 98.

influence into the Global South in turn created instability and chaos in the free world.⁶¹

Harkening back to his doctoral dissertation, Kissinger believed that international “[s]tability is the prime goal of diplomacy.”⁶² With stability versus peace in mind, there was no gain from the United States paring down their nuclear weapons supply. Instead, America should concentrate on inventing more strategic nuclear weapons. Only then could the United States form a comprehensive foreign policy, only then could the United States regain world superiority. He reiterated this by writing, “[the United States] cannot gear our strategy or stake our survival on the assumption that nuclear weapons will *not* be used against us ... We have to be prepared for nuclear war as well. Only being ready for limited nuclear war will give the option of a conventional strategy [author’s emphasis].”⁶³ In Kissinger’s mind, it was almost always the Soviet Union that made the first aggressive move, therefore causing the United States to have to react.⁶⁴

In 1962, the same year that Kissinger published this latest book, the Cuban Missile Crisis rocked the globe. The world held its collective breath for thirteen days waiting to see if the Soviets would launch their missiles at the United States from Cuban soil. Luckily, the nuclear war did not come to fruition with both sides giving in to demands expressed by the other – the Soviets removed their atomic warheads from Cuba in public view while the United States withdrew their nuclear weapons from Turkey privately. Although outwardly it seemed as if America won a great victory, this was wrong. Kissinger wanted this to be a wakeup call for the United States. Lulled into a false sense of security, surrounded by two oceans and no attack on

⁶¹ Henry Kissinger, *The Necessity for Choice: Prospects of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1962), 8, 71.

⁶² Kissinger, *A World Restored*, 75.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁶⁴ Ferguson, 22-23.

its own soil for over one hundred years, Kissinger expected the Cuban Missile Crisis to cause the American government to address actively “issues of strategy.”⁶⁵ Instead, the American people protested all nuclear weapons, wanting a reduction of all defense spending.⁶⁶ This desire of the American people could not have sat well with Kissinger, who firmly believed that “the horrors of nuclear war are not likely to be avoided by a reduction of nuclear armaments.”⁶⁷ However, Kissinger knew that America’s greatest problem, when it came to foreign policy, was that it oscillated between overconfidence and lack of conviction. This uncertainty, due to a lack of a grand strategy, led to the Soviets buttressing their nuclear stockpiles in another attempt to gain the upper hand in the nuclear balance of power by the end of the decade.⁶⁸

Up until the mid-1960s, the Soviet Union lagged so far behind the United States in “nuclear strategic forces” that the Red Army had only attacked its own allies.⁶⁹ Instead of using force against the United States, the only country to witness the Soviet Union’s might was Hungary. However, as the American government began to crack down on nuclear proliferation, all in response to civilian protests at home, the Soviets made inroads in closing the nuclear weapons gap with the United States. Humiliated on the world stage, the Soviets reacted to the Cuban Missile Crisis with gusto. Within six years of the event, the Soviet Union under Premier Leonid Brezhnev went from 220 to 860 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and from 100 to 120 submarine launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs).⁷⁰ During this time, the Soviets concentrated on larger weapons with heavier payloads, while refining the technology which

⁶⁵ Henry Kissinger, *The White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979), 195.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 200.

⁶⁷ Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*, 176.

⁶⁸ Henry Kissinger, *American Foreign Policy: Three Essays* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1969), 90-95.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 196-197.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 197.

improved accuracy.⁷¹ To Kissinger, Brezhnev represented all that was wrong with Communism – he was a leader dedicated to his ideology prevailing, and who would stop at nothing until the United States was in a weaker position.⁷²

By the end of the 1960s, Kissinger was finally in a position to change American foreign policy. On January 20, 1969, Richard Milhous Nixon became the thirty seventh President of the United States. Nixon chose Kissinger to become his National Security Advisor; this was no accident. On January 7, 1969, before even being sworn into office, Richard Nixon sent a memo to both Henry Kissinger and William P. Rogers, whom Nixon would select as Secretary of State, stating his desire “to move some of the dead wood out and to move some of the unqualified men from one post to a less sensitive one.”⁷³ Nixon first moved to Washington DC in 1946, giving him more than two decades to figure out the inner workings of the American government. Therefore, in order for government to work the way he wanted, Nixon knew that he needed to fill key positions with qualified people. Ever the anti-Communist, it is easy to see that Nixon chose Kissinger due to his hawkish stance when it came to the Soviet Union. Kissinger took this opportunity given to him to take his anti-Communist agenda to a global scale. He was able to do this because the National Security Act of 1947 does not specify how the National Security Advisor and the National Security Council interacts with the President. No laws do.⁷⁴ Originally only coordinating foreign affairs and defense, Kissinger slowly absorbed more and more power within the National Security Council until he amassed more power than Secretary of

⁷¹ Ibid., 198.

⁷² Henry Kissinger, *Years of Renewal* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 235.

⁷³ US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969 – 1976, Volume II, Organization and Management of U.S. Foreign Policy, 1969 – 1972: Managing the Department of State*, ed. David Humphrey (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 2006), Document 293.

⁷⁴ David Rothkopf, *Running the World: The Inside Story of the National Security Council and the Architects of American Power* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2005), 166.

State Rogers.⁷⁵ Kissinger was able to consolidate his power within the West Wing thanks in large part to his fully formed foreign policy ideas. He saw the strategic vision, which began in his childhood, come to maturation and fruition.⁷⁶ While becoming privy to top secret information thanks to his new elevated position, Kissinger realized his biggest fear had come true – “the Soviets had caught up with us – and they continued to build.”⁷⁷

However, Kissinger did see a bright side. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was suffering from economic woes due to its massive increase in nuclear weapons production. Therefore, if a dialogue began with Brezhnev now, the United States could regain its position of power. On February 17, 1969, less than a month after becoming National Security Advisor, Kissinger reached out to Soviet ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin to request a sit down to discuss strategic arms limitations negotiations. The White House put forth that these talks represented a beginning of détente, or relaxation of tensions, between the world’s superpowers. However, as William Burr and Jeffrey P. Kimball state, both Nixon and Kissinger “privately saw détente less as an idealist end in itself than as a ‘strategy to contain and harness Soviet use of its increasing power’ by ensnaring the Soviet Union in ‘a web of relationships with ... the United States, a web that he [Kissinger] would weave.”⁷⁸ Clearly, although their foreign policy seemed to promote cooperation, in fact it was just furthering containment.

Beginning in November 1969 in Helsinki, Finland, and lasting until May 1972 in Moscow, the talks between the United States and the Soviet Union remained hidden from the

⁷⁵ Jussi M. Hanhimaki, *The Rise and Fall of Détente: American Foreign Policy and the Transformation of the Cold War* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2013), 37.

⁷⁶ Suri, 13.

⁷⁷ Kissinger, *The White House Years*, 197.

⁷⁸ William Burr and Jeffrey P. Kimball. *Nixon’s Nuclear Specter: The Secret Alert of 1969, Madman Diplomacy, and the Vietnam War* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2015), 85.

public on both sides. One possible reason that Kissinger used private talks instead of public negotiations was, as he wrote in 1955, because “the only valid reason to hold summits with the communists was to assuage allies and score points with neutral nations.”⁷⁹ With the Vietnam War still ongoing at this time, Kissinger did not feel the need to pander to either allies or neutral countries because he did not want to answer questions dealing with Southeast Asia. Using these back channels also allowed for the President to appear outwardly tough on Communism, yet still privately agree with possible compromise. Since both countries sought different aims, eventually different limitations were set for each. Throughout the previous decade, before Nixon and Kissinger came to office, the Soviet Union concentrated on building heavy nuclear missiles, but still worked on perfecting their targeting systems.⁸⁰ By the time of Kissinger’s appointment to National Security Advisor, America had 1054 ICBMs, while the Soviet Union had 1550. The United States had 41 nuclear submarines, and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics had 42. The only place where the United States had superior numbers was in long-range aircraft bombers and a global naval presence.⁸¹ Although the numbers seem to suggest that the United States and the Soviet Union were on par with each other, this was not the case. For one, when Kissinger became the National Security Advisor, the United States had more than 29,000 nuclear bombs.⁸² As if those were not enough to destroy their enemy, American scientists spent the 1960s concentrating on building smaller weapons with more accurate targeting systems. This nuclear strategy, built on smaller, more accurate weaponry, echoed Kissinger’s sentiments about limited war. He did not see a largescale war breaking out, often mentioning that, “It’s difficult to believe

⁷⁹ Isaacson, 76.

⁸⁰David Mitchell, *Making Foreign Policy: Presidential Management of the Decision-Making Process* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005), 84.

⁸¹ Sargent, 62-63

⁸² Taubman, 160.

either side will launch everything.”⁸³ However, this did not stop Kissinger from encouraging President Nixon to use a “madman” strategy in order to cow the Kremlin.⁸⁴ By constantly threatening to launch their entire nuclear force at the Soviet Union, both the President and the National Security Advisor kept the Soviets constantly guessing as to their intentions. This guessing game allowed for Kissinger to have the upper hand when nuclear reduction talks began. Kissinger saw it as his duty to create negotiations with the Soviet Union that reduced the number of missiles on the Soviet side, but still allowed the United States to remain numerically superior. As Kissinger stated in his autobiography entitled *The White House Years*, “It was in our interest to demonstrate to the Soviet Union that given the inequality of resources it could not possibly win an arms race, that we would not stand by while the balance shifted against us, and that if sufficiently provoked, we would simply outproduce them.”⁸⁵ To Kissinger, the United States could not stand to lose any weapons for fear of falling behind the Soviet Union, while the communists could not keep building due to economic woes. Therefore, the creation of a strategic compromise, which gave the world the illusion of losses taken by both sides, happened.

As Kissinger predicted, the Soviets were just as willing to concede in order to slow the arms race, due to economic woes. Outwardly, according to Francis J. Gavin, “the policy goal of both superpowers, according to strategists and arms control advocates, should be to construct nuclear forces and strategies that accepted mutual vulnerability and did not seek a first strike advantage.”⁸⁶ Kissinger then proposed that the strategic arms limitation treaty (SALT I) be

⁸³ Ibid., 160.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 166.

⁸⁵ Kissinger, *The White House Years*, 203.

⁸⁶ Francis J. Gavin, “Nuclear Nixon: Ironies, Puzzles, and the Triumph of Realpolitik,” in *Nixon in the World: American Foreign Relations, 1969-1977*, ed. Frederick Logevall and Andrew Preston (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 129.

broken up into two treaties – the Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems Treaty (ABM) and the Interim Agreement.⁸⁷

Kissinger was the main negotiator for the ABM Treaty, which was part of the SALT I treaty arrangement. This permanent treaty “limited ABM systems to two sites each with a limit of 100 anti-ballistic missiles.”⁸⁸ By limiting the number of defense systems that each country could build, both sides could feel as if they had won a victory by not bankrupting their country through the construction of them. The treaty limited the number of anti-ballistic missiles to defend against strategic ballistic missiles; however, Kissinger ensured the treaty never concretely defined the term ‘strategic’. This was not by accident. Kissinger allowed for a limitation on anti-ballistic missiles because he was more concerned with the new technology of multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRVs) at the time. MIRVs contain several nuclear warheads in each missile that can be independently aimed at various targets. Again, a convenient weapon for limited war. The reason Kissinger wanted MIRVs to not be included in the SALT I negotiations was twofold: one, these were seen as a way of protecting American lives from Soviet attack thus making the United States’ strategy defensive instead of overtly offensive and two, this was a technology the Soviets lacked thus giving the United States the upper hand.⁸⁹ Both sides seemed comfortable with leaving the exact definition of the word ‘strategic’ opaque, thus allowing loose interpretations for both the United States and the Soviet Union. As John H. Barton points out, “the agreements greatly increased strategic stability, but they did not substantially slow the arms competition, and perhaps even helped accelerate it.”⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Sargeant, 62.

⁸⁸ Brian J. Auten, *Carter’s Conversion: The Hardening of American Defense Policy* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2008), 50.

⁸⁹ Kissinger, *The White House Years*, 208.

⁹⁰ John H. Barton, *The Politics of Peace: An Evaluation of Arms Control* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1981), 93.

Although both sides agreed to limits on delivery systems, there was no ceiling set on warheads.⁹¹ Outwardly, Nixon and Kissinger sold the SALT I treaty to the United States Senate touting the achievement of symmetry between the world's superpowers, when in reality the opposite was true.⁹² This was no equal treaty.

Along with the ABM treaty, the Interim Agreement, mainly negotiated by the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA), headed by Gerard C. Smith, came into effect. This was one of the few times Nixon, giving into pressures from Congress, allowed for a committee, and not Kissinger alone, to negotiate with a foreign power. The Interim Agreement, “a five-year agreement (1972 – 1977) that restricted particular classes of offensive nuclear forces,” was a temporary treaty that negotiators would eventually address in further detail later.⁹³ At this time, it froze the number of strategic ballistic missile launchers each side possessed as well as permitted for an increase in SLBMs only if there was a dismantling of a corresponding number of ICBMs. Due to the wording in the agreement, both sides were able to dismantle older missiles and replace them with new ones, the only limit being that there could be no new nuclear silos built. Theoretically, this allowed for all replacements to be on a one-to-one basis. For now, Moscow's ‘momentum’ of military buildup stopped and there was a sense of a stable, strategic balance of nuclear weapons.⁹⁴ The Interim Agreement created a holding pattern, anchoring the ABM Treaty by limiting nuclear arms competition and providing more time for further negotiations.

⁹¹ Taubman, 173.

⁹² Hanhimaki, *The Rise and Fall of Détente*, 56.

⁹³ Auten, *Carter's Conversion*, 50.

⁹⁴ Sargent, 62-63.

After the signing by both parties on May 26, 1972, it pleased the American government and people so much that the United States Senate ratified both treaties on August 3, 1972. The House of Representatives approved SALT I 307 to 4, and the Senate passed it with a vote of 88 to 2.⁹⁵ It seemed as if the buildup of tension since 1947 was getting a reprieve, finally. However, Kissinger knew better. Through his strategic omissions, the United States could continue to accumulate a stockpile of strategic weapons without violating the agreement.⁹⁶ He managed to convince the world that tensions were easing while at the same time allowing the United States to keep nuclear superiority. James Goody, an American arms negotiator, states that SALT I was important because it “broke the ice ... A precedent was set for more important agreements later ... But it did little to halt the nuclear arms race.”⁹⁷ Kissinger echoed this sentiment in his autobiography *Years of Upheaval* by writing, “after the signature of SALT I, our defense budget increased...Détente did not prevent resistance to Soviet expansion; on the contrary, it fostered the only possible psychological framework for such resistance.”⁹⁸ Through his deft negotiating strategy, and keeping the United States militarily superior to the Soviet Union, Kissinger kept the communist dictators from gaining the upper hand in the nuclear arms race.

Brzezinski – Post Harvard

Most historians readily draw the parallel between Arendt and Brzezinski. After reading her book, Brzezinski would ever after define both Communism as well as Fascism and Nazism as totalitarian revolutionary ideology aimed not so much at helping the people, but brainwashing

⁹⁵ Dan Caldwell, *The Dynamics of Domestic Politics and Arms Control: The SALT II Treaty Ratification Debate* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 34.

⁹⁶ Isaacson, 436.

⁹⁷ Taubman, 174-175.

⁹⁸ Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1982), 237.

the masses.⁹⁹ Leaders such as Stalin, and later Khrushchev and Brezhnev, needed to have this control over their people in order to consolidate and maintain their political power.¹⁰⁰ Brzezinski seemed particularly interested in these leaders because they conquered his homeland of Poland and locked it behind the Iron Curtain.¹⁰¹ While attending Harvard, Brzezinski solidified the thought that “Stalin’s will could not be questioned.”¹⁰²

It was this sentiment that prompted Dr. Carl J. Friedrich to ask his mentee, Zbigniew Brzezinski, to help coauthor a book. Friedrich, a friend of Hannah Arendt’s, wanted to take her work and make it more applicable to the Soviet Union. Arendt’s influence from *Origins of Totalitarianism* is undeniable in Friedrich’s and Brzezinski’s *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, which came out five years after Arendt’s work, in 1956. *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* blends Friedrich’s dislike of the Soviet Union with Arendt’s view of isolation and atomization. To this, Brzezinski added his impressions of Soviet dictatorship, told to him by his father. Expanding on Arendt’s explanation on how Hitler and Stalin obtained power, Friedrich and Brzezinski mapped out six factors needed to make a successful totalitarian dictatorship: “an ideology, a single party typically led by one man, a terroristic police, a communications monopoly, a weapons monopoly, and a centrally directed economy.”¹⁰³ It was the combination of these six traits, never being all present together in any one society before this time, which allowed totalitarianism to become a modern form of complete dictatorship.¹⁰⁴ Once it was in

⁹⁹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 487.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, v.

¹⁰¹ Rothkopf, 158.

¹⁰² Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1956), 17.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁰⁴ Friedrich, ed., *Totalitarianism*, 55.

place, this specific combination also ensured that the average citizen had no hope of fighting against this new governing system.¹⁰⁵

Not only did this system affect the people living within the borders of the totalitarian state, so too did it influence foreign relations. Totalitarians reject conventional diplomatic behavior. As stated in Friedrich and Brzezinski's book, "[totalitarianism] rejects the possibility of peace between communism and capitalism... War is a necessary means to the end the Bolshevik strives." For how else can the workers of the world rise up and end societal stratification?¹⁰⁶ With this in mind, Friedrich and Brzezinski believed that the only way for totalitarian dictators to interact with the world is through constant struggle, leading both men to affirm in their book that "those who reject [totalitarianism] have no alternative but to strive for its destruction."¹⁰⁷ In the age of nuclear weapons, this was a dangerous idea, yet Brzezinski would adhere to this point of view throughout his future political career.

Just as Kissinger sought to influence more than just academics with his publishing of *Confluence*, Brzezinski wanted to as well. However, these two men approached this goal in different ways. While Kissinger focused on diplomatic interrelationships between countries, Brzezinski looked to the future and wrote about what might happen if communism continued.¹⁰⁸ In an interview, he once exclaimed, "I want to influence the world, shape American policy."¹⁰⁹ At the same time he coauthored *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* with Friedrich, Zbigniew Brzezinski worked on his doctoral dissertation, "The Permanent Purge: Politics in

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 12.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 61.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 68.

¹⁰⁸ Rothkopf, 158.

¹⁰⁹ Vaïsse, "Zbig, Henry, and the New U.S. Foreign Policy Elite," 9.

Soviet Totalitarianism,” under the tutelage of Harvard historian Professor Merle Fainsod.¹¹⁰ In this work, Brzezinski focuses on the purges which occurred in the 1930s, asserting that these led to Stalin’s solidification of power. The secret police enthusiastically executed these purges in order to “perpetuate or extend the terror.”¹¹¹ Brzezinski describes how the members of the secret police started to gain power through these violent purges. Once this happened, Stalin then turned on these same executioners. He then rid the police of the more overly ambitious members. Thus, Stalin reasserted his power and preserved his brand of totalitarianism.¹¹² Although Stalin kept his power after these purges, it was at a price. Brzezinski was quick to point out this as one of many “evolving dysfunctions” of the Soviet Union, always pointing out “the cracks in the façade.”¹¹³ Zbigniew Brzezinski concluded his doctoral thesis by stating that these purges confirmed “the gap between the elite and the general population, since it settles everything inside the hierarchy, and eliminates any lingering notion that spontaneous leadership might arise.”¹¹⁴

With the twin publishing of both *Totalitarian Dictatorship* and *The Permanent Purge* in the same year, the term totalitarianism became even more preponderant in writings about the Soviet Union. The influence of these two works would last well into the next decade, becoming a staple in secondary and college textbooks.¹¹⁵ This included Fainsod’s book *Smolensk under Soviet Rule*, published in 1958. Brzezinski helped Fainsod comb through archival papers of the Communist Party from Smolensk, first seized by the Nazis in 1941 and eventually moved to the United States in 1945. These papers, and the subsequent book, gave firsthand proof of

¹¹⁰ Vaïsse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski: America’s Grand Strategist*, 28.

¹¹¹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Permanent Purge: Politics in Soviet Totalitarianism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), 21.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 128.

¹¹³ Rothkopf, 160.

¹¹⁴ Vaïsse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski: America’s Grand Strategist*, 29.

¹¹⁵ Gleason, 126.

Brzezinski's vision of the Soviet regime as an omniscient and omnipresent totalitarian power; the papers give a personal account of totalitarianism as seen by the people.¹¹⁶ Thanks to these works, as well as several others published through the end of the 1950s and into the 1960s, all of which condemned the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and its totalitarian state, Brzezinski earned the reputation of being the premier Sovietologist in the United States, not just at the Russian Research Center at Harvard University.¹¹⁷

Unfortunately, unlike Henry Kissinger, Harvard University did not offer a professorship to Zbigniew Brzezinski. Therefore, he opted to work at Columbia University in New York City in 1960. Although offered more lucrative positions at the University of Chicago and Berkeley, Brzezinski chose to work in New York because of its proximity to Washington DC, "along the corridor of power."¹¹⁸ This move allowed for him to concentrate on the Russian Institute as well as the Research Institute on Communist Affairs. This also allowed him the time to write books and articles condemning the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the success of which led to Harvard offering Brzezinski tenure only two years after turning him down for associate professor. Although he was tempted by the proposition, he declined because he felt his "destiny was no longer in Cambridge but right where he was, in New York, halfway between Cambridge and Washington."¹¹⁹

It was during the mid-1950s that Brzezinski not only denounced the Soviet Union as a totalitarian state, but he also judged the United States responses to Soviet malevolence as "essentially static, even conservative."¹²⁰ Brzezinski hoped that after the death of Joseph Stalin

¹¹⁶ Vaïsse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski: America's Grand Strategist*, 27.

¹¹⁷ Vaïsse, "Zbig, Henry, and the New U.S. Foreign Policy Elite," 4.

¹¹⁸ Vaïsse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski: America's Grand Strategist*, 64-65.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 64-66.

¹²⁰ John Dumbrell, *American Foreign Policy: Carter to Clinton* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 40.

in 1953 the tensions could ease and the unification of Europe would commence.¹²¹ However, prior to his death, Stalin used propaganda films that focused on local leaders in various parts of the Soviet Union and its satellite states, highlighting those who were in lockstep with his dictatorial policies. Two of the men featured in the marketing schemes were Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev. Both men rose through the Communist ranks, avoided purges, and eventually became premier mainly by mirroring and furthering Stalin's policies, as well as utilizing his tactics.¹²² Brzezinski reiterated this thought in an article for *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* by writing, "It is noteworthy that since Stalin's purges of the early 1930s, the Soviet leadership has made an effort to restrict party membership."¹²³ Only those loyal to Stalin's ideology could join the Soviet Communist Party. Therefore, Khrushchev and Brezhnev, in turn, would use totalitarian tactics reminiscent of Stalin to keep the Soviet empire intact. This was especially acute when Soviet satellite states such as Hungary and Czechoslovakia started seeking independence from Moscow, the suppression of which came swiftly. For this, neither man received severe chastising for their actions from the United States.

Brzezinski condemned America's foreign policy for its lack of action after both the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and the Prague Spring of 1968. In response to both events, Moscow responded with military might to quash them. Unfortunately, these uprisings coincided with the Suez Canal crisis and the Vietnam War respectively, therefore Washington felt its

¹²¹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, "How the Cold War Was Played" in *Foreign Affairs* 51, no. 1 (October 1972): 189.

¹²² Friedrich, ed., *Totalitarianism*, 21-22.

¹²³ Zbigniew Brzezinski, "The Pattern of Political Purges," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 317 (May 1958), 87.

attention belonged elsewhere¹²⁴ However, Brzezinski did not think the other world events should preclude America's actions in Europe. Zbigniew Brzezinski believed that the Soviet Union overstepped by invading these European countries, and since the United States did not respond in kind, America was essentially allowing the Soviet Union to keep the continent divided.

The first event, the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, came about a few months after Nikita Khrushchev's Secret Speech, which condemned Joseph Stalin, the Stalin cult, and his bloody regime. While the world hoped the new Soviet leader might lift the Iron Curtain, allowing for the satellite states of Eastern Europe to form their own sovereign and elected governments, Khrushchev showed his true colors on November 4, 1956, just thirteen days after the people of Hungary expressed interest in separating themselves from Moscow's grip. Brzezinski described the events as follows, "In Hungary, the Communist party of some 900,000 members disintegrated in a few glorious October days. Its power was reimposed only by Soviet bayonets and a new party was constructed."¹²⁵ Unwilling to let a satellite state leave the Soviet Union, Khrushchev sent in troops to quell the rebellion. Despite the Soviet Union militarizing imperialism with the launching of their newly acquired intercontinental missiles, the United States refused to take action, thus allowing the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to oppress a country within its sphere of influence unchecked. Despite a Hungarian diplomat pleading for help from the Department of State in a teletype conversation sent on the night of November 3,

¹²⁴ Günter Bischof, "'No Action': The Johnson Administration and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968," in *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968*, ed. Günter Bischof, Stefan Karner, and Peter Ruggenthaler (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010), 215.

¹²⁵ Brzezinski, "The Pattern of Political Purges," 86.

and into the morning of November 4, 1956, all while the Soviet tanks came rolling through the city of Budapest, the United States' only response was the following:

Hungary in its present exceptionally difficult situation turns with particular confidence to the love of peace, the wisdom, and the bravery which the President up to now has so often firmly shown. Although the people of Hungary are determined to resist with desperation the attack upon them, there is no doubt that in this unequal struggle it will be defeated if it does not receive help. In this moment [the] most necessary kind of help is political not military.¹²⁶

In no uncertain terms, the United States responded to Hungary's appeals by saying that the only aid forthcoming is that of words, not actions. By not helping out the people in Hungary, containment amounted to the American government "accept[ing] the status quo."¹²⁷ Therefore, the Soviets had a free hand in suppressing the rebelling, including purging the Hungarian government of dissidents, including former Prime Minister Imre Nagy, and the Soviets installed a puppet government. János Kádár, a centrist party figure, took Nagy's place and supported reconciliation with the Soviet Union.¹²⁸ These Soviet actions horrified and hardened Brzezinski's views toward the Soviet Union, who supported liberation of the captive peoples of Eastern Europe, a policy President Eisenhower dismissed due to his not wanting to start a nuclear war, which he believed would happen if the United States challenged this event in the Soviet bloc. To Brzezinski, the American lack of military reaction to the Hungarian Revolution made the United States look like a coward to its European allies.

In order to ensure that other satellite states would not opt for revolution, Khrushchev began to focus on the "central front," which consisted of the countries along the Iron Curtain.

¹²⁶ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957, Volume XXV, Eastern Europe*, eds. Edward C. Keefer, Ronald D. Landa, and Stanley Shaloff (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1990), Document 162.

¹²⁷ Vaïsse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski: America's Grand Strategist*, 49.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 86.

Khrushchev went so far as to explore a nuclear option, which became possible in 1959, with the successful test of their first ICBM. Now, “the Soviet leaders launched [a] new campaign to coerce the West out of Berlin, through sustained military-political pressure.”¹²⁹ With Berlin deep behind the Iron Curtain, Khrushchev wanted to remove the western powers that controlled three-fourths of the city. The launch was fortuitous because it coincided with Khrushchev solidifying his position as Stalin’s ideological successor. Once the Soviet leaders realized their philosophical and political system would remain intact after a regime change, they once again set their sights on expanding their empire.¹³⁰

Khrushchev’s successful consolidation of power caused Brzezinski to revamp his definition of a totalitarian regime. The six characteristics he laid out with Friedrich really only applied to the beginning of totalitarianism, with Stalin. By the early 1960s, totalitarianism morphed to the point that it only included three characteristics: “(1) an ideology based on refounding society and humanity; (2) the absence of moral, legal, or traditional restraints on the exercise of power; (3) a logic of action and destruction or absorption of all the other social groups.”¹³¹ This new definition reflects that the post-Stalin Soviet Union saw a relaxation of some control over the population; however, this did not extend to the satellite states, including Hungary, where Khrushchev ensured that violence would keep the Communist Party in power.¹³² With these changes, Brzezinski did feel there was a possibility for Washington to attack Moscow. Instead of just accepting the stranglehold of communism in Eastern Europe,

¹²⁹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Alternative to Partition: For a Broader Conception of America’s Role in Europe* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1965), 76-77.

¹³⁰ Betty Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 232.

¹³¹ Vaïsse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski: America’s Grand Strategist*, 71.

¹³² Zbigniew Brzezinski, preface to *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1956), ix.

Brzezinski advocated an alternative plan “combining patience and ruse...bring[ing] into play the natural tendency of Eastern Europeans to be attracted by the West...lead[ing] to distancing from Moscow.”¹³³ Although Brzezinski did not want another world war to break out in response to the abuses happening to the European nations behind the Iron Curtain, this did not mean that the United States should just idly accept any aggressive moves from the Soviet Union.

In other parts of the world, the United States was able to flex its military muscle. The reassertion of American political and military strength during the Cuban Missile Crisis led to tactical changes in the Soviet Union as well as a leadership shift. In 1964, Leonid Brezhnev replaced Nikita Khrushchev as General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. With Brezhnev came a change of Soviet foreign policy towards the West, mainly consisting of what Brzezinski would call fragmentation. Although the Soviets still desired the United States to pull out of Europe all together, Brezhnev and his ambassadors pursued a two-pronged attack along diplomatic and political lines, instead of using nuclear options.¹³⁴ This fragmentation policy sought to disrupt American – European political and economic unity. Brezhnev hoped this disruption would lead President Johnson to give up the thought of a united Europe.¹³⁵ Economically, since 1948 the United States sent millions of dollars in financial and material aid through the Marshall Plan in an effort to rebuild and re-unify Europe. Although this aid was a good idea, Brzezinski believed America missed an opportunity; this opportunity being to “employ a first nuclear strike to protect its interests abroad [and] give its verbal threats a greater credibility.”¹³⁶ With this strategy, Brzezinski saw the strategic use of atomic weapons to

¹³³ Vaïsse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski: America's Grand Strategist*, 258.

¹³⁴ Zbigniew Brzezinski, “The Communist World in a New Phase,” *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science* 28, no. 1 (1965), 60.

¹³⁵ Brzezinski, *Alternative to Partition*, 79.

¹³⁶ Glad, 235.

eliminate enemy warehouses and other war materiel as a way of preventing the Cold War from starting. In essence, Zbigniew Brzezinski, just like Henry Kissinger, saw the validity of a limited nuclear war that would devastate the Soviet Union, thus stopping the threat of communism before the setting up of spheres of influence. By missing this chance, the United States essentially allowed the Soviet Union the opportunity to start to build its own stockpile. Once the Soviet Union thought they gained nuclear parity with the United States, the Soviet Union felt confident enough to crack down on its satellite states, thus making “the Soviet presence in Europe ... a combination of very traditional imperialism with an ideological compulsion for creating carbon copies of the Soviet model in countries subject to Soviet control.”¹³⁷ Brezhnev would demonstrate this belief in Czechoslovakia before the decade’s end.

Just as Nikita Khrushchev quashed the Hungarian Uprising of 1956, so too did Leonid Brezhnev crush the Prague Spring of 1968. Despite the fact that the Czechoslovakian leader Alexander Dubček only sought to reform his country’s political and cultural life by giving additional rights to, the Soviet Union refused to allow this to happen.¹³⁸ Despite Dubček’s insistence on remaining loyal to Moscow, the Soviet premier refused to listen. Instead, Brezhnev authorized the Warsaw Pact countries to invade their neighbor with heavily armored tanks. Eventually the Soviet Union forced Dubček to step down, replacing him with Gustáv Husák, who used the process of normalization to return the country back to its pre-revolutionary, pro-Soviet days. In response to this aggressive move by the Warsaw Pact, the term totalitarianism came back into political use, after being on the wane since the Cuban Missile Crisis.¹³⁹ Stating that only Moscow could intervene in its satellite states, the Brezhnev Doctrine reinforced the

¹³⁷ Zbigniew Brzezinski, “America and Europe” in *Foreign Affairs* 49, no. 1 (October 1970), 15.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹³⁹ Gleason, 191.

view that even under new leadership the Soviet Union still operated within a totalitarian regime. In Brzezinski's eyes, the doctrine was an assertive measure to stop bridge-building between the East and the West.¹⁴⁰

During 1968, America's military was responding to the Tet Offensive in Vietnam. President Johnson could not fathom having to fight a two-front war on Communism. Therefore, in response to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, the United States again did nothing. For the second time in less than fifteen years, Moscow gave Washington a reason to respond militarily. However, already bogged down in a quagmire raging in Southeast Asia, Johnson and his administration wanted to avoid a second war against Communism. Secretary of State Dean Rusk fervently pushed for this "no action" policy because the United States and the Soviet Union were on track toward détente, having just signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty less than two months before the Warsaw Pact Invasion, and with atomic limitation talks scheduled begin in the near future.¹⁴¹ Not wanting to deter this positive progression in relations, Secretary Rusk along with Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford wrote a letter to Premier Brezhnev, with President Johnson's assent, stating the following position:

On this matter, the policy of the United States and of our NATO allies has, moreover, been clear: We ourselves have no desire or intention of taking any action in Eastern Europe which might threaten the security of the Soviet Union. On the contrary, we have been working towards the possibility that NATO and the Warsaw Pact might negotiate mutual troop withdrawals or reductions and gradually ameliorate the confrontation in Central Europe and open the way towards stable peace in that critical area.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Brzezinski, "America and Europe," 18.

¹⁴¹ Bischof, 218.

¹⁴² *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XVII, Eastern Europe*, ed. James E. Miller (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1996), Document 91.

Therefore, in order to avoid another world war, the United States “would not respond militarily to the renewed rape of Czechoslovakia.”¹⁴³

This lack of response seemed to undo the hegemony the United States gained after the Cuban Missile Crisis. Soviet totalitarianism once again proved that in order for the Communist bloc to remain under Moscow’s rule, force and hostility were necessary.¹⁴⁴ Yet, the United States refused to stop this destructive force. Due to America’s lack of response to the invasion of Czechoslovakia, Brzezinski asserted that the “American establishment appears to be intellectually paralyzed and politically pusillanimous ... It is with Europe that the United States shares certain concepts of law and personal freedom. Unless America continues actively to promote a broad vision of European restoration America does not have a foreign policy.”¹⁴⁵ Brzezinski emphasized that in order for the United States to keep world supremacy, it must sustain an effective military presence in Europe; Europe needed the United States to act as a “sword defending Europe instead of a shield protecting their allies.”¹⁴⁶ Of course, the sword to which Brzezinski alluded to was the threat of nuclear war. Allowing the Soviet Union to invade a European country unchecked diminished the effectiveness of American foreign policy.¹⁴⁷ This lack of American response to the Soviet invasions of both Hungary and Czechoslovakia ensured that the Iron Curtain stayed in place, again making the United States look weak upon the world stage.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ Bischof, 221.

¹⁴⁴ Brzezinski, *Alternative to Partition*, 121.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁴⁶ Zbigniew Brzezinski and Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Power: USA/USSR* (New York: The Viking Press, 1965), 395.

¹⁴⁷ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 30.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 411-412.

Brzezinski hoped with the election of President Nixon that America would again be tough on Communism. With one of America's most fervent anti-Communist politicians in the White House, Brzezinski felt he could share his "hard-nosed containment doctrine" on the world stage. He pushed for aggressive military maneuvers, in both Europe and Vietnam.¹⁴⁹ Brzezinski believed that in order for the United States to topple the Soviet Union, America had to not only recommit to its European allies on the continent, but also push back against Soviet incursions in other parts of the world.¹⁵⁰ It was at this point that Brzezinski began criticizing his fellow Harvard alumnus, calling Kissinger's approach to the Soviet Union "too timid, essentially static, even conservative."¹⁵¹ Brzezinski associated Kissinger with détente, even though he would eventually pursue similar policies under Carter as his National Security Advisor. At this point, Brzezinski did not believe that a relaxation of tensions could occur due to a fundamental difference in the understanding of the term's definition.¹⁵² For the United States, détente was a comprehensive agreement which saw both sides reducing their stockpiles; for the Soviet Union, détente amounted to peaceful coexistence where neither side would seek to influence countries outside of their own sphere of influence.¹⁵³ Although Brzezinski did not want a large scale war, he felt that Nixon and Kissinger went too far, stating "we are not only helping the Soviet economy but we are also buttressing the Soviet political system."¹⁵⁴ Also, détente allowed for American complicity against the Soviet Union's growing boldness.¹⁵⁵ Therefore, Brzezinski

¹⁴⁹ Dumbrell, 15.

¹⁵⁰ Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard*, 30.

¹⁵¹ Dumbrell, 40.

¹⁵² See p 37.

¹⁵³ Zbigniew Brzezinski, "From Cold War to Cold Peace" in *Détente*, ed. G. R. Urban (London: Temple Smith, 1976), 266.

¹⁵⁴ Scott Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled: The Foreign Policy of the Carter Administration* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008), 20.

¹⁵⁵ Vaïsse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski: The Grand Strategist*, 127.

supported SALT I only in as much as he viewed it as a testing ground to see if the Soviet Union actually wanted to stop their nuclear buildup.¹⁵⁶

Then, in 1976, Zbigniew Brzezinski went from foreign policy expert and theorist to foreign policy advisor with the election of America's thirty-ninth president, James Earl Carter Jr. President Carter believed that government, and all of its policies, should adhere to the standards upheld by its people. In particular, he wanted this applied to foreign policy and once in office, Carter immediately wanted to tackle the arms control issue. First, in his inaugural address, he expressed his hope of achieving not only an international agreement on human rights but also he wanted the American people to know that his presidency would seek the "ultimate goal – the elimination of all nuclear weapons from this earth."¹⁵⁷ In saying this, Carter "became the first president to declare publicly complete nuclear *disarmament* (in contrast to *arms control*) as a goal for US policy [author's emphasis]."¹⁵⁸ Although eager to end the nuclear arms race, unfortunately Carter lacked the knowledge of how to draft foreign policy and treaties. Hence, Carter looked to Zbigniew Brzezinski for help and appointed him his National Security Advisor.

Previously, both men worked together on the Trilateral Commission, an elite group focusing on bringing Europe, North America, and Japan together economically and politically.¹⁵⁹ From this group sprang a trust between Carter and Brzezinski that would last throughout Carter's presidency. Carter, whose only previous political experience consisted of being a one-time governor of Georgia, knew he was weak in his knowledge of foreign policy issues, therefore he relied on Brzezinski's expertise, deferring to his judgment.¹⁶⁰ Carter, like Nixon, allowed all

¹⁵⁶ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 50.

¹⁵⁷ Caldwell, 17

¹⁵⁸ Ibid..

¹⁵⁹ Rothkopf, 166.

¹⁶⁰ Glad, 36.

Soviet Union intelligence briefings to come through Brzezinski “and by no one else.”¹⁶¹ Carter would go even further and elevate Brzezinski’s position to one on par with Cabinet positions. This action solidified Brzezinski as Carter’s main source for foreign policy advice on key issues, much to Secretary of State Cyrus Vance’s chagrin.¹⁶²

Picking up where Kissinger left off, as Nixon’s and Ford’s National Security Advisor and then Secretary of State, Brzezinski had almost complete control of American foreign policy. He would center it on three pillars: one, maintaining a powerful military; two, encouraging division and nationalism within the communist bloc; and three, spreading Western ideology via American programming on Radio Free Europe, transmitted across the Iron Curtain.¹⁶³ These three pillars would help to provoke the crumbling of the Soviet Union.¹⁶⁴

Once in charge of the National Security Council, Brzezinski wanted to challenge the Soviet military buildup since the 1960s. Brzezinski wanted to target not just the Soviet Union’s economy, but also their political and military leaders.¹⁶⁵ By targeting leaders, Brzezinski hoped for a weakening of the interior structure, predicated on the strength of the Politburo and the Soviet Armed Forces, eventually leading to a collapse of the entire system.¹⁶⁶ This did not go

¹⁶¹ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 64.

¹⁶² Rothkopf, 167.

¹⁶³ Vaïsse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski: America’s Grand Strategist*, 260.

¹⁶⁴ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 258.

¹⁶⁵ Rothkopf, 181-182.

¹⁶⁶ Brzezinski’s hope was that once the inner workings of the Communist system started to collapse, then the entire system would come tumbling down. He hoped that all the various ethnic groups, forced to coexist behind the Iron Curtain, would pull apart and want independence. As stated earlier, Brzezinski’s predictions often came true. One cannot help but think of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. Although Josip Broz Tito died in 1980, he really was the glue which held that country together. The conflicts and ethnic tensions kept bubbling up, with men like Slobodon Milošević leading the charge. By 1990, the old communist parties had lost their power, and between 1991 and 1992, four states declared independence. Unfortunately, all this tension led to war and genocide as the factions battled over boundary lines and claims to territory. Although not to this extent, the type of infighting and fractioning that occurred in the Balkans was exactly what Zbigniew Brzezinski hoped would occur once the leaders of the Soviet Union began to be seen as weak and incapable. Luckily, Mikhail Gorbachev was able to steer his country along a safer, less war-ridden path.

unnoticed by Moscow, with the top Soviet leadership writing in a report that “Dr. Brzezinski was seen as the arch enemy, a man not to be trusted.”¹⁶⁷ He wanted to push ten goals for the Carter administration in the first four years. Although number four stressed the arms limitation and reduction talks with the Soviet Union, number ten spelled out a harsher stance: “To maintain a defense posture capable of deterring the Soviet Union, both on the strategic and conventional level, from hostile acts and from political pressure.”¹⁶⁸ In order to achieve goal number ten, the United States would need to rethink its defenses as well as improve the military might of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Brzezinski, like Carter, wanted to pursue a commitment to human rights.¹⁶⁹ By focusing on the Soviet Union’s abuse of its citizens, like what happened during the Hungarian Revolution and the Prague Spring, Brzezinski hoped to gain “greater global support and focus global attention on the glaring internal weaknesses of the Soviet system.”¹⁷⁰

With this in mind, Brzezinski began to separate himself from Kissinger’s legacy by crafting of the second strategic arms limitation treaty. Brzezinski did not believe that the only alternative to détente was war. Instead of just focusing on nuclear missile numbers, Brzezinski wanted the SALT II agreement to reflect a relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union that had evolved from massive retaliation to one based on “competition and cooperation.”¹⁷¹ Only by basing foreign negotiations on this policy could both countries achieve peace. This comprehensive view of détente led to the Soviet Union attacking Brzezinski. In his

¹⁶⁷ Vaïsse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski: America’s Grand Strategist*, 262.

¹⁶⁸ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977–1980, Volume I, Foundations of Foreign Policy*, ed. Kristin L. Ahlberg (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 2014), Document 36.

¹⁶⁹ Dumbrell, 20.

¹⁷⁰ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 149.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 149.

ideas, Moscow saw “a challenge to their legitimacy and thus to their very existence.”¹⁷² Zbigniew Brzezinski replied, “I must say their fears are justified.”¹⁷³ Brzezinski talked in code; for to him “[the] words ‘reciprocal’ and ‘comprehensive’ meant ... that we should insist on equal treatment (retaliating in kind if necessary)” against the Soviet Union.¹⁷⁴ It is no accident that Brzezinski wanted to organize the SALT II process, for this was the only way he could ensure that there was no effect on American nuclear stockpiles.¹⁷⁵

The biggest difference between Brzezinski and Kissinger was Brzezinski’s public declarations of his intentions. Although he spoke in code, he presented his views to the world. Premier Brezhnev liked Nixon-Kissinger backdoor foreign policy making, which continued under Ford. When Carter and Brzezinski announced to the world that the only deal they were willing to make with the Soviets involved addressing human rights issues, this shocked the Brezhnev. The public proclamations made by President Carter regarding the necessity for human rights clauses caught the Soviet government off guard. Under Carter’s predecessor Gerald Ford, the Soviets believed they reached the basic tenets of the SALT II negotiations at the Vladivostok Summit in 1974.¹⁷⁶ The Soviet Premier did not expect the changes presented by Carter and Brzezinski, therefore Brezhnev rebuffed initial requests for peace talks.

Eventually, this strategy proved harmful to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The Soviet economy suffered greatly under the pressures of the arms race, therefore Brezhnev could no longer ignore Carter. However, to save face on the world stage, the Soviet government

¹⁷² Brzezinski, “From Cold War to Cold Peace,” 264.

¹⁷³ Ibid..

¹⁷⁴ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 147.

¹⁷⁵ Rothkopf, 183.

¹⁷⁶ Itai Narzizenfield Sneh, *The Future Almost Arrived: How Jimmy Carter Failed to Change US Foreign Policy* (New York City: Peter Lang Publishing, INC, 2008), 30.

decided to send Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko to the negotiating table. Gromyko made every effort to come to a quick agreement on SALT II provisions.¹⁷⁷ Brzezinski saw all negotiations with members of totalitarian dictatorships as false; “to them, such an occasion is another opportunity to undermine the enemy.”¹⁷⁸ Therefore, Brzezinski used these peace talks as strategy sessions, believing that détente under Kissinger worked more in the favor of the Soviets than it did the United States, therefore he did not want Gromyko to have the upper hand.¹⁷⁹ As historian David Rothkopf points out, “[Brzezinski] was, to a greater extent than many of his colleagues, more committed to containment than ‘balance’.”¹⁸⁰ With the nickname ‘Mr. Nyet’, Moscow could feel reassured that Gromyko would not buckle under pressure from Brzezinski at the negotiating table.¹⁸¹ Brzezinski relished talking to the hard-lined Gromyko for this allowed him to convince Carter that the only way to “stabilize relations with the Soviet Union was to threaten them.”¹⁸² The hawkish tendencies of Brzezinski began to influence American foreign policy. For instance, Brzezinski’s proposition for SALT II consisted of the United States limiting “the number of heavy bombers equipped with ALCMs [air-launched cruise missiles] with ranges up to 2500 km to a total of 250; during the same period, the Soviet Union will also limit the production and deployment of Backfires to the total of 250 ... The U.S. is *not* prepared to count each such heavy bomber as the equivalent of a MIRVed missile launcher, to be counted against the MIRV ceiling [author’s emphasis].”¹⁸³ Like his predecessor, Brzezinski also refused

¹⁷⁷ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 165.

¹⁷⁸ Frederick and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, 60.

¹⁷⁹ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 149.

¹⁸⁰ Rothkopf, 184.

¹⁸¹ “The Rise of Détente”, 489.

¹⁸² Glad, 236.

¹⁸³ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume XXXIII, SALT II, 1972-1980*, ed. Erin. R. Mahan (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 2013), Document 163.

to lessen the number of MIRVed missiles, which were superior to any nuclear weapons system the Soviets had.

However, these tendencies eventually went too far. Although Brzezinski wanted to improve conditions for Soviet citizens, he would not protect them at any cost. Whenever human rights came up during the nuclear negotiations, Gromyko kept reminding the United States of their own flawed human rights record. Alluding to the failure of the Equal Rights Amendment to pass Congress, Gromyko said “that he was concerned that the public debate on this issue would be disadvantageous to both sides... Brezhnev does not want to see the human rights issue become a test of wills between the two countries because then Brezhnev would be ‘forced to answer’.”¹⁸⁴ Clearly, Brezhnev was not going to accept all human rights issues on American terms, dragging out the SALT II talks. As the negotiations with Gromyko continued with no end in sight, Brzezinski made a choice. As he would state in his memoir about being National Security Advisor, “when a choice between the two had to be made, between projecting U.S. power or enhancing human rights ... I felt that power had to come first. Without credible American power, we would simply not be able either to protect our interests or to advance more humane goals.”¹⁸⁵ In a memorandum, Zbigniew Brzezinski tried to persuade President Carter to acquiesce on the human rights issue no longer. He wrote that by allowing the human rights issue to overrun the nuclear talks, the Soviet Union made all the calls, thus relegating the United States to an inferior negotiating position. Brzezinski summed up his feelings as follows:

Both in tone and occasionally in substance, we have been excessively acquiescent, and that the country craves, and our national security needs, both a more assertive tone and a more assertive substance to our foreign policy. I believe that both for international reasons as well as for domestic political reasons you ought to *deliberately toughen both*

¹⁸⁴ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977 – 1980, Volume VI, Soviet Union*, ed. Melissa Jane Taylor (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 2013), Document 3.

¹⁸⁵ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 49.

the tone and the substance of our foreign policy. The country associates assertiveness with leadership, and the world at large expects American leadership insofar as the Soviet challenge is concerned. That challenge is real, and a recognition of it does not mean that we have to abandon such positive objectives as arms control and notably SALT II. We should be mature enough to be able to seek, all at the same time, SALT II; and more defense efforts; and pursue a more assertive foreign policy [author's emphasis].¹⁸⁶

This positive correspondence reflects that Brzezinski, although he supported liberation of Eastern Europe, would not allow for the SALT II negotiations to end over the human rights issue.

Instead, the United States needed to be aggressive during the SALT II nuclear talks in order to appear tough on the world stage. In Brzezinski's opinion, for too long the United States seemed inferior to the Soviet Union when discussing nuclear arms proliferation.

It was at this point that President Carter, wanting terms reflecting his stance on human rights, sent Secretary of State Vance to the negotiating table along with Brzezinski. Both Carter and Vance wanted deep cuts in nuclear missile numbers, yet Brzezinski repeatedly pushed for only modest ones.¹⁸⁷ Brzezinski feared that even if the United States drastically reduced their nuclear missile numbers, there was no guarantee the Soviet Union would follow suit. As Carter's Secretary of Defense Harold Brown described it, "Brzezinski had, I think, a much more apocalyptic view of the world ... [especially] toward the Soviets."¹⁸⁸ The United States might falter, and to Brzezinski, nothing could be worse for "there is no alternative to the West and there simply must be no decline of the West."¹⁸⁹ Therefore, Brzezinski pushed Carter to inform his Joint Chiefs of Staff that throughout the SALT II talks, there was a definite "commitment to a strong national defense and, in particular, a vigorous strategic force modernization program."¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977 – 1980, Volume I, Foundations of Foreign Policy*, ed. Kristin L. Ahlberg (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 2014), Document 126.

¹⁸⁷ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 159.

¹⁸⁸ Rothkopf, 188.

¹⁸⁹ Brzezinski, "From Cold War to Cold Peace," 279.

¹⁹⁰ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969 – 1976, Volume XXXIII, SALT II, 1972-1980*, ed. Erin. R. Mahan (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 2013), Document 225.

Already irked at Brzezinski's influence on foreign policy, Vance saw this continuing harsh stance as problematic, therefore Vance then went to Moscow by himself in order to finish the SALT II negotiations. Brzezinski knew that Vance would somehow guarantee that the Soviet Union would end up having more nuclear weapons than the United States. Through talks lasting from April to May 1979, "Vance and Gromyko resolved their outstanding differences, agreeing to limit both superpowers to 2250 (initially 2400) delivery vehicles, while sublimits would restrict particular categories of weapons, including heavy ICBMs, and separate agreements would limit the deployment of cruise missiles and tactical bombers."¹⁹¹

These terms were unacceptable to Brzezinski. A little over a month before the scheduled meeting between Carter and Brezhnev to sign the new treaty in Vienna, Brzezinski urged Carter to reconsider. In a memorandum to Carter, Brzezinski warned, "We have had intelligence that indicates that the Soviet Union is developing a new lighter missile to replace the aging SS-11s. All the negotiations on new ICBM parameters seemed aimed at permitting just such a development in addition to developing another new MIRV missile under the ICBM exception in the agreement."¹⁹² Despite his warning, both countries accepted the terms reached by Vance and Gromyko, and Premier Leonid Brezhnev and President Jimmy Carter signed SALT II on June 18, 1979 in Vienna.

Although Brzezinski did not successfully stop President Carter from signing SALT II, he was able to push his hawkish agenda again with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Brzezinski "devised and recommended United States military support" of the Afghan people to stop the

¹⁹¹ Sargent, 272.

¹⁹² *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume XXXIII, SALT II, 1972-1980*, ed. Erin. R. Mahan (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 2013), Document 238.

Soviet incursion.¹⁹³ This time, Brzezinski was effective in his drive for intervention, and for the first time the United States adopted “a policy of directly supporting actions aimed at killing Soviet troops.”¹⁹⁴ Finally, Brzezinski was able to find a way to create and exploit a weakness in the Soviet Union, for the ensuing quagmire would eventually be one of the mitigating factors in the Soviet Union’s collapse a decade later, ending the Cold War confrontation.¹⁹⁵ At home, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan led to the United States Senate not ratifying the SALT II agreement. Once the boots were on the ground, détente died.

Concluding Remarks

Throughout the 1970s, arguably the second most powerful men behind the President of the United States were two immigrants from Europe. Wanting the chance to influence foreign affairs on a national level, they espoused a strong anti-Communist policy in an effort to steer the thoughts of men working in Washington. Both men would become pillars of the Washington establishment in the role of National Security Advisor under Presidents Nixon and Carter. As Justin Vaïsse states, “they shared essential features and a common achievement... Together, these two immigrants invented a new model that men would later emulate, and they made a profound mark on American foreign policy, one that resonates to this day.”¹⁹⁶ As students attending Harvard University, America’s premier institution of higher learning, these men solidified their beliefs. Under the tutelage of the old guard, these two men forged a new path as foreign-born specialists of European policy. Not only was their ability to speak European

¹⁹³ Rothkopf, 205

¹⁹⁴ Zbigniew Brzezinski, “The Cold War and its Aftermath” in *Foreign Affairs* 71, no. 4 (Fall 1992), 41.

¹⁹⁵ Rothkopf, 208-209.

¹⁹⁶ Vaïsse, “Zbig, Henry, and the New US Foreign Policy Elite,” 22.

languages a plus, but their European background contributed to their success as well. These men remembered a strong, pre-totalitarian Europe, one they wanted to see free again.

In order to do this, both men urged limited nuclear war in an effort to stop the spread of Communism in Europe. Although to the twenty-first century observer, these powerful men advocating the United States use its nuclear options seems extreme, an understanding of their youthful experience with totalitarian regimes can help explain their attitudes and motivations. Kissinger saw families disappear into the night in Nazi Germany while Brzezinski's father witnessed the purging of intellectuals and dissidents in Soviet Ukraine. Neither man advocated a large-scale war, yet neither believed that totalitarianism should go unchecked in the world. In addition, neither man believed the United States went far enough in addressing the atrocities committed back in their respective homelands before the Second World War.

These men left Europe as children, leaving behind countries in the midst of totalitarian political terror. Once at Harvard, political theorist Hannah Arendt gave both men a working definition of the regime in charge of the Soviet Union. In both men's minds, communism became synonymous with totalitarianism. To them, communism was a false prophecy; American patriotism and progress, they believed, therefore called for an uncompromising, government-led resistance by the American government. Both men admitted that, as policymakers, they depended more on convictions acquired before entering office than on new material they received as National Security Advisors. As evidenced by their early life experiences, as well as their influences during college and their readings of Hannah Arendt, it is argued here that their youthful experience in Europe led to their tough stance against Soviet totalitarianism. The shaping of both men came from a personal history that shaped their beliefs.

As Kissinger once wrote, “I had seen evil in the world, and I knew it was there, and I knew that there are some things you have to fight for.”¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁷ Suri, 14.

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Vita

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