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Gideon Weiss April 5, 2016

Rogue Counselors: Kissinger, Brzezinski and the Ambiguous National Security Advisor

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Abstract
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The 1947 National Security Act restructured the United States' foreign policy apparatus. The bill created the National Security Council, a new forum for cabinet level policy formulation, and a research and support staff. A few years later, in 1953, President Eisenhower created the National Security Advisor, who would serve dual roles, head of the NSC staff and policy advisor to the President. While the NSC had a basis in federal law, the National Security Advisor did not. When Henry Kissinger in 1968, the position's flaws, stemming from a lack of structure and oversight were revealed. Kissinger controlled foreign policy for eight years, shutting out Secretary of State William Rogers and often maneuvering unilaterally. While new administration attempted to fix the system, National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski was able to achieve a similar dominance over policy.

The reason for Kissinger and Brzezinski's control is one in the same; the amorphous and abstract nature of the position they held. Both men used the NSC system to control information flow and decision making power while using the position's lack of oversight to operate independently. Documents from the Nixon and Carter libraries give new insight into the two men's control. Kissinger used deputy Secretary of State Joe Sisco as his own staffer, usurping Secretary Rogers and operating a quasi-State Department out of the West Wing. Brzezinski used his power to dictate policy during the political crisis in Iran brought on by the Shah's departure. Brzezinski pushed for a coup and worked with military advisors outside of his purview to advance his goals. The structural deficiencies in the National Security Advisor position show up repeatedly during Kissinger and Brzezinski' terms in office, and allow the advisor to operate as an autonomous agent, the broad powers of which have yet to be curtailed.

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Contents

The United States of America emerged from World War II as a nation transformed. Boasting a roaring economy, an idealistic set of values that promised freedom and a voice for all, and the most powerful weapon ever created, the U.S. had positioned itself as a superpower for a new age. Yet the he country immediately faced its first test with the specter of Communism and the Soviet Union's rise to power. The Soviet Union had also emerged from the war as a powerful player on the world stage, with a political and economic system that threatened the democratic, capitalist way of life. All elements of the United States' defense, intelligence and military mechanisms had to be recalibrated to respond to this new threat.

It was in this context that President Harry Truman and Congress orchestrated a massive overhaul of the U.S. government's foreign policy apparatus. The 1947 National Security Act created the Central Intelligence Agency, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and consolidated the Navy and War Departments into the Department of Defense. The bill also established the National Security Council (NSC), which would provide a structured forum for the discussion and implementation of national security and foreign policy. The Council would also aggregate all intelligence and information from the various agencies.

The most important development in the evolution of the NSC was the 1953 creation of the National Security Advisor, perhaps the most enigmatic and opaque position in the Executive branch. The 1947 National Security Act originally called for an executive secretary to manage the National Security Council Staff. The executive secretary was an administrator, tasked with managing the bureaucratic aspects of the council. President Dwight Eisenhower appointed the first national security advisor, Robert Cutler, a year into his presidency. Eisenhower combined

the administrative aspects of the secretary role with the foreign policy bona fides of a cabinet official. Every president since Eisenhower has appointed someone to fill the role.[1]

Despite almost sixty-five years of existence, the National Security Advisor has no official job description. Because the position was created by Eisenhower to fill a need within his administration, there is no basis for the role in federal law. Ultimately, with no specific requirements, the rules and structure of the Advisor and National Security Council have changed with each administration. Furthermore, the National Security Advisor answers to no one but the President. Unlike other high level cabinet positions, the job requires no Congressional approval or oversight.

This puts the National Security Advisor position in potential conflict with the Secretary of State. For over one hundred and eighty years, the Secretary of State has served as the President's chief diplomat and as a symbol of the United States' growing influence in world affairs.[2] From its inception, the position of Secretary of State has carried clout and status. The (highest ranking) cabinet appointment is perhaps the second most powerful job in Washington, D.C. The Secretary of State is the President's chief foreign affairs advisor, and he or she carries out and is the public face of an administration's foreign policy. In fact, with the exception of the Oval Office, few positions in the United States government hold as much cachet and glamour as the Secretary of State. The position is as old as the country itself and has been held by some of the most influential figures in American history. The first Secretary of State was founding father and author of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson. Six U.S. Presidents previously held the position: Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, John Quincy Adams, Martin Van

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[1] John P. Burke, *The National Security Advisor and Staff*, issue brief no. 2009-02, White House Transition Project.
[2] Quite literally. Among the Secretary's many responsibilities is to care for the Great Seal of the United States, which aside from its function as the coat of arms of the country, is used to authenticate treaties and other documents.

Buren, and James Buchanan.[3] Like other cabinet positions and Supreme Court Justices, the Senate must confirm the Secretary of State.

For the first twenty-five years of its existence, the National Security Advisor toiled in relative anonymity, offering counsel to the President and the research support of the NSC. Yet the nature of the position changed when Henry Kissinger agreed to serve as National Security Advisor to the Nixon administration. Kissinger worked to gain control of U.S. foreign policy and became a public figure in his own right. During the first few years of his reign, Kissinger's monopoly on power did not go unnoticed. The press reported on the White House's systematic control of foreign policy and Kissinger's outsize role. But it was not until 1971, two years into Nixon's term that the extent of Kissinger's hold on the foreign policy apparatus would be revealed.

On March 2, 1971, Senator Stuart Symington read a speech on the floor of the Senate titled, "Further Concentration of Power, Executive Privilege and the Kissinger Syndrome."[4] His report alleged that National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger had bypassed the President as the decision maker on foreign policy matters. Symington claimed that it was Kissinger, and not Nixon, who had authorized the escalation of the Vietnam War. He also accused Kissinger of purposefully having avoided testifying about NSC actions before the Senate, on the grounds of Executive Privilege. Despite the senator's potentially explosive charges, his report received little

[3] Other influential men who served as Secretary of State include all three members of "The Great Triumvirate" – the powerful trio of Senators in the mid 19th Century, Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun, William Jennings Bryan, who was well known for his distinguished law career, including the Scopes Trial, and 20th Century diplomatic icons, George Marshall, Dean Acheson and John Foster Dulles.

[4] I discovered the Symington report in the Henry Kissinger files at the Nixon Archives. Kissinger read a copy of Symington's speech and immediately wrote a point-by-point rebuttal of the accusations. The rebuttal was meant to control the narrative when the speech went public. Kissinger was concerned enough about the allegations to defend himself as soon as he read the speech.

media coverage. *The New York Times* ran an article about the speech on the third page of the paper, but the story never gained traction.[5]

What separated Symington's speech from other condemnations of Kissinger's influence was the Senator's focus on Kissinger's structural power. The Senator recognized that Kissinger used the blank slate of the NSC to create a system that allowed him control of foreign policy. While the press focused on Kissinger's squabbles with Secretary of State Rogers and his growing influence, they never examined why this was so. Symington delved into the NSC committee structure – Kissinger chaired the majority of the influential committees - to understand why Kissinger had accrued so much power. Yet, when Zbigniew Brzezinski, who proved to be a similarly powerful and independent National Security Advisor to Jimmy Carter, rose to power through similar mechanisms in 1977, Symington's report was never revisited.

Kissinger and Brzezinski each took advantage of the undefined nature of the National Security Council and advisor position to monopolize influence on foreign policy. Both men created, in essence their own NSC system. This allowed them to control and edit the information that reached the President. At the height of their reigns, Kissinger and Brzezinski manipulated the foreign policy apparatus to exclude the State Department and implement their own initiatives. Kissinger organized the secret bombings in Cambodia at the beginning of his first term. He also co-opted one of Secretary of State William Rogers' deputies, Joseph Sisco, and used State Department personnel to enact his own policy decisions. Kissinger used Sisco as a secret source within the State Department, to stay one step ahead of Rogers' actions. Brzezinski, meanwhile, ascended to an influential role during Carter's term more slowly, reaching an apex as he sidelined Cyrus Vance during the Iran crisis, advocated a coup to Vance's subordinates, and planned the Iranian hostage rescue without the Secretary's consent.

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[5] John W. Finney, "Symington Protests Kissinger's Power," *The New York Times*, March 03, 1971.

Kissinger and Brzezinski both used the flexibility inherent in the position of National Security Advisor for their own gain, yet the rest of the circumstances that led to their control of foreign policy were vastly different and were particular to the circumstances of two very different presidential administrations. Kissinger accepted Nixon's job offer with the promise of controlling the administration's foreign policy. It was an expectation that the State Department would be excluded from the process. The President wanted Kissinger in control and the two structured the NSC system to fit their needs. Nixon purposefully hired a bureaucrat without diplomatic experience, William Rogers, to be Secretary of State, because he was suspicious of career diplomats at State, a holdover viewpoint from his strident cold warrior days as Vice President. He wanted to juxtapose a strong National Security Advisor with a weak Secretary of State. When Jimmy Carter hired Zbigniew Brzezinski, it was with the understanding that Brzezinski would be part of a collegial team, with clearly delineated responsibilities. Carter's intention was to create a foreign policy apparatus that was grounded in teamwork and focused on human rights. Just as importantly, the system was supposed to remedy the failures of the Nixon-Kissinger era. Yet, Brzezinski still managed to control the information flow to the President, and implement foreign policy parallel to Secretary of State Cyrus Vance's initiatives.

Kissinger's ascent to power has been widely documented and analyzed. Academics and Washington insiders alike have acknowledged Kissinger's career as National Security Advisor as the change that shifted the power of foreign policy from the State Department to the White House. Most notable in this vein are the works of Walter Isaacson's *Kissinger* and Seymour Hersh's *The Price of Power.*[6] Both books delve into the reasons for and consequences of Kissinger's rise to power and identify the malleable nature of the foreign policy apparatus as a

[6] Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger: A Biography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992); Seymour M. Hersh, *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House* (New York: Summit Books, 1983).

major factor in Kissinger's influence. Other analyses concentrate on Kissinger's unique contributions to American foreign policy, or his foreign policy ideology, as opposed to the root of his success, the nature of the position itself.[7] In fact, many scholarly articles focus on Kissinger's time as Secretary of State.[8] Other books, like Marvin Kalb and Bernard Kalb's *Kissinger,* and Robert Dallek's *Nixon and Kissinger,* are more broad historical narratives.[9] The latter, in particular, focuses on relationships. There is also little mention in the existing literature about Kissinger's partnership with State deputy Joseph Sisco, which enabled the National Security Advisor to use the mechanisms of the State Department for his own gain. Newly opened documents at the Nixon Presidential Library reveal that Sisco was reporting to Kissinger and that the National Security Advisor had used the deputy's office as a way to control State Department policy.[10]

Scholars have been quick to point out the similarities between Kissinger and Brzezinski, and indeed, superficial similarities are startling. Scholars have shown how Brzezinski reverted to a Kissinger style system, despite Carter's efforts to avoid the mistakes of the Nixon and Ford administrations.[11] Brzezinski's most well known moment of influence is when, in April of 1980, he scheduled a key NSC meeting regarding the hostage rescue attempt while Vance was on vacation. The Secretary of State later resigned in protest. However, a better and less appreciated example of Brzezinski's control of policy was during the political turmoil in Iran in early 1979.

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[7] Tad Szulc, "How Kissinger Did It: Behind the Vietnam Cease-Fire Agreement," *Foreign Policy* No. 15 (July 01, 1974), JSTOR; Coral Bell, "Kissinger in Retrospect: The Diplomacy of Power-Concert," *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 53, no. 2 (April 01, 1977), JSTOR;

[8] Daniel Madar, "Patronage, Position, and Policy Planning: S/P and Secretary Kissinger," *The Journal of Politics* 42, no. 4 (November 01, 1980), JSTOR; Edward R. F. Sheehan, "How Kissinger Did It: Step by Step in the Middle East," *Foreign Policy* No. 22 (April 01, 1976), JSTOR.

[9] Marvin L. Kalb and Bernard Kalb, *Kissinger* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974);

[10] During my research at the Nixon archives, I read through months worth of telephone conversations. Kissinger had his phone conversations recorded and had multiple secretaries whose job it was to transcribe the conversations. When Sisco's name came up repeatedly, I delved into the content of their conversations. I found that Sisco reported to Kissinger instead of Rogers and that the National Security used the partnership to hijack Rogers' foreign policy.

[11] There is significantly less literature on Brzezinski than on Kissinger.

The National Security Advisor sent a businessman acquaintance to Iran to report back to the NSC without the knowledge of Vance. He was also instrumental in sending Lieutenant General Robert Huyser to Iran. Brzezinski would repeatedly push Huyser to arrange a coup of the newly organized civilian government. Huyser's mission was widely reported at the time, but its centrality to Brzezinski's control of foreign policy has not been analyzed. Brzezinski's efforts to start a coup and sideline Vance and his ambassador, Bill Sullivan, provide vital evidence of Brzezinski's usurpation of the Secretary of State's responsibilities.

Ultimately, it is the stark differences in Kissinger and Brzezinski's situations that highlight the problematic and dangerous nature of the National Security Advisor position. Each had different personnel and different policy goals. Kissinger created a revolutionary system that eliminated the historically powerful State Department from foreign policy influence. Brzezinski was paired with a more capable Secretary of State and agreed to a system that was supposed to share power between the NSC and State Department. Despite Carter's intentions to move away from Kissinger's mistakes, Brzezinski was still able to achieve similar levels of questionably legal influence and power. The common denominator is the National Security Advisor's amorphous role. Without oversight, approval, or grounding in federal statutes, the National Security Advisor position is a blank slate that allows the holder to circumvent the established channels of power.

The West Wing's Foreign Policy Machine

Henry Alfred Kissinger was a curious choice for National Security Advisor. His involvement on several State Department working groups aside, the German-born Kissinger had spent his entire career in academia. One only had to compare his resume to those of previous

National Security Advisors to understand the press's main complaint: the man was not qualified.[12] McGeorge Bundy, the National Security Advisor under Kennedy and Johnson, had worked with Eisenhower, Dulles and George Kennan on policy recommendations for the Marshall Plan. Eisenhower's National Security Advisors included a former Secretary of the Army and Deputy Director of the CIA. Adding to the public's confusion, Kissinger had spent the entire 1968 Republican primary cycle as Nelson Rockefeller's primary advisor on foreign policy, publically sparring with Richard Nixon, and advising his main political rival. Besides, Kissinger and his family had immigrated to the United States from Germany to escape the Nazis and still spoke with a thick German accent. It was rare to see a non-Christian immigrant, particularly a Jew, hold such high governmental rank.

Despite the press's qualms and his own inexperience, Kissinger fully embraced his new position. He noted that in the 1960s, "[college] professors for the first time moved from advisory to operational responsibilities."[13] Kissinger was the consummate academic. After completing his undergraduate studies at Harvard, he stayed in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to pursue his PhD. The graduate student studied with one of the foremost experts on Sovietology, Carl Friedrich. Kissinger's academic concentration foreshadowed his future conduct as a bureaucrat. He focused his research on Prince Klemens Von Metternich, Foreign Minister and Chancellor of the Austrian Empire. Metternich was first Chancellor of Austria from 1821 until his 1848 exile and was the driving force behind Austria's foreign policy and the country's police state crackdown. The prince is considered the true Austrian head of state for a thirty-year period, orchestrating the Empire's affairs from behind the puppet leadership of Austrian Emperors, Francis I and Ferdinand I.

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[12] Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), 21.
[13] Kissinger, *White House Years,* 8.

Part of the allure of Nixon's job offer was the opportunity to heavily influence and even control the administration's foreign policy. Up until 1968, the National Security Advisor had always been a more advisory position, hence the name. The duties were to provide the President with foreign policy advice, aggregate recommendations from the different supporting agencies, and give the President detailed background information on different global issues. McGeorge Bundy had taken steps towards the operational side of policy; he was a major voice during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, especially with regard to Vietnam. Yet, Kennedy preferred to make decisions by committee and solicited input from a number of trusted advisors. By Bundy's own admission, "The National Security Council is one instrument among many, it must never be made an end to itself"[14]. Kennedy's successor Lyndon B. Johnson preserved this structure as well.

Richard Nixon had a different design for his foreign policy, which he intended to run out of the White House. Nixon's plan was shaped by formative experiences in the House of Representatives, leading to a career-long distrust of the State Department, and as Vice President in the Eisenhower White House, where he saw first hand the bloated National Security apparatus. Nixon won a seat in Congress as the Representative of California's twelfth district in 1946. He ran his congressional campaign on a staunch anti-communist platform and brought that same worldview to Washington. His work on the Herter Committee was a major impetus for the passing of the Marshall Plan.[15] The plan sent billions of dollars in economic relief to European countries, as a way to stem the tide of communism.

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[14] Report; IDA to Richard Nixon; 11/6//68; "National Security Staffing in the White House;" Folder HAK Administrative and Staff --Transition; Box 1; HAK Administrative and Office Files; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum; Yorba Linda, California.

[15] "Biography of Richard Milhous Nixon," Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, https://www.nixonlibrary.gov/thelife/nixonbio.pdf, 2

Nixon also sat on the infamous House Committee on Un-American Activities. In the summer of 1948, the committee heard testimony from an American spy, Elizabeth Berkley, who named a State Department official, Alger Hiss, as a high level Soviet spy. Whittaker Chambers, a disavowed former communist also testified to Hiss's membership in a secret communist organization. When Hiss testified before the committee to swear his innocence, Nixon, despite reservations from his colleagues, was aggressive in his interrogation. It was discovered afterward that the congressman's relentlessness was aided in part by information on Hiss's allegiances from an FBI informant.[16] Then, in a career defining moment, Nixon chaired the HUAC subcommittee created to determine Hiss's innocence or guilt. Nixon led the subcommittee with zeal, ultimately pitting Chambers and Hiss against each other during the hearings. Hiss filed suit against Chambers for libel. Chambers responded by showing the committee State Department documents allegedly supplied by Hiss.

The committee discovered that Chambers had withheld more evidence, which Nixon subsequently subpoenaed. Chambers led investigators to a series of film, State Department documents from the 1930s, hidden in a hollowed out pumpkin. The existence of "The Pumpkin Papers" meant Hiss had not only perjured himself in the subcommittee testimony, but was likely a Soviet spy. The government could not try him for espionage because the statue of limitations had expired; however, they could indict him for perjury.[17] Hiss was convicted of perjury and sentenced to five years in prison. Nixon's tenacious work leading the subcommittee had led to the subpoena and the perjury trial. He was now a rising star in the Republican Party, using this cachet to win a Senate seat. He then parlayed the role into an eight-year stint as Eisenhower's Vice President.

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[16] Doug Linder, "The Alger Hiss Trials: A Commentary," Famous Trials, 2003, http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/hiss/hissaccount.html.
[17] Linder, "The Alger Hiss Trials: A Commentary."

Perhaps more importantly, the Hiss trial affected Nixon personally. Already an ardent anti-communist, the results of the investigation and trial proved, for him, that pernicious forces had infiltrated high levels of the government. "The Hiss case, for the first time, forcibly demonstrated to the American people that domestic Communism was a real and present danger to the security of the nation," Nixon later recalled.[18] The episode colored his perception of the State Department, and Democrats as a whole. During the committee's hearings and subsequent trial, many prominent liberal officials spoke out in Hiss's defense including Harry Truman, Adlai Stevenson and two Supreme Court Justices. When Nixon ran for President in 1968, public opinion against the Vietnam War exacerbated his fears about the State Department's loyalty. Civil service regulations prevented Nixon from replacing State Department officials and he worried about their allegiance.

Nixon had "little confidence in the State Department" and his distrust of the State Department only worsened after the election, when it was reported that fifty-seven percent of State officials had voted for Democratic nominee, Hubert Humphrey.[19] On November 11, 1968, just days after the election, Nixon received a briefing packet entitled "The President and the Department of State, Ensuring Control of Key Personnel."[20] The report went beyond the fifty-seven percent and suggested that that over ninety percent of the *entire* State Department was at least passively opposed to Nixon's candidacy. The report also warned of the "self-generated and securely protected cliques within the State Department/U.S. Foreign Service" that would oppose even "the firmest-intentioned reformers"[21]. Nixon wanted to shift control of foreign policy from

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[18] Richard M. Nixon, "'What Was the Hiss Case?': An Answer for Tricia," in *Six Crises*, comp. Doug Linder (Doubleday, 1962), http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/hiss/nixononhisscase.html.
[19] Kissinger, *White House Years*, 11.
[20] Report, Bob Halderman to Richard Nixon; 1/12/69; "The President and the Department of State: Ensuring Control of Key Personnel;" Folder Bob Halderman; Box 1; HAK Administration and Staff Files; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum; Yorba Linda, California.
[21] Ibid.

the State Department to the White House. To this end, Nixon looked for a suitable candidate for his National Security Advisor first; he hired Kissinger before finding a Secretary of State.

Nixon was to be the first Republican president in a decade. The Republican party of the late 1960s was a different animal from the 1920s version, much of the shift caused by reaction to the New Deal Thirties, the anti-war left, and the civil rights movement. Nixon's conservatism and opposition to the New Deal meant that he wanted shrink the size of the federal government. Nixon's time as Vice President brought experience to back up his beliefs. As Vice-President, he had seen firsthand the ineffectiveness of a bloated executive branch, particularly Eisenhower's foreign policy apparatus. As president-elect, he ordered The Task Force on Organization of the Executive Branch, a transition committee, to outline the different ways the incoming administration could scale back the size of the federal bureaucracy and make his executive branch more efficient.

The task force was filled with distinguished faculty from Harvard's Law and Government schools, board members of large corporations, and former defense and governmental officials. At the end of the report, the group suggested that Nixon needed "freedom from further encroachment… on your constitutional functions as Chief Executive" and increased flexibility and capacity for "quick reaction responses to urgent problems."[22] One way to improve the efficacy and efficiency of the executive branch was to reshape the National Security Council. The Task Force disapproved of Eisenhower's bloated National Security Council. Eisenhower had included dozens of staffers in council meetings. They concluded that this iteration of the NSC lost "much of its usefulness for action purposes." The group also noted that Kennedy and Johnson had "practically did away with the NSC… seldom summoning formal NSC meetings"

[22] Report; Nixon Task Force on Organization of the Executive Branch to Richard Nixon; 12/17/69; Folder Lindsay Task Force; Box 2; HAK Administration and Staff Files; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum; Yorba Linda, California.

and dealing "directly with individual department officials."[23] The task force suggested only including key personnel for NSC meetings and increasing the planning capabilities of the State Department so the NSC has "less staff work of their own."[24]

With a charge from Nixon to place the foreign policy apparatus in the hands of the White House, the newly appointed Kissinger began to organize his staff and create his structure. One of the first steps was to review past administrations' foreign policy systems. Included in a federally funded study from the Institute of Defense Analysis were over sixty pages of history and analysis of previous administrations' foreign policy structure and habits. The IDA report was commissioned on the suggestion of former National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy, to help with the transition. Bob Halderman, Nixon's Chief of Staff who had received the report on November 18, 1969, sent a copy to Kissinger, writing "Kissinger, any interest?" Kissinger wrote back underneath, with one of his more effusive responses, "I have the study. It is good."[25]

The "good" part of the report was its conclusion that "the most substantial area of agreement concerning the National Security Council is that a President is free to use it in any manner he sees fit." The report, "National Security Staffing in the White House," also gave twenty pages worth of recommendations for the Nixon team. This included a section on how best to create a White House centered system with "a Presidential representative with the power to direct corrective action and a clearly understood duty bringing deficiencies to the President's attention if necessary."[26] While it is unclear how much influence this paper had on Kissinger's

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[23] Ibid.
[24] The Task Force actually wanted to increase State Department influence. This would give the NSC staff less bureaucratic work and allow them to better advise the President. Nixon ignored this particular suggestion.
[25] Notes on Memo; Halderman to Kissinger; National Security Staffing in the White House; Folder HAK Administrative and Staff – Transition; Box 1; HAK Administrative and Staff Files, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum; Yorba Linda, California.
[26] IDA Report, "National Security Staffing in the White House."

eventual NSC structure, his later actions as National Security Advisor were notably similar to those described in the study.

Kissinger also consulted heavily with former Eisenhower military advisor, General Andrew J. Goodpaster. The general served almost two full terms as defense liaison and staff secretary. Goodpaster's position in the executive branch shared many similarities to that of the National Security Advisor. "If I were to choose the single procedure that was of the greatest importance in the work of the Special Assistant and myself," Goodpastor advised, "it would be our practice of bringing the principal officers of Government into the President's office on specific important questions involving security matters."[27] In addition to advising Kissinger on ways to structure the NSC, Goodpaster recommended procedures for organizing Department of Defense and Joint Chiefs of Staff operations. Implementation of these measures would strengthen the influence of the Secretary of Defense and Joint Chiefs of Staff, as well as improve the lines of communication between the White House and the military structure. If Nixon and Kissinger sought to sideline the State Department, improving communications between the White House, the Secretary of State and the Joint Chiefs would allow for more unilateral action by the White House.

Kissinger later wrote that as National Security Advisor, "I was not limited by departmental or civil service practices."[28] The National Security Advisor position was a product of Eisenhower's obese administrative structure. Eisenhower had combined the responsibilities of the management oriented 'Executive Secretary of the NSC' with those of a military advisor. Eisenhower needed Executive Branch officials that could work around the red tape and

[27] Report; General Goodpaster to Henry Kissinger; 12/12/68; "Security Affairs Staff Responsibilities Under President Eisenhower;" Folder General Goodpastor; Box 1; HAK Administrative and Staff Files; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum; Yorba Linda, California.
[28] Kissinger, *White House Years,* 23.

bureaucracy and better manage a massive intelligence and defense system. The United States was the major player in post-war global politics; the new globalized foreign affairs meant that the U.S. had interests all over the world. Foreign policy, defense and intelligence now required much more manpower, money and organization. A national security advisor could help manage the constant flow of information and opinions, as well as provide briefings and backgrounds on national security matters, while a defense secretary or chief of staff would not have the time to focus on such a specific issue. The job was so massive that Eisenhower had the National Security Advisor work in tandem with Goodpastor's defense liaison. When Kennedy entered office, he combined the responsibilities of the two positions into one. Despite the inclusion and institutionalization of the National Security Advisor position in subsequent administrations, there was no lawful or administrative protocol to specify the responsibilities of the position. Kissinger was not encumbered by any laws or any oversight, aside from the supervision of the commander in chief.

Nixon's insistence on centralizing power gave Kissinger even more autonomy than previous National Security Advisors. He had complete control in choosing his staff, even overruling Bob Halderman's objections to two of his staff selections.[29] Kissinger's influence on the Nixon Administration, despite his lack of experience, was enormous. On December 5, Kissinger received a copy of the State Department's Foreign Affairs planning guide.[30] Henry Owen, a State Department Official, sent Kissinger a rough draft of the paper, asking for feedback before it was to be presented to the Secretary-designate. The soon-to-be National Security Advisor was able to propagate his preferences for foreign policy into a document that the

[29] Kissinger, *White House Years,* 23.
[30] Memo; Henry Owen to Henry Kissinger; 12/5/68; Foreign Affairs Planning Guide; Folder General Transition Book I; Box 4; HAK Administrative and Staff Files; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum; Yorba Linda, California.

Secretary of State had not yet seen. Only a few weeks later, Kissinger wrote the foreign policy section of Nixon's Inaugural Address. Of course, most presidents do not write their own speeches, but Kissinger's central role in writing the speech, allowed for his unfettered access and unfiltered views. He had a direct role in shaping the Nixon Administration's foreign policy strategy. Rogers certainly had fewer fingerprints on the inaugural address.

In addition to having complete control in choosing his staff, Kissinger also reshaped the National Security Council and its protocols, ensuring further control. Since the Council's inception in 1947, the structure and organization of the National Security Council had been fluid, taking a different form in each administration. Kissinger leaned on former Oval Office advisors, General Goodpaster, and former Johnson National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy.

Bundy is often credited with raising the status of the National Security Advisor to an integral role in U.S. foreign policy. He became one of a handful of trusted advisors to President Kennedy. The young president preferred to discuss issues with advisors rather than in formal meetings. Bundy, at Kennedy's behest, worked to consolidate the NSC in order to allow quicker Presidential decisions and fewer planning discussions. The IDA report, (quoting a Congressional report on the foreign policy process), summed up Bundy and the NSC role as "a small personal staff whose members work "outside the system," "are sensitive to the President's own informational needs," and who can make "suggestions for policy initiatives not emerging from operational departments and agencies."[31] Kennedy's organizational preferences meant that the National Security Advisor was a more integral position. However, Bundy and his staff served an advisory purpose and deferred actual policy decisions. The NSC existed to support the President in a research capacity and, when needed, give independent evaluations on policy matters. The

[31] IDA Report, "National Security Staffing in the White House."

NSC staff could be relied upon to work quickly and provide reports and synthesized information in an extraordinarily timely fashion, eliminating much of the previous bureaucracy.

Nonetheless, Bundy was a great resource for Kissinger during the latter's transition and time in the White House. They not only met in person, but corresponded by phone and letter numerous times. Kissinger, when offered an unspecified position in the Nixon administration, consulted only one person: Bundy. He advised Kissinger to try to take a policy planning job. The former National Security Advisor also recommended space and office set up for the NSC. Interestingly, Bundy did recommend setting up a high speed Xerox transfer between the NSC and the State Department, in order to improve communication.[32] As Kissinger was not yet in the White House, no phone calls were logged, so there is no information regarding the two's phone calls. However, Kissinger did keep many of Bundy's structural changes, although he ignored efforts to increase communication with the State Department; it is not a stretch to assume that they discussed in detail the role of National Security Advisor.

After consulting with the likes of Goodpaster and Bundy, Kissinger sent his completed NSC system proposal to Nixon. The most crucial element of the NSC system was the NSC staff. These staffers, who reported to Kissinger, researched issues, created policy proposals and helped Kissinger formulate policy initiatives. The council staff was divided into three parts, Assistants for Programs, Operations Staff and the Planning Board. The Assistants were in charge of coordinating and leading the Operations and Planning staffs. Operations staff focused on following day-to-day geopolitical issues and readied papers that provided background on those particular issues. The Planning Board had the integral role of preparing NSC agenda papers, with policy proposals, counter arguments and analysis. They would also represent Kissinger and the

[32] Memo; Bundy to Kissinger; 12/4/68; Folder National Security Planning Material; Box 2; HAK Administrative and Staff Files; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum; Yorba Linda, California.

NSC on the different interdepartmental working groups to "introduce a feel for the President's priorities and constraints."[33] So important was the Planning Group's work that Goodpastor wrote to Kissinger recommending that Nixon officially appoint NSC staff to the Planning Board as a way to give those members what he euphemistically referred to as "the added sense of Presidential perspective."[34] By officially appointing these staffers to the Planning Board, Nixon would give the group agency to represent his views and power to push their agenda.

Kissinger also chaired other smaller working groups within the NSC. He created and chaired a small working group to deal with Defense spending and budgeting. These issues should have been under Defense Secretary Laird's purview. Kissinger also had control of several other working groups that handled covert operations, intelligence agency protocols and a crisis group.[35] In fact, a December 1 report to the President on U.S. Covert Operations, recommended that the President place a close White House advisor in charge of "watching all covert operations" and review all alternatives and options of each mission.[36]

The Council itself, made up of senior advisors and cabinet officials, was relatively unchanged, although Kissinger and Nixon planned to meet formally with the group more frequently than their predecessors.[37] The council was to be the main forum for "issues requiring inter-agency decisions and for setting basic national objectives."[38] Beneath the cabinet level group was the NSC Review Group, chaired by Kissinger. The Review Group would be comprised of the heads of State, Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the

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[33] Kissinger, "Memorandum on a New NSC System."
[34] Note; General Goodpastor to Henry Kissinger; 1/14/69; Folder General Goodpaster; Box 1; HAK Administrative and Staff Files; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum; Yorba Linda, California.
[35] Kalb and Kalb, *Kissinger,* 86-87**.**
[36] Report; Recommendations for Action by the President: United States Covert Operations; 12/1/68; Folder Lindsay Task Force; Box 2; HAK Administrative and Staff Files; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum; Yorba Linda, California.
[37] Kissinger, "Memorandum on a New NSC System."
[38] Ibid.

Director of Central Intelligence. The committee's job was to review NSC staff reports, determine whether they were worth the Council's attention and make sure that facts and alternatives were presented accurately. Any issues that Kissinger and the Review Group deemed not important enough for the Council were passed along to the Undersecretary's Committee and Inter-Agency Regional Group. The Review Group also had the authority to assign studies and operations to Ad Hoc and Inter-Agency Regional Groups.[39] This gave Kissinger the ability to use the State and Defense Departments (including Assistant and Under Secretaries), for any assignment he deemed worthy.

The second part of the new NSC structure was the implementation of National Security Council decision-making procedures. Under this new system, decisions from the President would be sent throughout the Executive Branch via memoranda. The first memo was the National Security Study Memorandum (NSSM), which was the official request for reports and studies. The second and more crucial type of memorandum was the National Security Decision Memorandum (NSDM), which informed "departments and agencies of Presidential decisions and the reasons for the decisions."[40] The National Security Decision Memoranda were often written by Kissinger himself, and if approved by the President, were issued with Nixon's signature. Kissinger wasn't just advising Nixon, he was handing him the decisions and telling Nixon to sign. As if to emphasize this new system, the bottom of Kissinger's proposal included two recommendations: " 1) That you [the President] approve the procedures outlined above" and "2) That the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs prepare a NSDM – to be issued on January 20th [Inauguration Day] – establishing these procedures."[41]

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[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.

While Nixon immediately approved Kissinger's NSC system, the feedback was not as positive from other members of the administration. Incoming Secretary of Defense Harold Laird objected to Kissinger's system, writing an official letter explaining that he "cannot fully approve the proposal in its present form." The letter is striking because Laird was a strong ally of the White House, and had his doubts regarding the State Department's ability to make policy. Laird's concerns with the proposed system look prescient in hindsight. He did not like that all information was supposed to be sent through the NSC; he worried that it would "isolate not only the President from direct access to intelligence community outputs but also to the [heads of State, Defense] and other top-level members of the President's team."[42] Laird had served on a Defense subcommittee as a Congressman and did not like the idea of an intermediary between actual intelligence and the President. Furthermore, he was concerned that Kissinger and the NSC would be put in charge of commissioning studies and determining policy issues. He added "it would give the Assistant the power and responsibility for implementing NSC policy as well as the right of determination of issues arising from the implementation of these policies" without having to consult or notify the other members of the National Security Council.

The State Department also pushed pack against the proposed system. On January 9, 1969, only a few weeks before the inauguration, Kissinger wrote to Nixon informing him of State Department dissent. He was particularly unhappy with Secretary Rogers, who had initially supported the NSC proposal and who now had cold feet. Interestingly enough, in the same memo, Kissinger characterizes Laird's strenuous objection as "a minor caveat." He already was trying to prevent dissent from reaching the president. The State Department was particularly unhappy with the NSDM 2, which required the inter-agency groups to submit papers through the

[42] Letter; Sec. Laird to Kissinger; 1/9/69; "Your Memorandum dated January 3, 1969 concerning a New NSC System;" Folder Sec. Laird; Box 1; HAK Administrative and Staff Files; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum; Yorba Linda, California.

National Security Advisor. The State Department wanted the Secretary of State to review the papers instead of the National Security Advisor. The Secretary could then decide whether or not to send the paper to the NSC Review Group.

The State Department sent the White House a counterproposal entitled, "A Proposal for Enhancing NSC Planning Functions and Redefining SIG [Senior Interdepartmental Group] Functions and Relations with NSC."[43] The paper calls for making any inter-agency group decisions binding for all executive departments and agencies. This, combined with the desire to place the Secretary of State in charge, would give the State Department a clear mandate for decision-making. Kissinger and Goodpaster sent a memo to the President defending their structure and rebutting the State Department alternative. They argued that if the State Department were to review policy papers, the SIG groups would prepare the papers from the narrow perspective of the State Department. Additionally, this action would bias the State Department representative on the NSC Review Group, who ideally would be able to "free to examine papers from a broad presidential perspective."[44] The question of whether the National Security Advisor would be able to carry that "broad" perspective was not included in the paper.

The NSC in Southeast Asia

On January 21, a short while after Richard Nixon uttered the oath of office on the steps of the Capitol, Henry Kissinger closed off access to the new President of the United States. In a memorandum to all executive branch departments and agencies, Kissinger ordered that all

[43] Memo; State Department to White House; 12/5/68; "A Proposal for Enhancing NSC planning functions and Redefining SIG Functions and relations with NSC;" Folder HAK Administrative and Staff Files – Transition; Box 1; HAK Administrative and Staff Files; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum; Yorba Linda, California.
[44] Memo; Kissinger and Goodpastor to Nixon; "Memo for the President-Elect;" Folder HAK Administrative and Staff Files – Transition; Box 1; HAK Administrative and Staff Files; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum; Yorba Linda, California.

national security communications sent to the President, "including those from department and agency heads," must go through the National Security Advisor's office.[45] His instructions were so explicit such that the memo clarified that national security matters meant "the broadest interpretation of that phrase."[46] The result was the National Security Advisor's stranglehold on national security matters. Even Senate confirmed cabinet secretaries and gatekeepers of state secrets like the head of the CIA and other intelligence services were subject to Kissinger's oversight. A number of them outranked Kissinger, were in the Presidential line of succession, and nearly all had more governmental and national security experience. But every memo to the President had to meet Kissinger's approval.

Aided by the streamlined information route to the President and the new NSC structural changes, Kissinger essentially owned American foreign policy. He directed the NSC to prepare policy plans for regional issues including the Soviet Union, Vietnam and the Middle East. The NSC staff's policy plans were the basis for the majority of the Nixon Administration's actions. It would be difficult for voices outside of Kissinger's staff to present unfiltered views to Nixon.

Kissinger brought a specific and academic worldview into the West Wing. He was heavily influenced by his decade at Harvard. Due to his work with Sovietologist Carl Friedrich, Kissinger saw a world that revolved around the U.S. relationship with the Soviet Union and that the U.S.S.R. propagated an insatiable nationalism and a disregard for existing international law. Later, Kissinger wrote that Soviet strategy was "essentially one of ruthless opportunism."[47]

Russian expansionism leaked into other areas of American national interest. The Soviet Union provided arms to the North Vietnamese and several Arab states surrounding Israel. They

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[45] Memo; Henry Kissinger to Executive Branch Departments; Folder General Transition Book IV; Box 4; HAK Administrative and Staff Files; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum; Yorba Linda, California.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Kissinger, *White House Years*, 119.

jauntily ignored international border laws, occupying the likes of Czechoslovakia. Yet there was still a conflict between the Soviets' expansionist aims and its desire to thaw relations with the United States, particularly through an arms reduction treaty.[48] Kissinger recognized this conflict. He saw an opportunity to exploit the schism in Soviet policy. The result was the ubiquitous doctrine of "linkage." Linkage dictated that improvement in U.S.-Soviet relations had to be made on a broad scale "Events in different parts of the world, in our view, were related to each other," Kissinger wrote in his memoir, "even more so, Soviet conduct in different parts of the world."[49] Conversely, Kissinger saw the Soviet's desire for a treaty as a way to improve the undesirable status quo in the Near East (Vietnam) and Middle East. He refused to enter SALT negotiations with the Soviets unless the U.S.S.R. promised help de-escalate tensions in Vietnam.

Vietnam was perhaps the most pressing foreign policy issue. The Nixon administration desired a speedy, yet honorable resolution to the quagmire in Southeast Asia. At the time of Nixon's inauguration, over 54% of Americans believed it had been a mistake to send troops into Vietnam and 70% of citizens believed it was the nation's most important issue.[50] Pressuring the Soviets to help ease tensions was just one part of the administration's strategy. Kissinger, by virtue of the NSC's standing, had the power to shape policy towards Vietnam. One of his first moves was to replace the Johnson era negotiators. In their place, he appointed respected Republican diplomat Henry Cabot Lodge, the former ambassador to Saigon.[51] Diplomats and negotiating teams usually fell under State Department jurisdiction. By appointing Lodge himself, Kissinger made sure that Lodge reported to the White House directly.

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[48] Negotiations for SALT or the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty had started in President Lyndon B. Johnson's second term.
[49] Kissinger, *White House Years,* 120.
[50] Frank Newport and Joseph Carroll, "Iraq Versus Vietnam: A Comparison of Public Opinion," Gallup.com, accessed January 27, 2016, http://www.gallup.com/poll/18097/iraq-versus-vietnam-comparison-public-opinion.aspx.
[51] North and South Vietnam were often referenced by their capitol cities, Hanoi and Saigon, respectively.

The new negotiator was crucial to the NSC's strategy. In the last few months of 1968, Kissinger's NSC staff had formulated a comprehensive Vietnam plan, starting with the renewed talks. Disengagement talks had started under President Johnson but had ended without a deal in November of 1968.[52] In January, Kissinger reached out to Hanoi to articulate the incoming President's views on ending the conflict, indicating that the U.S. was ready to restart serious talks.[53] When Nixon took office, the U.S. began multilateral negotiations in Paris, with Lodge leading the way, as part of a quartet with the Soviet Union, Saigon and Hanoi.[54] At the same time, the Defense Department began preparations to reduce troop levels *and* aid the South Vietnamese with weapons and training. Referred to as "Vietnamization,"[55] Kissinger viewed this plan as a means to an end: a negotiated settlement in Paris. [56] Finally, he reached out to Soviet ambassador to the United States, Anatoly Dobrynin and used the prospect of SALT negotiations to ask the Soviets to stop arms shipments to the North Vietnamese. Kissinger's goal was to indirectly stifle any North Vietnamese offensives, while also appearing humble and flexible in the negotiations.

This was one of several plans the NSC had presented to the President. The options included a massive escalation and troop call up, an immediate and unconditional withdrawal, or the aforementioned Vietnamization plan. Nixon and Kissinger had already agreed upon the third plan, but they presented all the possibilities at an early NSC meeting to give the illusion of debate.[57] This was the NSC system at its most efficient and lethal. Kissinger had already given

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[52] Newly unearthed tapes reveal that the Nixon administration had sabotaged an impending deal in late 1968 in order to win the election.
[53] Memo; Henry Kissinger to Richard Nixon; 1/8/69; Folder General Transition Book II; Box 4; HAK Administrative and Staff Files; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum; Yorba Linda, California.
[54] The disengagement talks in Paris had started under the Johnson administration.
[55] Kissinger, *White House Years,* 214
[56] Ibid.
[57] Richard M. Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1978), 380-381.

his recommendation to the President and received approval. Yet the other top officials believed in their ability to present their views to the president and the efficacy of NSC meeting discourse.

There was one top official in particular whom Kissinger sought to sideline. Secretary of State William Rogers was the closest competition to Kissinger and his ability to influence foreign policy. Defense Secretary Laird, by comparison, was often a Kissinger ally and the National Security Advisor's partner in planning military operations. Additionally, Laird couldn't insert himself into the diplomatic process in the same way as Rogers. Despite Kissinger's maneuvers to run foreign policy out of the West Wing, Rogers wasn't helpless. He had the resources granted to him by Congress and federal law.[58] The power of his office allowed Rogers to meet with any number of foreign officials, most importantly Soviet ambassador Dobrynin. Kissinger could not prevent Rogers from meeting on his own with Dobrynin. Since the relationship with the Soviets was the nucleus of foreign policy, he began to meet with the Soviet diplomat secretly. Nixon approved of the secret talks, which became known as "The Channel."[59] During Dobrynin's first official visit to the White House, a meeting from which Rogers was excluded, Nixon told the Soviet diplomat to take up "sensitive matters" with Kissinger.[60] These parallel meetings, some of which took place at Dobrynin's Washington apartment, became the primary method of substantive contact between the two nations. The Soviets quickly knew that any meetings with Rogers were irrelevant. If there were a need for serious discourse, they would have to contact Kissinger.

During the first few months of 1969, Kissinger was focused on the various Vietnam negotiations. Several of his discussions with Dobrynin centered on the conflict in Southeast Asia.

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[58] "22 U.S. Code § 4802 - Responsibility of Secretary of State," Legal Information Institute, Cornell School of Law, https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/22/4802.
[59] Kissinger, *White House Years*, 140.
[60] Kissinger, *White House Years*, 141.

The National Security Advisor continued to push his linkage strategy. Dobrynin was receptive to the prospect of a summit to discuss the many points of conflict between the two countries. However, he characterized Kissinger's demand to halt support of the North Vietnamese as blackmail.[61] Meanwhile in Paris, Lodge, acting on Kissinger's instructions, offered a plan of mutual withdrawal from South Vietnam. The North Vietnamese representatives countered with a sole American retreat.[62] Complicating the negotiations were the continued North Vietnamese attacks on U.S. troops in South Vietnam. NSC research showed that the communist insurgents were using Cambodia as a staging ground for the attacks.

Kissinger did not want to leave a matter like Vietnam open to the whims of several different parties**.** By mid-march, Kissinger and the NSC had formulated a plan that would force the North Vietnamese to negotiate on U.S. terms *and* discourage further attacks on American troops. It was an endeavor of dubious legality and thanks to a campaign of misdirection and lies, Kissinger's actions remained hidden from some of the highest government officials.

Thus began the secret bombing of Cambodia. Early in the morning of March 18, 1969, American B-52 bomber pilots received orders to bomb enemy targets in South Vietnam. The mission was designated "Breakfast Plan" and was the first in a series of bombings called MENU. The pilots were briefed normally and received the specific instructions to not encroach on Cambodian territory. After the bombing mission, the pilots and crew were debriefed according to their standard protocols. As was usual, the appropriate members of Congress were alerted that the U.S. would be carrying out bombing missions in South Vietnam. However, this bombing run was vastly different. Unbeknownst to the pilots and crew, radar technicians in charge of directing the bombers were ordered to direct the planes into Cambodia and bomb communist targets.

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[61] Kalb and Kalb, *Kissinger,* 112.
[62] Kalb and Kalb, *Kissinger,* 132.

"Prior to a MENU operation, a representative from Strategic Air Command Advanced Echelon at Military Assistance Command Vietnam headquarters in Saigon went to the radar site with the MENU target information. A new set of computations and forms was then prepared at the radar site."[63] Once the coordinates were altered, the mission would "be flown in such a way that the MENU aircraft on its final run would pass over or near the target [while on the border of] South Vietnam and release its bombs on the enemy in the MENU sanctuary target area."[64]

The bombings had been ordered on the recommendation of Kissinger. On March 15, he and his deputy, Alexander Haig, gave the order for the attack in a secret meeting with Halderman, and an Air Force Colonel from Vietnam Command. [65] As noted above, the colonel was instructed to keep the pilots in the dark about the actual targets. In addition, "an elaborate double entry bookkeeping system was devised so that those in the know at the Pentagon could keep a true record of what was dropped on Cambodia – that record was eyes only, top secret." An altered record of the munitions report was given to the Senate Armed Forces committee; the report fabricated various locations in South Vietnam to account for spent bombs.[66] Only the chairman and ranking member of the Senate Armed Forces committee, Richard Russell and John Stennis, respectively, were notified of the bombs' real destination.[67]

A day later on March 16, Kissinger sent a memo to the Secretary of Defense, alerting him to the previous day's "separate operational order" and authorizing the embassy in Saigon to alert South Vietnamese President Thieu of an impending mission. Nonetheless, Nixon held a National Security meeting that afternoon to solicit opinions from his advisors. As Kissinger would later

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[63] Report; DOD to Congress; 9/10/73; Folder Cambodia – Cambodian Bombing; Box 11; HAK Administrative and Staff Files; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum; Yorba Linda, California.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Commander of American Forces in Vietnam, General Creighton Adams, and Ambassador to Saigon, Ellsworth Bunker, were also advocates of a bombing run.
[66] Kalb and Kalb, *Kissinger,* 132.
[67] Kissinger, *White House Years*, 246.

explain in his memoir, "There were several hours of discussion during which Nixon permitted himself to be persuaded by Laird and Wheeler to do what he had already ordered."[68] Rogers, the main opponent to the bombings, eventually acquiesced. The whole meeting, however, was a charade. Rogers did not know that his input was irrelevant. His participation was a formality, an effort to keep a veneer of teamwork and democracy. Kissinger even agreed not to launch additional attacks along the DMZ, a move recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in order "to keep Rogers with us."[69]

Additionally, it was Kissinger and the NSC that coordinated the campaign of disinformation to the American public. Two days before the bombings, on March 16, Kissinger sent the top-secret memo to Secretary of Defense Laird with specific procedures for DOD Public Affairs personnel.[70] The announcement regarding the bombings would go through the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MVAC) spokesperson, a low rung official in the hierarchy and importance of press secretaries. The National Security Advisor deliberately wanted the information to stay away from the White House, Defense or State communications offices. The MACV spokesman was told to issues the following statement, "B-52 missions in 6 strikes early this morning bombed these targets: Enemy activity, base camps, and bunker and tunnel complexes 45 kilometers northeast of Tay Ninh City."[71] He would be allowed to acknowledge that the bombings occurred on the border of South Vietnam and Cambodia. If the press persisted, the spokesman was supposed to deny any knowledge of a border violation and promise an investigation into the matter.

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[68] Kissinger, *White House Years*, 247.
[69] Memo; Henry Kissinger to Melvin Laird; 3/16/69; Folder Cambodia - Cambodian Bombing; Box 11; HAK Administrative and Staff Files; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum; Yorba Linda, California.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.

In his memoirs, Nixon mentions that the impetus for the Cambodia bombings was the North Vietnamese's "small scale but savage offensive into South Vietnam."[72] Other historians and biographers point to the same reason. However, Nixon and Kissinger had been preparing for an escalation in the region since the administration's transition period. The then President-elect had requested that Kissinger and General Goodpastor prepare a paper on North Vietnamese (NLF) troop movements in Cambodia.[73] The report detailed the NLF's frequent incursions into Cambodia; it also laid out potential targets. On January 8, 1969, Nixon declared, "I think a definite change in policy toward Cambodia should be one the first orders of business when we get in."[74] The Johnson Administration had begun bombing targets in Cambodia but publically announced a halt in October 1968. Nixon and Kissinger had been preparing to expand the war beyond South Vietnam's borders for months before the March 18 attacks.[75]

Kissinger's Breakfast Plan was just the beginning. Under Kissinger and Nixon's direction, the Air Force continued to pummel North Vietnamese troops inside of Cambodia for over a year, until May of 1970. In a little over a year of bombing, the U.S. dropped 108,823 tons of munitions on Cambodian soil.[76] Beginning that month, the U.S. expanded its operation by bringing ground forces over the border. A new operation called "Freedom Deal" continued airstrikes from May 1970 through August of 1973. Freedom Deal continued the dual reporting system for these tactical strikes. The army expanded airstrikes into neighboring Laos in February of 1970, dropping another fifty thousand tons of munitions.[77]

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[72] Nixon, *Memoirs*, 380.
[73] Memo; Richard Nixon to Henry Kissinger; Folder General Transition Book I; Box 4; HAK Administrative and Staff Files; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum; Yorba Linda, California.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Nixon identifies the attacks as the morning of the 17th. Several other sources including Defense Department reports to Congress suggest otherwise.
[76] Report; DOD to Congress; 9/10/73; Folder Cambodia – Cambodian Bombing; Box 11; HAK Administrative and Staff Files; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum; Yorba Linda, California.
[77] Ibid.

The Vietnam expansion was a success story for the Kissinger NSC. The National Security Advisor's staff formulated the bombing plans, and the other cabinet positions, notably the Secretary of State, were consulted in the most limited of capacities. The lack of oversight allowed Kissinger to operate outside of the traditional and proper channels. He answered to no one except for the president; his voice was heard above all else. Kissinger used his pulpit to enforce his desired policy. The first few months of Kissinger's employment were still an adjustment period. The next two years would bring him to even greater heights of influence and power.

Rogers' Guerilla War

As the cherry blossoms bloomed in Washington D.C. in the spring of 1969, temperatures and tempers began to rise. A certain amount of tension was expected; after all, Kissinger and Nixon had taken countless steps to sideline the State Department. In March, Kissinger sent Halderman a memo outlining over twenty instances of alleged State malfeasance.[78] The worst was an incident on March 8, when Rogers met with Anatoly Dobrynin, without White House knowledge. The State Department was "free-wheeling on matters of Presidential interest," Kissinger suggested.[79] Luckily for the White House, Rogers' actions had little impact on the planned expansion of the war into Cambodia, or relations with the Soviet Union.

During the summer, however, tensions worsened, and only six months into the Presidency, the feud was beginning to affect policy. Since the beginning of the administration, high-level officials in the State Department had ignored presidential orders and sent "substantive" cables "dealing with important policy or operational matters" without White House clearance. Kissinger was supposed to have oversight on all State Department cables that

[78] Memo; Kissinger to White House; "Problems with State;" Folder State-WH Relationship Vol. 1; Box 148; HAK Administration and Staff Files; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum; Yorba Linda, California.
[79] Ibid.

contained any type of policy, operational details, mentions of the White House, matters regarding the NSC and, of course, Presidential interest.[80] The idea was to prevent State from having any autonomy on any foreign policy or national security matters. Kissinger could also filter out any cables that he deemed inconsequential, thereby saving Nixon valuable time.

In mid-June, a State Department cable was sent to Dobrynin to arrange a meeting. Kissinger received a copy of the cable after the fact. On June 18, he called the Attorney General John Mitchell to discuss the protocol violation, "to acquaint [him with the problem] on which he might need the AG's help."[81] The cables had been forwarded to Kissinger's office after the fact. He told Attorney General that "all cables are signed by Rogers [and that] this is a direct order from [Rogers]."[82] The National Security Advisor followed up with the President to stress the importance of the NSC's oversight of State Department Cables. "Were it not for this control [cable clearances], the U.S. positions on troop withdrawals, coalition government and a ceasefire would have long since progressed along lines which were contrary to your desires," Kissinger wrote.[83] His handwringing could not prevent the inevitable. One day later, Rogers, without Nixon's consent, met with Dobrynin. He signaled that the administration was ready to begin SALT talks a mere twelve days later. Kissinger was livid.[84]

In response, Kissinger sent a message to the President. The June 19 letter reminded Nixon that enforcing cable clearances prevented other departments from pursuing policy without

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[80] Ibid.
[81] *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1969–1976, Volume II, Organization and Management of U.S. Foreign Policy,1969–1972, eds. David C. Humphrey and Edward C. Keefer, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 50.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Memo; Kissinger to Nixon; "Clearances of Cables (1);" 6/19/69; Folder State/White House Relationship Vol. I; Box 148; HAK Administrative and Office Files; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum; Yorba Linda, California.
[84] Memo; Henry Kissinger to John Mitchell; "Bureaucratic Responsiveness to the President;" Folder State/White House Relationship Vol. 1; Box 148; HAK Administrative and Staff Files; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum; Yorba Linda, California.

White House knowledge. Kissinger asked Nixon to sign an attached memo that forcefully reminded Rogers to adhere to policy, which he sent to Rogers.[85] The Secretary of State did not know that the memo was from Kissinger, as evidenced by the fact that he reached out to Kissinger to ask for his thoughts before sending a reply back to the President.[86] Rogers was dismayed by the President's seemingly harsh response. Kissinger used Nixon's signature to enforce policy and his own position, without anyone else's knowledge and was still able to maintain his guise as 'advisor.'

Despite the reprimand, the State Department went rogue on a number of issues. On September 1, Nixon had to send a Presidential Directive from Colorado Springs to the Secretaries of Defense and State, as well as the Director of the CIA. "I am disturbed in recent days by the lack of teamwork in the conduct of National Security Affairs," wrote Nixon.[87] He then reiterated that all public statements and press releases of presidential importance had to be cleared by Kissinger. All official communications (for example, a diplomatic cable) were to be run through the White House as well. An earlier draft of Nixon's directive stated that Nixon was "appalled in recent days."[88] The same week, Kissinger once again contacted Attorney General Mitchell. NSC staffers had prepared for the National Security Advisor several papers outlining State Department overreach. The author of the report, Tony Lake, noted that Rogers seemed

[85] Memo; Kissinger to Nixon; "Clearances of Cables (2);" 6/19/69; Folder State/White House Relationship Vol. I; Box 148; HAK Administrative and Office Files; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum; Yorba Linda, California.
[86] *Foreign Relations of the United States,* Document 50.
[87] Memo; Richard Nixon to DOD, DOS and CIA; 9/1/69; Folder State/White House Relationship Vol. I; Box 148; HAK Administrative and Staff Files; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum; Yorba Linda, California.
[88] Draft of Memo; Richard Nixon to DOD, DOS and CIA; 9/1/69; Folder State/White House Relationship Vol. I; Box 148; HAK Administrative and Staff Files; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum; Yorba Linda, California.

more invested in maintaining State Department influence than in helping to pursue Nixon's foreign policy goals.[89]

This time, Kissinger sent a paper to Mitchell, entitled "Bureaucratic Responsiveness to the President." The paper notes repeated failures by the CIA, Defense Department and State Department to clear vital information and actions with the White House. "The past few weeks have seen a series of incidents in which the bureaucracy was either unresponsive to the President's demands, or displayed an extraordinary inability to coordinate matters within itself", Kissinger wrote. The National Security Advisor placed the blame on the State Department; he explicitly told Mitchell that almost all the problems could have been avoided if the State Department had cooperated with the White House.[90] He added, "What seems to be an increasingly serious sort of bureaucratic guerilla war may have very serious consequences for the management of our foreign affairs."[91]

The so-called guerrilla war continued into the fall of 1969, as the Nixon Administration prepared for the start of SALT talks with the Soviet Union. Rogers moved unilaterally on a series of issues. On October 9, the NSC received a copy of State Department cable 170777. The cable was a transcript of a conversation between Soviet Minister Tcherniakov and State official Bill Sullivan. The two diplomats discussed sensitive matters regarding the ongoing Paris negotiations to end the Vietnam conflict. These matters required Sullivan to make substantive policy declarations on behalf of the government. On Kissinger's orders, Alexander Haig sent a memo to

[89] Report; Tony Lake to Henry Kissinger; "Problems with State;" Folder State/White House Relationship Vol I; Box 148; HAK Administrative and Staff Files; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum; Yorba Linda, California.
[90] Memo; Henry Kissinger to John Mitchell; "Bureaucratic Responsiveness to the President;" Folder State/White House Relationship Vol. 1; Box 148; HAK Administrative and Staff Files; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum; Yorba Linda, California
[91] Ibid.

the State Department banning any negotiations with the Soviets or North Vietnamese without the President's authorization.

On October 24, Rogers sent a memo to Nixon, outlining his plan for the SALT negotiations. NSC staffers felt that the paper was "designed to give State and ACDA [Arms Control and Disarmament Agency almost autonomous control of [the talks]."[92] In addition, the State Department refused to give the White House transcripts of conversations between Dobrynin and Rogers. This move was in direct violation of Nixon's Colorado Springs memo. Furthermore, they did not notify European allies of the SALT negotiations until after the announcement had been leaked to the press. A NSC report also alleged that the State Department had disseminated the Colorado Springs directive with explicit instructions to limit collaboration with National Security Council Staffers.

By November, Kissinger was concerned enough to ask multiple staffers to write him recommendations on how to deal with the deteriorating relations with the State Department. The dual reports by Bill Watts and Tony Lake outlined the history of discord between the two offices and set forth recommendations to resolve the infighting. The NSC perspective manages to acknowledge State's worries, that "the White House is undertaking clandestine policy initiatives without even cluing State in," that Kissinger is virulently anti-State department and that the NSC was built to limit State's power. The reports also rationalize White House autonomy. Watts wrote "the whole NSC operation from you [Kissinger] down, stands head and shoulders above the Department of State in terms of quality of product and degree of initiative."[93] Lake offered

[92] Memo; Haig to Kissinger; 10/29/69; "Continuing Problems with the State Department;" Folder State/WH Relations Vol. I; Box 148; HAK Administrative and Staff Files; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum; Yorba Linda, California.

[93] Memo; William Watts to Kissinger; 11/15/69; "On Dealing with State;" Folder State/WH Relations Vol. I; Box 148; HAK Administrative and Staff Files; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum; Yorba Linda, California.

that the NSC could afford to improve its relations with the State Department because the NSC consistently does a better job.[94] In addition, the two primary forms of NSC communiqués, the Decision and Study memoranda, were often ignored because officials at the State Department believed that they "reflected your [Kissinger's] desires more than the President."[95]

Lake presented two possible solutions. The first was a situation in which, "people are simply fired if they don't carry out directives." The second was a series of confidence-building maneuvers. Watts agreed with the latter and presented six recommendations to Kissinger including a private meeting with Rogers and a follow-up meeting with State Department officials in the Interdepartmental Group. Watts also advised Kissinger to push NSC staffers to work more closely with their counterparts at State. Two of the final recommendations were particularly salient. Watts concludes his paper by advising the continued use of clandestine White House policy operations, which he wrote, "is required by Presidential style and the concern over possible leaks."[96] The paper recognized State Department concern about NSC autonomy and its affect on morale and working relationships. In his intro, Watts admitted that frayed relations between the two staffs undermined national security. But ultimately, he called for the continued use of secret White House enterprises, just that they be used "only where absolutely necessary."[97] Perhaps more interesting, was Watts' recommendation that Kissinger should strengthen the role of the State Department undersecretaries. The reasoning, he argued, is that increasing their responsibilities will challenge the undersecretaries to do better jobs. Lake agreed

[94] Memo; Tony Lake to Kissinger; 11/14/69; "Relations with the State Department;" Folder State/WH Relations Vol. I; Box 148; HAK Administrative and Staff Files; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum; Yorba Linda, California.
[95] Watts, "On Dealing with State."
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid.

with the assessment and added that the National Security Advisor would do well to make better relationships with the undersecretaries.

The Shadow Secretary

Lake's proposal to improve relationships with the State Department undersecretaries hinged on a success story, Henry Kissinger's relationship with Joseph Sisco, a former CIA officer and longtime Foreign Service officer at the State Department. He was the chief U.S. mediator in the aftermath of the 1967 Six-Day War in the Middle East. When Nixon took office, he appointed Sisco as the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs. The Middle East was the one area of policy outside of Kissinger's reach. Sisco would soon give the National Security Advisor a back door through which he could reassert control.

At the outset of his administration, Nixon gave control of Middle East policy to the State Department. The President sought to placate the embattled Rogers and he wanted to give Rogers an area of policy that had a high risk of controversy and a low risk of success. Kissinger would later write that Nixon "calculated that almost any active policy would fail; in addition, it would almost certainly incur the wrath of Israel's supporters. So he found it useful to get the White House as much out of the direct line of fire as possible."[98] The unstable Middle East was as big a diplomatic black hole as any region. (Then there was the matter of Kissinger's Judaism. Nixon was a known anti-Semite and while he formed a close relationship with his National Security Advisor, the President was always wary of Kissinger's ties to Israel.)[99]

Nixon inherited a Middle East reeling from a fresh entry in the lexicon of Arab-Israeli violence. The 1967 Six-Day War began with a preemptive Israeli air strike on the Egyptian air-

[98] Kissinger, *White House Years,* 348.
[99] Dallek 170-171.

force facilities; Egypt had massed troops on Israel's border. Allies Jordan and Syria responded with attacks into Israel. Less than a week later, Israel had defeated the Arab offensive (an alliance called the United Arab Republic) and pushed passed previous borders, taking land in the Golan Heights, Sinai Peninsula and East Jerusalem. A ceasefire did little to mitigate tensions; the conflict went global as the Soviets rebuilt the Egyptian air force and the United States became the primary military benefactor to Israel.[100] The region was one of the Nixon Administration's important issues, but unlike Vietnam, it was not an immediate concern.[101] In fact, the White House was concerned that any attempt to intervene would set off another war and destroy progress with the Soviets on other fronts. Kissinger, in particular, turned his focus elsewhere; he spent nearly the first year of the term painting the broad strokes of Soviet policy and focusing his efforts on the immediate priorities of SALT and Vietnam. Nonetheless, a volatile region inextricably linked to the Soviets and rife with violence was still an important matter.

For the first year and a half of the administration, Kissinger's role in Middle East policy was limited. He maintained his influence through his control of the NSC system. The national security advisor was able to stay current on issues because of his ability to read all incoming State cables to the President. He was still the chair of the various, influential NSC committees, including the Senior Review Group, Intelligence Group and the Special Action Group. Additionally, he was still a part of the Middle East policy meetings. As Nixon's top foreign policy advisor, Kissinger got to be in the room where it happened; however, his advice carried less weight. Nixon, wary of Kissinger's Judaism and committed to State Department ownership of the Middle East, deferred to Rogers on important decisions. The first ten months of Middle

[100] Dallek, 172.
[101] Memo; General Goodpaster to Henry Kissinger; 12/11/69; "Priority List of Security Projects;" Folder General Goodpaster; Box 1; HAK Administrative and Staff Files; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum; Yorba Linda, California.

East policy underscored Kissinger's odd place in the administration. He was a puzzle piece so big he obscured much of the picture; he also didn't fit with any other pieces. Nixon had put Middle East foreign policy in the hands of the State Department, yet Kissinger had too centralized a role in foreign policy to be shut out.

A burgeoning partnership would eventually give Kissinger an opportunity to reclaim foreign policy dominance. Assistant Secretary of State Joseph Sisco was Secretary Rogers' point man for the Middle East. It was Sisco who set the administration's early Middle East policy, often referred to as the "Two Pillar" strategy.[102] The United States would pursue two simultaneous routes, bilateral talks with the Soviets and Four Power talks, negotiations between Britain, France, the Soviet Union and the United States. He and Kissinger sat in on the same interdepartmental meetings and when Sisco met with the President, the national security advisor was almost always there. Kissinger met frequently with Joseph Sisco and was consistently impressed with Sisco's quality work and disposition.[103] The assistant secretary would also mediate between Kissinger and Rogers; the Middle East was just another point of contention between the two. This further ingratiated Sisco to the academic.

The trust between Kissinger and Sisco developed slowly and was often affected by the conflict between the National Security Advisor and Secretary Rogers. In February of 1969, Kissinger clued in Sisco to the NSC's strategy regarding the Four Power talks. The White House did not want the talks to move forward. This plan was in direct opposition to Rogers' desire to move forward with negotiations as quickly as possible. By July, Kissinger had developed a strong enough relationship with Sisco to help dictate the direction of negotiations. One State Department official, Ambassador to the U.N. Charles Yost, complained to Kissinger that the

[102]George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 801.
[103] Kissinger, *White House Years*, 348-349.

national security advisor had given Sisco instructions that were contrary to Rogers' policy. Kissinger had instructed the assistant secretary to "await further concessions before demonstrating any flexibility in his discussions with Soviet representatives regarding an Arab-Israeli settlement."[104] By the time of Tony Lake's November 14 memo to Kissinger, Sisco's relationship with the national security advisor was one of the few positive connections between the NSC and State Department.

However, the first few months of the Kissinger-Sisco friendship were not perfect. Kissinger still did his utmost to undermine Rogers, and by extension, Sisco. The Secretary of State continued to fight the "guerilla war" and ordered Sisco to stop clearing cables with the NSC.[105] In fact, Sisco would continue to violate White House cable clearance rules for the next few years. Kissinger allegedly ordered Hal Saunders, the NSC Middle East expert to ignore Sisco. Overall, the assistant Secretary remained loyal to Rogers and in late October of 1969, even suggested that Rogers publically outline his peace initiative as a way of publicizing State Department goals without prior White House consent. The Secretary of State presented his plan at a conference on adult education, the most immediate public speaking engagement on his schedule. The speech, indelibly known as "the Rogers Plan", drew the ire of the American Jewish community, the Israeli Knesset and the White House. The speech outlined a resolution to the conflict wherein Israel would relinquish control of its conquered territories. Kissinger encouraged the President to distance himself as quickly as possible from the plan. Nixon and

[104] *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1969–1976, Volume XXII, Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1969–1972, eds. Steven Galpern and Adam M. Howard, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 43.
[105] David A. Korn, "US-Soviet Negotiations of 1969 and the Rogers Plan," *Middle East Journal* 44, no. 1 (January 01, 1990).

Kissinger decided to use an angry Prime Minister Golda Meir as an extension of the White House; the President wanted Meir to "slam the hell out of Rogers and his plan."[106]

The early days of the Kissinger–Sisco relationship are important not because of any substantive collaborative efforts, but because each recognized the others' talents and intangible qualities. The two were friendly adversaries, with a mutual respect and recognition. Even when Rogers ordered his deputy to circumvent the NSC, Sisco kept open channels through to the White House without Rogers' knowledge.[107] The national security advisor recognized his colleague's desire for effective governance. Kissinger slowly felt out his relationship with Sisco, as he tested the State official's trust. He was savvy enough to recognize a potential ally.

Kissinger and Sisco communicated frequently over the next few months. Sisco valued the counsel of the national security advisor, despite Kissinger's ongoing feud with his boss. By February of 1970, the two men were consummate colleagues and it seems, allies. Sisco joked with Kissinger that "In our next life you will be President and I will be Secretary of State."[108] In the same phone call, Kissinger added, "Hal Saunders [the NSC staffer on the Mid East desk] and I were talking about the ideal relationship your office and mine have."[109]

The National Security Advisor became a surrogate boss to the assistant secretary. Kissinger advised Sisco on how to handle the renewed Middle East negotiations and made sure that the White House's interests were met. Yet the relationship was far from one-sided. Sisco's hard work and loyalty to Kissinger soon earned the official a valued position of influence inside the West Wing. Kissinger often sought Sisco's opinion and the assistant secretary helped the

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[106] Herring, 800.
[107] Korn, "US-Soviet Negotiations of 1969 and the Rogers Plan."
[108] Telecon; Kissinger and Sisco; 2/2/70; Folder February 1-7, 1970; Box 4; HAK Telecons; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum; Yorba Linda, California.
[109] Ibid.

NSC on a wide range of matters, from properly wording Presidential statements to chasing down press leaks.

While it is difficult to pinpoint the exact beginning of Sisco's allegiance to the White House, by the summer of 1970, the 'ideal relationship' was flourishing. Sometime in early July, Nixon, in a phone call with Kissinger, referred to Sisco as "our guy [in the State Department]." On July 7, the national security advisor relayed the conversation to Sisco himself. On the same 10:45am phone call, Sisco, on Kissinger's behalf, promised to contact *The Washington Post* to find out the source of a State Department leak and walk back previous State comments regarding the Middle East to the press. Kissinger promised to present Sisco's actions to the President "as your [Sisco's] own initiative." Half an hour later, Sisco called back; he had completed his assignment. The national security advisor made good on his word to Sisco. At 11:41am, Kissinger called the President and explained Sisco's actions. Kissinger repeatedly endorsed the State official's strategies. The final exchange between Nixon and Kissinger gives further insight into Sisco's relationship with the NSC. The president asked Kissinger "when are you seeing your friend?" and suggested bringing him through "the new door."[110] Kissinger had recently moved from the West Wing basement to a large office near the Oval Office. The door mentioned was probably a back door that allowed Sisco to meet with Kissinger without arousing suspicion.

Five days later, Joe Sisco went on *Meet the Press* to explain the White House interpretation of UN Resolution 242. The resolution, passed in the aftermath of the 1967 war, was the basis of Rogers' peace plan and stipulated Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories. Rogers supported a full withdrawal, as outlined in the resolution. Sisco argued that 242 didn't explicitly state the extent of a proposed Israeli withdrawal. Having made statements in

[110] Telecon; Kissinger and Nixon; 7/7/70; Folder July 1-13, 1970; Box 6; HAK Telecons; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum; Yorba Linda, California.

opposition to Rogers' and Soviet policy, Sisco met with the Secretary of State later that afternoon. Kissinger called the assistant secretary that afternoon; he was worried that Rogers had excoriated Sisco. He asked Sisco, "What did he [Rogers] give you hell about?" "It's a long story", replied Sisco. "I took it and it's over."[111] The national security advisor reiterated his own and the President's support to Sisco.

Kissinger continued to advise Sisco, as the Assistant Secretary of State tried to bring the Israelis and Egyptians closer to a ceasefire. This was his project, and Kissinger, not Rogers, was his confidant and supervisor. Sisco deftly handled the tenuous situation of being in between two departments. Instead of sidelining Rogers completely, Sisco consulted with his boss routinely, yet he would do so only after talking with Kissinger first. On August 5, Sisco asked Kissinger to review the "definitive proposal for a cease-fire standstill." He told Kissinger that "I would be much more comfortable if it goes through you first [before it is sent to Rogers]."[112] Displaying the loyalty that had ingratiated himself to the White House, Sisco ended the conversation by adding, "We've got to pull this off for the President."[113] Sisco was able to get both the Egyptians and Israelis to agree to a ceasefire, only a few days later. The deal went through despite a last minute Israeli ploy to get a better weapons shipment and a Defense and State Department effort to decide on an arms package without White House consent. In his memoir, Richard Nixon praises Rogers and Sisco on a diplomatic success. However, it was really Sisco, with Kissinger's support, who navigated American bureaucracy, and the Egyptian and Israeli pressures to get the deal done.

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[111] Ibid.
[112] Telecon; Kissinger and Sisco; 8/5/70; Folder August 4-10, 1970; Box 6; HAK Telecons; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum; Yorba Linda, California.
[113] Ibid.

In September of 1970, a new conflict arose in the Middle East that solidified Kissinger's grasp on Middle East foreign policy. Palestinian rebels inside of Jordan unified under the leadership of Yasser Arafat and executed a series of plane hijackings (of flights filled with Israeli citizens) and attacks on Jordanian King Hussein's government. Hussein's Jordan had been a place of relative stability in the Fertile Crescent, especially when compared to the aggressive, violent Nasser-led United Arab Republic. The result was known as Black September, a bloody civil war for the control of Jordan. The Palestinian Fedayeen's dual actions were of serious concern to the Israelis. The destruction of the Hashemite Kingdom would result in a dangerous and unstable rebel state on Israel's immediate border. The plane hijackings would be the least of Israel's problems.

A crisis in Jordan was a perfect opportunity for Kissinger to assert himself. His NSC system was built for these moments. In the event of a diplomatic emergency, the National Security Council would convene a special emergency committee, the Washington Special Action Group, chaired by Kissinger himself. Indeed, when the national security advisor learned of the conflict in Jordan, he called an immediate meeting of the special action group.[114] Kissinger took the lead on how to handle the plane hijackings and helped formulate a strategy to aid King Hussein. He had a direct role in moving the Navy's Sixth Fleet from Europe towards the Middle East. The National Security Advisor also directed press statements about the crisis for Press Secretary Ron Ziegler.

Early on the morning of September 17, Jordan exploded into full war and Kissinger led the government's response. Kissinger took action to move a second aircraft carrier into the Mediterranean Sea and bring the Sixth Fleet near the shores of Cyprus. In addition, Kissinger

[114] Isaacson, 294.

worked to arrange targeted airstrikes on fayedeen targets in Jordan "as a show of force."[115] Later that day, Kissinger told the press that

at the crisis's onset, he had woken up Nixon to notify him of the war. This implied that Nixon had assumed control of the situation. In fact, Kissinger and Halderman had elected to let Nixon sleep and dealt with the situation themselves. Additionally,

Kissinger reinserted himself into the diplomatic process. He and Sisco spoke with British foreign secretary Denis Greenhill to discuss Britain's role in the crisis. While Kissinger spoke often with Dobrynin and Ambassador Rabin, important diplomatic discussions on the Middle East were usually reserved for the State Department.

The NSC system had worked and orchestrated a collaborative effort to solve a dangerous and time-sensitive situation. After a year and a half of standing on the sidelines of Middle East policy, Kissinger was back. For the next few days, the national security advisor worked to implement his grand strategy; a Jordanian victory that strengthened Arab moderates and U.S. influence in the region. On September 21, the Syrian army had invaded Jordan in support of the Palestinians. Kissinger coordinated and negotiated between Ambassador Yitzhak Rabin, Nixon and King Hussein to orchestrate Israeli support for the Jordanians.[116] Two days later, Syrian forces withdrew from Jordan, the Palestinian uprising had been quelled and Kissinger had successfully improved U.S. standing in the region.

As a coda to the comeback, four months later, in late January of 1971, Nixon sent a Presidential directive officially restoring the Middle East to the National Security Council. From that point on, Kissinger would not relinquish control again. Two and a half years later, Secretary William Rogers would resign; Nixon appointed Kissinger to lead the State Department. Henry

[115] Ibid.
[116] Isaacson, 304.

Kissinger would become the only person to ever concurrently hold the positions of Secretary of State and National Security Advisor. (Joseph Sisco, the longtime Kissinger ally was promoted to the second highest position in the State Department, Secretary for Political Affairs.) Kissinger stayed on as Secretary of State after Richard Nixon's resignation in the aftermath of the Watergate Scandal. He did however give up control of the NSC. Kissinger did not relinquish his grasp on U.S. foreign policy until January 20, 1977, the inauguration of James Earl Carter Jr.

Mistakes of the (Nixon) Past

The foreign policy team that came into power upon Carter's inauguration on January 20, 1977 was remarkably similar to the team that began work on January 22, 1969. Both featured an Ivy League-educated, New York lawyer and a Harvard-educated, accented, immigrant academic. Nonetheless, President Carter was intent on a new way of governing. Six days after his inauguration, Carter sent a handwritten note to his two primary foreign policy advisors.[117] The commander in chief's long, curving handwriting informed 'Cy' and 'Zbig' to appear for a meeting about teamwork and NSC/State Department cooperation. Teamwork, or as he called it, collegiality, had been a top priority since the President began to assemble his transition team during the transition period. The caustic dealings between Nixon's State Department and National Security Council were well known in Washington's circles. The new President was determined to run foreign policy, and his administration differently.

From the beginning of Carter's run for the White House, the legacy and deeds of the Nixon administration loomed large. Carter's opponent for the presidency was Gerald Ford, the

[117] Note, Carter to Brzezinski and Vance, 1/26/77, White House Central Files, Subject – FG 26, Jimmy Carter Library.

incumbent President and a man inextricably tied to Richard Nixon. The Carter campaign sought to link Ford to another four years of Richard Nixon-like secrecy and dishonesty.

The specter of another Nixon and Ford official hovered over the election proceedings. Remarkably, Henry Kissinger had left the Nixon administration with his reputation almost entirely untarnished.[118] Yet despite Kissinger's popularity in the Republican establishment circles, he embodied the type of secretive, undemocratic and manipulative foreign policy that many Americans rejected in the wake of Vietnam. There was also a sense that Kissinger had often prioritized the administration's interests over a just and human rights focused policy. Carter and his transition team were determined to prevent another Kissinger-esque foreign policy.

Three months into his presidency, Carter gave the commencement speech at the University of Notre Dame and used the opportunity to outline his administration's foreign agenda. Carter's foreign policy goals stood in stark contrast to those of the previous administration. "We can also have a foreign policy that the American people both support and, for a change, know about and understand," the President declared.[119] In a rebuke of the Kissinger way, Carter added, "We are confident that the democratic methods are the most effective, and so we are not tempted to employ improper tactics here at home or abroad." It was a promise to move away from unilateral decision-making and bring back a democratic decision-making process. Of Carter's new pillars of foreign affairs, the theme of human rights was the capstone. In his speech, Carter wove together a narrative that tied the seminal events of American history to a belief of human freedom, self-determination and inalienable rights. It was the United States' duty to push for the propagation of human rights around the globe. There was an undercurrent of optimism running throughout the address. Carter wanted to rebuild the confidence of the

[118] In the summer of 1974, Ford begged Kissinger to stay on has Secretary of State for the remainder of Ford's term.
[119] Jimmy Carter, "Address at Commencement Exercises at the University of Notre Dame", The American Presidency Project.

American people and their confidence in the government. If Nixon's realpolitik was a reflection of the messy, complicated present, Carter's s optimism was meant to usher in a bright and peaceful future. It was his intention that the goals of transparency, democracy, optimism and human rights would allow the United States to lead the world into a new age.

The first step was to hire the right personnel to realize Carter's grand vision. Hamilton Jordan, the architect of Carter's presidential run and soon-to-be chief of staff, wanted fresh political voices -- people removed from the Washington bureaucracy and academic elite, who would complement the fresh vision of foreign policy. Jordan himself had graduated from the University of Georgia, Press Secretary Jody Powell studied at Georgia State and Emory. After hearing that Brzezinski and Vance's names were being floated for roles in the administration, Jordan declared, "If after the inauguration you find a Cy Vance as Secretary of State and Zbigniew Brzezinski as head of National Security, then I would say we failed and I'd quit."[120] Jordan didn't quit, but his words would be prescient. The Vance-Brzezinski partnership would end in failure.

Carter filled the vacancy at the State Department first, hiring lawyer and longtime diplomat Cyrus Vance. After a Yale law degree, Vance rose up the ranks in Washington to become the top counsel to the Defense Department. He transitioned from attorney to bureaucrat as Secretary of the Army and later served as a key negotiator during the Vietnam War. Carter knew that Nixon had paired the ambitious Kissinger with the bureaucratic Rogers, who didn't have diplomatic experience. Carter wanted equity of power between the State Department and the White House. Although Vance and Rogers had similar backgrounds, Vance had the diplomatic experience that Rogers sorely lacked.

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[120] Cyrus R. Vance, *Hard Choices: Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 30

Despite his aversion to Kissinger's style, Carter appointed someone as his National Security Advisor whose biography and resume oddly mirrored Kissinger's. Zbigniew Brzezinski was the son of the Polish Ambassador to Canada. After spending his undergraduate years in Canada, Brzezinski went to Harvard and took his PhD with famed Sovietologist Carl Friedrich, the same man under whom Kissinger had studied. Brzezinski spent over a decade on the faculty at Harvard and Columbia. Similarly to Kissinger, Brzezinski sat on several think tanks and committees at the State Department during his time in academia. He had also gotten a taste of politics as a foreign policy advisor for 1968 Democratic nominee for President, Hubert M. Humphrey.[121] His counterpart in the Nixon campaign was none other than Kissinger.

Brzezinski was also the Executive Director of the Trilateral Commission, a group of politicians, academics, and businessmen who "advocated coordination and cooperation amongst the capitalist economic superpowers" in order to "promote global economic stability."[122] In 1973, he invited then-governor Jimmy Carter to the prestigious think tank. Eventually, twenty-five members of the Commission held high-ranking positions in the Carter administration, including Cyrus Vance.[123] (After Kissinger left government service, in addition to a teaching position at Georgetown, he accepted a position at the Trilateral Commission.) Through their work together on the commission, Carter and Brzezinski became close and by 1976, Brzezinski had become Carter's primary foreign policy advisor. The two were close confidants before they ever stepped foot in the West Wing.

Carter felt strongly that Vance and Brzezinski would make a balanced and collaborative team. Both men reinforced Carter's optimism, and they indicated a willingness to work

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[121] Douglas Brinkley, "Out of the Loop," The New York Times Magazine, December 29, 2002, http://www.nytimes.com/2002/12/29/magazine/29VANCE.html?pagewanted=all.
[122] Lawrence X. Clifford, "An Examination of the Carter Administration's Selection of Secretary of State and National Security Advisor, 9
[123] Clifford, *An Examination,* 7.

unselfishly, as part of a team.[124] To that end, Carter set about restructuring the NSC system, which would ensure that neither Brzezinski nor Vance would have excessive influence in foreign affairs.

Theoretically, Carter's new NSC system stood in stark contrast to Nixon's structure. Below the actual cabinet level council, there were two distinct working committees. For comparison, Kissinger's NSC system had seven different committees. Vance and Brzezinski each led one committee. Each committee would have policy oversight over distinct facets of national security and foreign policy. This gave each Vance and Brzezinski definitive policy jurisdiction. The delineation was designed to prevent the NSC and State Department from stepping on each other's toes. The first committee was the Policy Review Committee (PRC), which Vance usually chaired. The committee dealt with "foreign policy issues" and "defense policy issues with international implications."[125] Brzezinski headed up a second committee, the Special Coordinating Committee (SCC). The SCC would deal with covert operations and crisis management. Yet the SCC had a more vague directive, "to deal with specific, cross cutting issues requiring coordination in the development of options and implementation of Presidential decisions."[126] In fact, it was Brzezinski who designed the NSC structure and he submitted several versions for Carter's approval. Carter rejected the first few NSC proposals, because they gave the NSC and the White House too much power.[127]

While the design seemed to balance interests, in practice, the new NSC structure tipped the balance of power in Brzezinski's favor. Brzezinski had created the new foreign policy structure, and while Carter had wanted a fair division of power between Brzezinski and Vance,

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[124] Jimmy Carter, *White House Diary* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), 22.
[125] Presidential Directive/NSC 2, Jimmy Carter, 1/20/1977, Presidential Directives Online Database, Jimmy Carter Library.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Vance, *Hard Choices, 36.*

he gave only one of the men control over the system. As part of the two-committee structure, Brzezinski prepared a summary of either the PRC or the SCC meeting, and any recommendations that resulted and sent it directly to Carter. These summaries, known as Presidential Directives, were not sent to other members of the committees for review. It became clear to Vance that "the national security advisor had the power to interpret the thrust of the discussion or frame the policy recommendations of department officials."[128] These "department officials" included the heads of the Defense and State Departments, the head of the CIA and the chair of the Joint Chiefs.

This narrow method of communication also did not sit well with other cabinet members. Director of Central Intelligence Stansfield Turner later noted that "at the next meeting Zbig would tell us the President's responses, but we were never given copies of the memos or allowed to read them." Turner added that he "was never comfortable because so much [of the veracity of the directives] depended on the skill, objectivity and personal agenda of the scribe."[129] Several scholars have referred to the ideal National Security Advisor as an "honest broker," someone who could be relied upon to bring policy discussions to the President in the most unbiased and succinct fashion. Because he was in a position to single-handedly frame debates within the administration, Brzezinski had enormous influence over the president. Carter had great trust in Brzezinski's evenhandedness. Others in the administration were not so sure.

The result was a system nearly identical to Kissinger's National Security Decision Memorandum. If there was a policy recommendation at the end of a Presidential Directive, the President could sign the bottom and the recommendation would become policy. In fact, in one of his first actions as President, Carter issued a Presidential Directive, completely dismantling

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[128] Vance, *Hard Choices,* 37.
[129] Stansfield Turner, *Terrorism and Democracy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1991), 28.

Kissinger's NSC system.[130] It was intended as a coda to Nixon's autonomous dealings and served to remind the new executive branch that Carter wanted to do things differently. Ironically, the move to abolish the previous system was ordered through a system that mimicked Kissinger's autonomous organization.

Since his appointment to the State Department, Cy Vance had been wary of his role in the administration. [131] In fact, he had signed on as Secretary of State with two conditions. The first was that the Secretary of State would be the chief foreign policy spokesman for the administration; the second was that despite additions to Carter's circle of advisors like Brzezinski, Vance would always have a direct line to the president to present his "unfiltered views."[132] During the transition period, Carter, Brzezinski and Vance seemed to successfully set roles and boundaries. After the inauguration, Vance's ephemeral concerns became more concrete. The three men could not "come to any understanding about their respective roles," he would later say.[133] While Vance would consistently remain the public face of Carter's foreign policy as promised, the Secretary of State struggled to get face time with the President. Brzezinski's Presidential Directive structure limited his ability to share his views.

Only a month into the administration, there was already a disparity between Carter and Vance's perception of the State-White House relationship. Carter was galvanized by the cooperation between his National Security Advisor and Secretary of State. "Dr. Brzezinski has, I think, fit in well with Cy Vance and with me and Harold Brown. He's inquisitive and innovative, and I think has not been a problem in attempting to repeat what Kissinger did, and that was to

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[130] Presidential Directive/NSC 1, Jimmy Carter, 1/20/1977, Presidential Directive Online Database, Jimmy Carter Library.
[131] Lawrence X. Clifford, "An Examination of the Carter Administration's Selection of Secretary of State and National Security Advisor," in *Jimmy Carter: Foreign Policy and Post Presidential Years*, ed. Herbert D. Rosenbaum and Alexej Ugrinsky (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994), 9.
[132] Vance, *Hard Choices,* 34.
[133] Clifford, "An Examination," 9.

run the major department from the position of [National Security Advisor]," he wrote in a diary entry for February 18.[134] Carter attributed Kissinger's power to the size of the NSC, instead of his ability to control the flow and content of information.

Vance was less than happy. The Secretary of State took issue with the National Security Council's hold over information. He complained to Carter about Brzezinski's control of the Presidential Directive process and in particular, the directive's lack of transparency in the months leading up to the inauguration. Vance requested to see each Presidential Directive before it was sent to the President. Carter felt that considering Vance's busy job managing the State Department, this was an unnecessary step.[135] Although he was less than sympathetic to Vance's concerns, Carter compromised and promised to provide Vance with a copy of every report**.** To further allay fears of White House control of foreign policy, Carter set up the weekly VBB breakfast.[136] The 'VBB' stood for Vance, Brzezinski and Harold Brown, the Secretary of Defense and the meeting was supposed to keep Brzezinski and Vance on the same page regarding policy.

The weekly meeting helped, but Brzezinski was still at a significant advantage. Brzezinski worked close to the President in the West Wing. Vance was at Foggy Bottom, when he was not traveling around the world on official business, and was often busy managing the bureaucracy of the State Department. Brzezinski also found an ingenious way to further his contact with the President. In previous administrations, the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency gave the President his daily intelligence briefing. Brzezinski simply changed the name of the briefing to "The National Security Meeting and placed it under the auspices of the National

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[134] Carter, *Diary,* 23.
[135] Betty Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009)„ 31.
[136] Carter, *Diary*, 66.

Security Council.[137] Thus, Brzezinski met daily with the President, leading Carter to note "his constant access to me."[138]

A Cold War Brewing

Tensions between Brzezinski and Vance slowly simmered for the first two years of Carter's presidency. The conflict was rooted not only in their competition for the President's ear, but also in their differing styles. The two men often agreed on policy goals but fought on how to achieve them. Brzezinski's more stringent anti-Soviet views and preference for a more forceful U.S. role contrasted with Vance's predisposition for negotiation. This reflected the two men's different personalities. The National Security Advisor was energetic, passionate and sometimes harried. These traits endeared him to Carter, as well as his underlings at the National Security Council. Brzezinski's high-energy working style resulted in a flow of ambitious policy initiatives. Carter loved the influx of ideas, noting that Brzezinski would bring him multiple ideas each day that were imaginative, if sometimes unrealistic.[139] Vance, by contrast, was known for his calm, quiet and professional demeanor. Supporters in the State Department felt that these traits gave the Secretary the ability to rise above political squabbles and disagreements. His critics, including at times President Carter, saw them as indicators of a lack of passion and drive.

These disputes were important and necessary, as they presented different options to the President. They served more as a proof of important discourse in the foreign policy apparatus than as evidence of fault lines in the team. This was a departure from the Nixon model, which tried to silence the State Department. Nixon and Kissinger wanted to run foreign policy their way and certainly had no interest in cultivating debate. But the arguments were also indicators of a

[137] Glad, *An Outsider in the White House,* 33.
[138] Carter, *Diary*, 12.
[139] "Jimmy Carter Class Visit," interview by author, November 12, 2014.

larger problem, Brzezinski's increasing control and rising influence. The tensions between Brzezinski and Vance, coupled with the National Security Advisor's control of the Presidential Directives and desire for the spotlight gave Vance pause.

Luckily for Vance, in the first eighteen months of the administration, the White House-favored-system had little impact on policy. In fact, there were even moments of teamwork. Perhaps the best example of Vance and Brzezinski's partnership was the Camp David Accords. In the summer of 1978, the Carter Administration rushed to bring Egypt and Israel together to negotiate a framework for a peace treaty.

The first year and a half of Carter's presidency had featured multiple false starts with regard to a Middle East peace plan. Early momentum was halted by the June 1977 election of Menachem Begin. He would be a significantly more hardline prime minister than his predecessor, Yitzhak Rabin. In the fall of 1977, Vance and the administration failed to bring together Arab countries and Israel for bilateral talks in Geneva. On September 2, Brzezinski noted a shift in U.S. strategy, from comprehensive Arab-Israeli agreements to a focus on the two willing partners, Anwar Sadat's Egypt and Begin's Israel. By the summer of 1978, Vance traveled to the Middle East to push both sides to attend a summit at Camp David. The Secretary of State and Brzezinski each led negotiating teams at the summit, and spent significant time strategizing with Carter as well. The Arab-Israeli conflict was perhaps the topic on which Vance and Brzezinski held the most similar views in both philosophy and practice. The administration was rewarded with the framework that would result in the first peace treaty between an Arab state and Israel. In fact, in his exit interview with the National Archives Office of Presidential Libraries, Brzezinski gave Vance much of the credit for the success of the negotiations.[140]

[140] Brzezinski, "Exit Interview," 2/20/81, Jimmy Carter Library.

Yet tensions appeared in other areas of policy. In early 1977, Brzezinski, Vance and Carter made it an administration goal to reach out to China, but there was internal disagreement over how to start. Both Brzezinski and Defense Secretary Brown wanted to establish security relations with China first; Brzezinski in particular wanted to take advantage of a mutual wariness of the Soviet Union. Security cooperation, with shared intelligence and technology, would put pressure on the Soviet Union and hopefully act as a check to Soviet power. Vance strenuously disagreed. In a memo to President Carter in April of 1977, he wrote that "nothing would be regarded as more hostile to the Soviet Union than the development of a U.S-Chinese security relationship."[141] At the time Vance was also in talks with the Soviets about a possible SALT II treaty and didn't want to make any overtures to the Chinese that could threaten the Soviet Union. Carter sided with Vance's position and that August sent the Secretary to China to begin talks.

Vance's visit to China was unproductive and a few months later, Carter chose Brzezinski to make a trip to reinvigorate talks. Later, Carter would say that Vance's effort had been a disaster and noted Brzezinski's "lovefest" or strong rapport with the Chinese.[142] Vance was unhappy that Brzezinski reaped the benefits of a high profile trip and worried that it would send a message that the National Security Advisor was the public face of Carter's foreign policy. The Secretary of State fought hard against the President's decision, and his disagreement even reached the *Washington Post*. Responding to reporter inquiries, State Department officials, claimed that it was Vance who " 'recommended' that Brzezinski go." But anonymous sources within the State Department confirmed Vance's strong opposition, as well as reports of the duo's rift.[143] Immediately after Brzezinski's trip, and much to Vance's chagrin, the National Security

[141] Vance, *Hard Choices,* 76.
[142] "Jimmy Carter Class Visit," interview by author, November 12, 2014.
[143] Dan Oberdorfer, "Brzezinski Plans to Visit China, Despite Reported Opposition From Vance," *The Washington Post*, April 27, 1978, accessed November 2014, ProQuest.

Advisor appeared on *Meet the Press* and slammed Soviet policies. It was clear that the move was intended to further bolster connections with China, but Vance worried that the remarks put the SALT II negotiations in jeopardy. Once again, Brzezinski took the spotlight.

Only a few days later, *The New Yorker Magazine* published an in-depth profile of Brzezinski. Author Elizabeth Drew sought to explain the man who sits "at the center of the system for making foreign and defense policy."[144] The article covered the National Security Advisor's personality, place in the administration, and relationships with his colleagues. For every positive description of Brzezinski's personality and exultation of his talent, Drew presented criticism from his detractors, including Brzezinski's eagerness to burnish his public persona. Drew noted his many appearances at press conferences and on television as well as the addition of a press secretary to the NSC staff. Brzezinski continued to play down his public role and reiterated his desire to not overstep his boundaries and encroach upon Vance or Brown, but the article further established Brzezinski as the President's foremost advisor on foreign policy. Several times throughout, Drew attempted to draw a distinction between Brzezinski and Kissinger, yet the repeated linkage between the two men only solidified comparisons. Brzezinski possessed less political savvy and more humility, but both men had the loudest voice in the room. Ultimately, the article served to further Vance's concerns of Brzezinski's ambition and influence. "There is no question that," Drew wrote, "of them all [Vance, Brown and Brzezinski], Brzezinski spends by far the most time with the President."[145]

The growing rift, fueled by disagreements on China policy and Brzezinski's love of the spotlight, escalated. By December of 1978, the U.S. was moving toward an agreement to normalize relations with China. In part due to Brzezinski's initial trip, Leonard Woodcock, the

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[144] Drew, *Brzezinski,* 90.
[145] Elizabeth Drew, "Brzezinski," *The New Yorker*, May 1, 1978.

chief American negotiator was able to reach a tentative agreement with his Chinese counterpart. Right before the pivotal December 13th meeting, Vance and Brzezinski met to discuss the domestic ramifications of the negotiations. The Senate had passed a resolution calling for the White House to keep Congress apprised of the secret Chinese negotiations. Vance was in favor of compliance, seeing it as a beneficial and easy way to curry favor with Congress. Brzezinski disagreed, preferring to keep the negotiations as secret as possible, to maintain White House control of information. The president sided with Brzezinski. When Woodcock and his counterpart, Deng, reached the agreement, Vance was in the Middle East. With the Secretary of State gone, Brzezinski, without consulting Vance deputies Warren Christopher and Richard Holbrooke, moved up the date of the Chinese normalization press conference. Vance was in "shock" and returned barely in time for the announcement. In addition, as Vance noted in his memoir, "several key members of Congress, included critically important ones, were irritated by the lack of consultations and by the fact they had been called to the White House one hour before the announcement to be informed, not consulted."[146] Five days after the announcement, Vance informed the President of miscommunications and possible problems between the National Security Council and the State Department. Carter did not have a clear understanding of Vance and Brzezinski's dynamic, because after calling the two men in for a meeting, the President considered the matter closed.[147] The President's solution to the problem was to have a weekly lunch with Vance, Brzezinski and their respective deputies. This meeting was in addition to the weekly foreign policy breakfast. It was Carter's second attempt at ameliorative weekly meals.

[146] Vance, *Hard Choices,* 119.
[147] Carter, *White House Diary,* 267.

The Brzezinski and Vance Administrations

The beginning of the end of collegiality came in 1979. The administration, which in the first two years had accomplished several key goals, now faced a diplomatic emergency. A key American ally in the Middle East faced a popular uprising. If Iran's government fell, it could start a destabilization tidal wave throughout the Middle East. The crisis tested the Carter foreign policy system and the already frayed relationships of the foreign policy team.

In the early months of 1977, protests targeted the Shah of Iran, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi. The Shah was part of the Pahlavi royal family. His father, Reza Shah came to power in a coup that overthrew the 140-year reign of the Qajar dynasty. In 1941, the British forced Reza to abdicate in favor of his son, Mohammad Pahlavi. Shah Mohammad was overthrown briefly in 1953, but a CIA and British Secret Service effort reinstalled the Iranian leader later that year. Aside from the short coup, the Shah ruled Iran through a constitutional monarchy well into Carter's term.

The United States long had maintained strong ties with Shah. Pahlavi had exiled Islamic hardliners from Iran, including the venerated religious leader, Ruhollah Khomeini, and oversaw a mainly secular society. The regime's rejection of Islamic extremism and its control over large oil reserves provided the U.S. a partner with strategic political and economic benefits. In 1975, the Ford Administration signed a 15 billion dollar economic agreement with Iran.

President Carter's emphasis on human rights in foreign affairs gave the administration second thoughts about continuing the relationship with Iran. Although the Shah had worked to modernize Iran for most of the previous decade, he spent much of the seventies building up Iran's military and centralizing government. This change in direction also strengthened the authoritarian elements of the Shah's regime. Internally, administration officials supported the

idea of [a potential] regime change, with Vance noting concerns over Iran's human rights and arms sale policies.

As the Carter transition team began work after the election, they requested a paper from the State Department evaluating the Shah as an ally.[148] The Bureau of Intelligence and Research report raised doubts about the stability of the Shah's regime. The Shah himself was worried about the new administration's attitudes toward Iran. Not only had he reportedly donated millions of dollars to the Ford campaign, but between 1975 and 1977, Iran began to trade heavily with West Germany and Japan, pushing the U.S. from first to third in non-military exports.[149]

The status of Iran as an ally forced Carter to confront the tension between his human rights stance and Cold War politics. Despite reports of human rights violations, the Shah was still a strategic ally in the Persian Gulf, especially against the Soviets. Brzezinski was against any actions to weaken or reform the Shah's regime for this very reason. He worried that any attempts to liberalize Iran would result in destabilization and provide an opening for the Soviets to regain influence in the Persian Gulf. Additionally, Iran was an influential voice in OPEC and the Carter administration relied on the Shah to prevent a rise in oil prices. So despite exploratory efforts to distance itself from Iran, the Carter administration needed the relationship. Vance wrote later that despite new arms transfer policies and an emphasis on human rights, "we decided early on that it was in our national interest to support the Shah so he could continue to play a constructive role in regional affairs."[150]

In fact, the Carter administration used military aid both as an investment in the Persian Gulf's security, and as a bargaining chip for political reforms and promises of oil stability. Carter

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[148] Babak Ganji, *Politics of Confrontation: The Foreign Policy of the USA and Revolutionary Iran* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2006), 16.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Vance, *Hard Choices,* 317.

delayed a deal for an advanced aircraft detection system for a month until there was evidence of sufficient reforms.[151] In August of 1977, the Shah implemented a series of reforms and liberalization programs, which included cabinet changes, Red Cross access to prisons, and expansion of freedom of speech. When the Shah visited the White House in mid-November, the U.S. agreed to supply two nuclear reactors to Iran. On December 31, Carter visited Tehran for a New Year's Celebration and toasted Iran's place as "an island of stability in one of the more troubled areas of the world."[152] It seemed that Vance and Carter's strategy was succeeding and even Brzezinski was mollified.

Yet the beginning months of 1978 would upset this surface calm and eventually pit Brzezinski's anti-Soviet views against Vance's moderate worldview. In Iran, the Shah faced burgeoning protests and a slowly solidifying opposition. Iran's growing inflation, declining economy, and continued political repression spurred a more active opposition. On May 10th, Vance wrote Carter a memo, expressing concern for "the most serious anti-Shah activities in Iran since 1963."[153] By the summer, it had become clear to U.S. officials that the exiled Ayatollah Khomeini was orchestrating the protests from abroad. But State Department officials and U.S. Ambassador to Iran Bill Sullivan were confident in the Shah's ability to persevere through the tensions. And still, the Shah faced opposition on multiple fronts. The religious fundamentalists accelerated protests while those in the government opposed his liberalization policies. On September 8, while top U.S. officials including Vance and Brzezinski were at Camp David, the Shah declared marshal law.

In a move possibly indicating his fragile rule, the Shah redoubled efforts to liberalize Iran, announcing housing, education and agriculture projects while suspending spending on

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[151] Carter, *Diary,* 75.
[152] Carter, *Diary,* 156.
[153] Vance, *Hard Choices,* 324.

nuclear energy and weapons purchases. In late October, the Shah saw two options, a military government or a civilian coalition. Meanwhile, the Ayatollah went to Paris and used the city's wealth of resources to guide the protests in Iran.[154] The Shah reached out to Ambassador Sullivan wondering if the U.S. would support a military government. Vance's advisors in the State Department opposed U.S. support for a military government. But Vance refused to take a position on the basis that the administration was not informed enough about the Iranian political climate to give adequate advice.[155] This decision was reflected in Carter's November 2 message to the Shah, in which Carter told the Shah to "hang firm and count on our backing."[156] But word of other State Department officials' views reached Brzezinski, who concluded that the State Department had given up on the Shah. He even attempted to exclude the head of the State Department's Iran desk, Harry Precht, from SCC meetings because he believed that Precht supported the Shah's removal.[157] Vance later cited this as the beginning of a new dynamic between the State Department and the National Security Council. The two agencies moved from "a close and harmonious cooperation in the Middle East" (read: Camp David) to "an estrangement." [158]

At the end of November, Cyrus Vance and Middle East deputy Alfred Atherton travelled to the Middle East to piece together an Israeli-Egyptian peace agreement.[159] Brzezinski used Vance's absence to exclude the State Department from policy decisions towards Iran. Vance would never have discovered this duplicity had a trusted ally not moved into the NSC offices on November 30.

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[154] Vance, *Hard Choices,* 327.
[155] Vance, *Hard Choices,* 328.
[156] Carter, *Diary,* 257.
[157] Ganji, *Politics of Confrontation,* 91.
[158] Vance, *Hard Choices,* 328.
[159] The Camp David Accords set the framework for peace deal, the negotiations to finalize the peace came after.

George Ball was a former Undersecretary of State and U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. He and Vance were former colleagues in the Johnson Administration; both men were second in command at their respective departments. Ball was the lone dissenter against the North Vietnam invasion in 1978 and spent the early Nixon years developing Middle East policy in the State Department. In fact, Carter had initially wanted Ball to serve as Secretary of State, but chose Vance instead because he considered Ball too radical on Middle East policy.[160]

Carter, on the recommendation of Treasury Secretary Werner Blumenthal, invited Ball to the White House to serve as a special advisor to the President. Ball moved into the NSC offices and witnessed firsthand Brzezinski's actions. "I felt depressed by the conditions I now found – particularly the distorted role of the National Security Council," Ball later wrote. "He [Brzezinski] was operating in a free-wheeling manner, calling in foreign ambassadors, telephoning or sending telegrams to foreign dignitaries outside State Department channels."[161] Brzezinski even warned Ball against talking with Harry Precht, whom the National Security Advisor had previously blacklisted. Soon the veteran diplomat discovered that Brzezinski had excluded U.S. Ambassador to Iran Bill Sullivan by communicating directly with Iranian Ambassador Zahedi. In his memoir, Brzezinski admitted direct communication with Zahedi, although he insisted that Carter "told Zahedi to keep in touch with me, which he did from time to time by telephone" and that there was "not daily contact as was subsequently alleged."[162] In one November telegram to the National Security Advisor, Sullivan mentioned Brzezinski's contact with Zahedi, writing, "before I could pass a message to the Shah, he had his aide telephone to

[160] Douglas Brinkley, "Out of the Loop", New York Times.
[161] George W. Ball, *The past Has Another Pattern: Memoirs* (New York: Norton, 1982), 457.
[162] Brzezinski, *Power and Principle,* 370.

ask if I had a message for him from [the] President. I can only assume you must have alerted Zahedi to this fact."[163]

But it was not just phone calls with Zahedi. The same month, Brzezinski sent Arthur Callahan, the Director of International Government Affairs for the Westinghouse Electric Company, to Iran. Westinghouse provided equipment for nuclear energy. Although he was "traveling in his private capacity," the National Security Advisor wanted him to meet with the Shah and other members of the Iranian leadership. While Vance was aware of Callahan's visit, Brzezinski wanted Callahan's NSC affiliation to remain a secret.[164] Callahan subsequently communicated via private telegram channels with National Security Council staff. At the request of NSC Middle East expert David Aaron, the businessman met with the Shah and reported back on the Shah's role in military activities. Brzezinski's memoirs briefly mention an anonymous American businessman, appointed to act as the National Security Advisor's personal emissary. The extent and questionable legality of Callahan's role remain absent from the book.

On November 16, Sullivan confronted Brzezinski over Callahan's role. The ambassador was uncomfortable that Callahan was representing U.S. interests, all the while selling nuclear power plants to Iran. Sullivan suggested that he "could have had cause to resent [Callahan's role] as indicating a lack of confidence in my mission." "I think you will find that Callahan, from his brief audience, is unable to give you assessments of the type [you] seek," the ambassador added.[165] Sullivan ended the telegram by asking Brzezinski to review Callahan's relationship with the NSC with Vance. He told Brzezinski to consult the Secretary of State the next time the

[163] Telegram, Sullivan to Brzezinski, 11/3/78, NLC-7-8-3-34-6, Backchannel Communications Iran, Box 8, NSA 7, , Jimmy Carter, Library.
[164] Telegram, Brzezinski to Sullivan 11/10/78 NLC-7-8-3-35-5, Backchannel Communications Iran, Box 8, NSA 7, , Jimmy Carter, Library.
[165] Telegram, Sullivan to Brzezinski 11/16/78 NLC-7-8-3-37-3, Backchannel Communications Iran, Box 8, NSA 7, , Jimmy Carter, Library.

National Security Advisor wanted to execute a secret mission. Brzezinski was unhappy with and even disdainful of Sullivan's suggestions. "Callahan went with the President's approval and I assume he received your fullest cooperation," wrote Brzezinski. "Your suggestion that we review his status as a consultant is not appreciated."[166]

During Brzezinski's month of secret communication with Iran, the State Department continued to advise the Shah, offering unconditional support without condoning a military regime. On December 11, Ball presented Carter with his recommendation. The U.S. should force the Shah to turn power over to a civilian government, while remaining the head of the Iranian armed forces. Brzezinski was seemingly wary of counsel from outside the NSC and tried to stop Ball's recommendations from being distributed to the other cabinet members on the council.[167] The National Security Advisor supported a Shah-led crackdown on dissidents.

Carter told Ball that he could not tell the Shah what to do and promised to continue his support of the Iranian leader. On December 14, the President then informed his temporary advisor that he planned on sending Brzezinski to Tehran.[168] Ball was astounded. Brzezinski was going to replace Sullivan as the primary U.S. representative to the Shah. The ambassador supported Vance and Ball's assessment that the Shah should relinquish power to a civilian government. With Sullivan gone, only one point of view would be involved with policy. Sullivan was Vance's main source of information and influence on the Iran matter.[169] George Ball vociferously argued with Carter and managed to block Brzezinski's trip. When Cyrus Vance

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[166] Telegram, Brzezinski to Sullivan, 11/17/78, NLC-7-8-3-38-2, Backchannel Communications Iran, Box 8, NSA 7, , Jimmy Carter, Library.
[167] Ball, *Another Pattern,* 460.
[168] NSC Document, Gary Sick, Meetings on Iran since November 1978, 2/6/79, NLC-25-140-3-4-2, Declassified Digital Files, Jimmy Carter Library.
[169] Vance, *Hard Choices,* 326-331.

returned to the United States on December 16, Ball informed the Secretary of Brzezinski's actions.

On January 2, Sullivan relayed news of a regime change. The Shah was ready to step down and hand over power to Shahpur Bakhtiar, a leader of Iran's National Front. Bakhtiar agreed to lead a parliamentary government on the condition that the Shah left Iran. Over the next two weeks, the U.S. waited to see if Bakhtiar would be able to form a new government. The situation was tenuous. Although the Shah was contemplating an exit from Iran, he was still weighing a move to abolish the parliament and enact a totalitarian regime. In France, Ayatollah Khomeini used his influence to encourage protests. The religious leader was no fan of Bakhtiar and hoped for an opportunity to return to Iran. Worried about the effects of a government collapse on the Iranian military, the Carter administration sent Deputy Commander for United States European Command, General Robert Huyser to Iran. His mission was to liaise between the United States and Iranian military leadership. Brzezinski was certain that with the Shah's impending exit, and the government in an uncertain transition, the Iranian military was the first and only defense from losing American influence in the country. If the military didn't hold, Brzezinski thought, the subsequent power vacuum would allow the Ayatollah to regain control. He forecasted that with Khomeini's rule, the Soviets would not be far behind.

In an SCC meeting on January 3, Charles Duncan, the Deputy Secretary of Defense suggested that the President send General Robert Huyser to Iran as part of an effort to support the Iranian military. According to Brzezinski's journal entry from January 3, Vance had left the table to make a phone call, when Duncan suggested Huyser. The plan to send Huyser had been in the works for a least a day before the SCC meeting. Duncan had already sent Brzezinski a memo, extolling the General's qualifications, *before* the pivotal meeting. "Huyser has made several

trips to Iran recently in conjunction with a Command, Control and Communication studies project he has headed," wrote Duncan. "In this capacity he has had frequent contact with the Shah and all of the top Iranian military leaders."[170] General Alexander Haig, Huyser's commander, was opposed to the mission, despite the fact that Duncan's memo had included Haig's recommendation. In fact, Haig told Ambassador Sullivan that if Huyser were indeed sent to Iran, he would resign.[171] The same day, Huyser received his orders. Haig resigned from his post as Supreme Commander of NATO Forces and retired from the U.S. Army.

General Huyser would arrive in Tehran on January 4. There were two facets to his mission or at least what would become administration talking points regarding his trip. The first was to act as the American representative to what was termed "the most important institution in Iranian political life," or the military.[172] He was to guarantee the safekeeping of U.S. military equipment and Iranian oil reserves. In addition, it was Huyser's job to ensure the Iranian military's support of the prospective Bakhtiar government. There was one more set of instructions for Huyser, a mission to which the White House often alluded, but never explicitly ordered. The general was supposed to assess the ability of and if necessary convince, the Iranian military to overthrow the government.[173]

At six in the evening on January 3, Brzezinski approached Carter and asked him for permission to urge the Iranian military to overthrow the government. The President denied his advisor's request. Brzezinski did it anyway, and would continuously push for a coup, even though Carter saw it as a last resort. "My hope however," wrote Brzezinski, "is that the telegram to General Huyser, who is supposed to fly to Tehran with a message of assurance to the Iranian

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[170] Memo, Charles Duncan to Brzezinski, NLC-25R-33-6-395-6, Declassified Digital Files, Jimmy Carter Library.
[171] William H. Sullivan, *Mission to Iran* (New York: Norton, 1981), 228.
[172] FOI Request #80-163, Huyser Mission Packet, 10/28/80, NLC-25R-33-6-395-6, Declassified Digital Files, Jimmy Carter Library.
[173] Brzezinski, *Power and Principle,* 379.

military… will be interpreted by the Iranian military as encouragement to take firm action when the moment of truth arrives… I hope all of that will give the Iranian military the needed signal."[174] The written copy of Huyser's orders included the message "As the Iranian military moves through this time of change, they should know that the U.S. military and U.S. government, from the President down, remain strongly behind them. We are prepared to stick with them. We will maintain our military supply relationship, maintain our establishment and training consistent with their desires."[175] The telegram expressed support for a civilian government, but intentionally left out any mention of Bakhtiar.

The Carter administration had been reticent to send the officer any written orders.[176] This aroused Huyser's suspicions as it indicated that his mission was supposed to be off the books. It was only after Huyser refused to leave for Tehran that Deputy Secretary Duncan sent written orders, the content of which Brzezinski controlled. As Huyser would later note in his memoirs, these orders lacked any specifics and convinced him that Brzezinski was advocating a coup of the Bakhtiar government.[177]

The chain of command and lines of communication during Huyser's time in Iran were extraordinarily blurred. Huyser and Sullivan reported back to separate departments and were often given conflicting orders. Sullivan made almost daily reports to Vance at the State Department, Huyser to Duncan at the Defense Department. Huyser reported directly to Duncan and Secretary Brown, who in turn consulted with Brzezinski. Sullivan would later write that each evening, he and the general would speak to their various supervisors in Washington and then compare notes to understand if there was a unified strategy. Both would report that they felt that

[174] Brzezinski, *Power and Principle,* 378.
[175] Robert E. Huyser, *Mission to Tehran* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 18.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Huyser, 19.

they were answering to two different governments, a problem that would persist until Huyser returned home a month later.

Sullivan and Huyser also lived together in Tehran, and readily shared intelligence between them. Despite strategic disagreements, the duo made it a priority to work together, especially amid mixed signals from Washington. The confusion started almost immediately. On January 5, the general's first full day in Tehran, Vance sent a memo to Sullivan, which included orders for Huyser. The Secretary of State wanted Huyser to ignore previous orders from Brzezinski and the Defense Department.[178] Vance was concerned that Huyser's orders might undo Sullivan's efforts to ensure the Shah's departure and transition peacefully into the new government. Fortunately for Vance, Huyser did not seem to share his superiors' desire for a coup. The general insisted that he considered a coup a last resort. In fact, in his first meeting with the Iranian generals, Huyser repeatedly pushed the leadership to support Bakhtiar and avoid a coup.

During their first week together in Tehran, Sullivan and Huyser worked to solidify plans for the Shah to leave Iran and ensure the success of the Bakhtiar government. Meanwhile, Huyser continued to receive orders to meet with the Iranian military establishment and ensure a readiness for a military takeover. Although reticent to push for a coup, Huyser repeatedly inquired into the Iranian military's capabilities for a takeover. The Iranian generals did not even have the broad strokes of a plan until the middle of January. The general received permission from both the Secretary of State and Defense to accompany Sullivan on all his assignments. But the converse was not permitted. Sullivan was excluded from any of Huyser's meetings.[179] Brzezinski in particular had long distrusted the ambassador and was not impressed with his

[178] Huyser, 23.
[179] Huyser, 75.

work. This was not the first time the National Security Advisor had tried to sideline Sullivan. The previous December, the National Security Advisor lobbied Carter to go to Iran and replace Sullivan. If it had not been George Ball's last minute rebuttal and defense of Sullivan's abilities, Brzezinski would have succeeded. Over the next few weeks, Brzezinski continued to discredit the ambassador in the eyes of the President.

That first week, Huyser and Sullivan reported to their respective supervisors about the mounting problem of the exiled Khomeini. The religious leader held tremendous sway over the young, observant masses and his influence was growing. The message back to Washington was clear; Khomeini posed a threat to the success of the Bakhtiar government. (The Shah and Iranian military leadership echoed this sentiment.) Vance was concerned about the Ayatollah's influence and asked Carter for permission to open up an indirect channel with the exiled leader. He wanted to ask Khomeini to give the Bakhtiar government a chance to succeed. Brzezinski too was wary of Khomeini's influence but he also had no intention of letting Khomeini use this period of transition to take control. In what was becoming a more common occurrence, Carter, heeding the counsel of Brzezinski and Brown, rejected the Secretary's proposal.[180] The three men agreed that direct contact with Khomeini would likely push many Iranian military leaders out of the country. The President met with his national security staff on the morning of January 10 and faced a last resort argument from Vance, who backed up his pro-Khomeini stance with support from Sullivan and the Shah himself. Carter compromised and agreed to reach out to the Ayatollah through the French government. Carter's leadership team agreed upon a strategy for Sullivan and Huyser. The ambassador would promise Bakhtiar explicit U.S. support and urge the Shah to leave the country immediately. Huyser would stay in Iran and cajole Iranian high command to support Bakhtiar.

[180] Vance, *Hard Choices,* 336-337.

And yet someone in Washington wanted to make sure that Huyser still readied the Iranian military for a coup. On January 11, Secretary Brown, as part of his daily phone call with Huyser, reread Huyser's orders. The general was certain that his superiors thought he wasn't following policy. Still confused the following day, Huyser sent a long telegram to Secretary Brown and JCS Chief General Jones. Huyser relayed his interpretation of Washington's wishes and as well as his thoughts on the best possible outcomes of the crisis. The top two outcomes were either a successful Bakhtiar government, or a Bakhtiar government that succeeds for a few months and then fails.[181] Third, or option C, was the military coup. Much to Huyser's confusion, the next day, on the thirteenth, Brown once again reread his orders. "Again, I was a bit mystified by Harold Brown's tone, because I thought he knew this [aligning the military with Bakhtiar] was what I was trying to do," Huyser recalled.[182] The general had spent the previous seven days coaxing and cajoling the Iranian generals to support Bakhtiar. It was completely in line with the orders he had received from the outset.

As it turns out, it was Brzezinski who was worried that Huyser had stopped pushing for coup. The National Security Advisor was "concerned that [he] might interpret his instructions as meaning that we were committed indefinitely to any kind of civilian government."[183] In fact, Brzezinski had attached Huyser's January 12 report with a memo to the President that "I feel uneasy about his list of desirable governments." He was not happy that a coup d'état was Huyser's third option. Brzezinski's distrust of Huyser explains Brown's follow-up phone call the next day. Vance would later write that the same day, January 13, that Sullivan informed the

[181] Telegram, Huyser to Sec. Brown**,** 1/12/79, NLC-6-29-3-25-4, Declassified Digital Files, Jimmy Carter Library.
[182] Huyser, 105.
[183] Brzezinski, *Power and Principle,* 385.

Secretary of State that "Brzezinski was trying to get General Huyser to push the military into a coup attempt."[184]

There is no record of Brzezinski directly contacting Huyser to implement a military overthrow of the Bakhtiar government. It seems as though Harold Brown's follow-up phone calls on January 13 and 14 were the orders to which Vance and Sullivan referred. Brzezinski had kept himself removed to avoid any connection to the Defense Department's communications with Huyser. The Defense Department was careful as well: in memos to the general, Duncan and Brown refer only to 'the White House.' Yet Huyser understood that Brzezinski was behind many of the orders from the White House and Defense Department and interpreted Brown's message as orders from the National Security Advisor. Part of Brown's message was that Huyser must "keep [the military] psychologically and physically in a state of readiness for the coup."[185] It is likely that after hearing Brown's messages, Huyser told Sullivan that Brzezinski was pushing him towards a coup.

Brzezinski continued to direct policy from behind the scenes. Huyser was a high-ranking general and second highest-ranking officer at European Command. Protocol mandated that Huyser report to the Defense Department. Brzezinski technically had no jurisdiction. One day later, Brown spoke to Huyser and relayed that 'the White House' was concerned about 'Option B', a Bakhtiar government that fails after a short period of time. They wanted to go right to option C, the coup.[186] Brzezinski was never mentioned. On January 16, the Shah left Iran and the Iranian senate confirmed Bakhtiar by a 38-1 vote.[187] The Shah had even instructed his military leaders to obey Huyser's wishes. The general and Sullivan had successfully executed two weeks

[184] Vance, *Hard Choices,* 339.
[185] Huyser, 105.
[186] Huyser, 120-121.
[187] Huyser, 120.

worth of planning. They immediately set about trying to ensure the success of Bakhtiar's new government.

It was at this crucial moment that Brzezinski directly inserted himself into the situation, taking part in a call to Huyser. The National Security Advisor thought that Huyser was dangerously close to 'option B,' a move that in Brzezinski's mind would mean the end of U.S. influence in Iran. "With Dr. Brzezinski on the line, I was hoping that Washington would now give me more latitude in [ensuring a successful Bakhtiar government]," Huyser recalled. "But my statement [that the Shah had ordered the generals' fealty] was greeted by a resounding silence and zero acknowledgement."[188] Furthermore, Brzezinski reiterated that the coup option should remain on the table. Once again, Huyser was mystified. "I began to wonder if this rather crucial issue [the choice between supporting Bakhtiar or the coup] had really been thrashed out in Washington," the general would later write.[189]

Brzezinski was certain of two things. The Bakhtiar government was going to fail and a coup was the only way to prevent the Ayatollah from gaining control. He also was against negotiating at all with the Ayatollah, which would ensure the success of the Bakhtiar government. Khomeini seemed willing to accept a Bakhtiar government if he was allowed a voice in Iranian politics. So either way, the National Security Advisor saw a coup as the only contingency that allowed continued U.S. influence. Brzezinski's refusal to communicate with directly Khomeini furthered Brzezinski's own goal of a coup d'état. Vance would later write that "the case for actively urging the parties to negotiate an understanding was impeded by Brzezinski's determined opposition to direct contacts with the ayatollah, despite the fact that both Bakhtiar and the military wanted our help in working out an arrangement with Khomeini,

[188] Huyser, 120.
[189] Ibid.

and by his persistent arguments to the president that we advise the Iranian military to seize power." [190] Carter's reliance on Brzezinski's input, despite overwhelming cabinet opposition, might have prevented the U.S. from stabilizing the situation in Iran. Carter refused to include Khomeini in discussions, which might have placated both Khomeini and Bakhtiar.

Instead, Carter's approach only isolated Bakhtiar and angered Khomeini. The Ayatollah seized on Bakhtiar's now evident weakness and on February 5 formed his own parallel government. Khomeini appointed Mehdi Bazargan as Prime Minister, whom Vance noted was a pro-Western, democratic politician. One week later, on February 11, amidst fighting between pro-Khomeini and pro-Bakhtiar military forces, Bakhtiar resigned and went into hiding. Only the Ayatollah's government remained. The following day, Brzezinski tried one last attempt at a coup, this time to remove the Ayatollah. Again, Brzezinski did not make the call himself, instead using Vance deputy David Newsom. Sullivan was furious and replied with expletives.[191]

The irony of the almost month-long Iranian crisis was that Iran was not the only country involved to have two 'governments' operating at once. Vance's State Department and Brzezinski's National Security office were sending contradicting policy directives to Sullivan and Huyser for over a month. Carter was unaware of the dueling departments, because he had lost confidence in the State Department's usefulness. This was compounded by the fact that, early on in the crisis, Brzezinski convinced Carter of Sullivan's incompetence. On January 12, Carter wrote in his diary, "I've lost confidence in Sullivan" and later accused the ambassador of insubordination.[192] When Huyser returned home on February 5 and reported to the President, he included in his debrief a staunch defense of Sullivan. Yet Carter's diary entry for that day mentions only details of Huyser and Sullivan's disagreements and a declaration that "Sullivan

[190] Vance, *Hard Choices*, 341-42.
[191] Vance, *Hard Choices,* 342.
[192] Carter, *Diary,* 277.

has almost been disloyal".[193] The ambassador wasn't disloyal to the President. He simply had been receiving multiple versions of orders. Vance and his deputies had conducted foreign policy in accordance with what they thought were the President's wishes, while Brzezinski had sent altered instructions as well.

Epilogue

The events between January 2 and February 12, 1979 served as a point of no return for Vance and Brzezinski. Carter was now firmly in Brzezinski's camp, even though the National Security Advisor's policies had lost Iran. The Secretary of State was the chief foreign policy advisor to the President in name only. The preponderance of events known as the Iran Hostage Crisis would serve as a culmination to what General Huyser described as a Shakespearian saga.[194]

On November 4, 1979 zealous student protesters attacked the U.S. embassy in Tehran. Only three hours after Vance was notified, communication ceased. Bazargan and his foreign minister, Yazdi, lost any political influence. As word of the sixty-three hostages spread, an envoy was appointed to speak with Khomeini, who had capitalized on the situation by endorsing the hostage takers, and seemed to have taken charge of Iran. The envoy was denied entry into Iran, only strengthening the hypothesis that Khomeini was in control. Immediately, the U.S. began to increase pressure on the Iranians. By the middle of November, the U.S. had frozen Iranian assets in U.S. banks, imports of oil, and stopped any shipment of military equipment.[195] Vance kept in contact with Khomeini's officials through backchannels and attempted further action through the United Nations. Almost immediately, U.S. Special Forces command began to plan out

[193] Carter, *Diary,* 288.
[194] Huyser, 1.
[195] Glad, *An Outsider in the White House,* 181.

contingency plans and rescue options in the event that negotiations failed to bring back the hostages. Carter, however, assured Vance that military action was the last resort.

The saga of the Iran hostage crisis presented the final step in the evolution of Vance's relationship with Brzezinski and Carter. Vance had long felt that Brzezinski was impeding his access to the President and undermining his diplomatic efforts. The two continuously butted heads during meetings and offered opposing views to Carter. While Carter did give Vance the opportunity to find a diplomatic solution to the hostage crisis, their relationship was strained and Brzezinski constantly interfered. Two weeks into the crisis, Vance strongly opposed Brzezinski's suggestion to mine Iranian ports. On November 27, Vance threatened to resign, angered by what he saw was Carter putting the nation's honor before the hostages.[196]

Meanwhile, Brzezinski was still maneuvering behind the scenes. Seven days into the crisis, CIA director Turner noted that Brzezinski had yet to discuss a military option with the Special Coordinating Committee (SCC).[197] The Director of Central Intelligence Turner then discovered that Brzezinski had, without his or Vance's knowledge, begun a series of meetings regarding military options, and was even using intelligence from the Defense Intelligence Agency, which was under Turner's purview. During SCC meetings from the 20th to the 22nd of November, Brzezinski was the sole supporter of breaking diplomatic relations with Iran, which included the expulsion of U.S.-based Iranian officials.

By the end of November, it seemed to some that the Vance-Brzezinski rift was affecting the status of the diplomatic efforts,. "Perhaps there were no other solutions [to the crisis] but I wondered if it was because the Carter team was not working well together", Turner would later

[196] Carter, *Diary,* 373.
[197] Turner, *Terrorism and Democracy,* 38.

recall. "At our SCC meetings, the discussion often could not stay on track."[198] According to Turner, complicating the problem was Brzezinski's role as an advocate instead of an arbitrator. "That change [in the role of National Security Advisor] pushed more of the problem upstairs to the President, who had to do all the adjudicating himself."[199]

Vance believed that the only way to secure the release of the hostages was through a patient negotiating process, one that did nothing to antagonize the Iranians. In the beginning, Vance had public opinion on his side. Over 60 percent of Americans opposed a hypothetical military rescue of the hostages. A December 13th poll also concluded that a majority of Americans supported a measured approach to the situation.[200] This was one of the reasons Carter supported Vance's diplomatic efforts. It also seemed that a deal to bring back the hostages was imminent. Yet, every time it was the Iranians who backed out, accusing the U.S. of not fulfilling their side of the deal. On March 13, after another false hope, Carter declared he had lost faith in Iranian President Bani Sadr.[201] Vance, however, would not give up and met with the SCC to go over further options, coming up with a renewed plan. Vance believed that the hostages would be released once Khomeini was assured of the creation (and control) of an Islamic republic.

Perhaps complicating the diplomatic quandary was the sense among some in Carter's cabinet that he alternated support between Vance and Brzezinski.[202] On March 23, the President ordered the expulsion of Iranian diplomats. He then staked the success of this gamble on the chances that major U.S. allies (Britain, France and Germany) would do the same. Letters to the leaders of the allied countries asked for support and suggested that without it, military options

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[198] Turner, *Terrorism and Democracy,* 58.
[199] Turner, *Terrorism and Democracy,* 59.
[200] "Hostage Crisis Polling Memo from Public Affairs William D. Blair Jr. to the Secretary of State", NLC 7-22-6-17-6, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library
[201] Carter, *Diary,* 408.
[202] Turner, *Terrorism and Democracy,* 58.

would be considered.[203] Vance continued to support negotiations. "Our only realistic course was to keep up the pressure on Iran while we waited for Khomeini to determine that the revolution had accomplished its purpose, and that the hostages were of no further value," he wrote later. "As painful as it would be, our national interests and the need to protect the lives of our fellow Americans dictated that we continue to exercise restraint."[204]

By April, however, Carter felt that the U.S "had leaned over backward with the Iranians to the point of being inept."[205] On April 27, he broke all diplomatic relations with Iran. Four days later, on April 11th, Carter convened a National Security Council meeting to make a decision about a rescue mission. Vance, who had left on vacation the day before, was not at the meeting, which was "hastily convened."[206] Warren Christopher, Vance's deputy sat in on the meeting as acting Secretary of State, but because he was a substitute and not fully briefed, Christopher did not take a position on the proposed operation.[207] Vance would later write that he was "stunned and angry that such a momentous decision had been made in [his] absence."[208] It was the final straw in a years long battle to hold the President's attention and with the April 11th meeting, one he had seemingly lost. The President gave Vance the opportunity to speak his mind to the National Security Council on April 12th. According to Turner, the Secretary of State gave "a calm powerful argument," preaching faith in the diplomatic process and explaining the dangers of a military operation. Turner noted that Vance "offered no rejoinder or suggestion for compromise when the President decided against him. I felt certain that what we had seen was a

[203] "Cyrus Vance Draft of Letters to England, Germany and France", NLC-33-14-17-1-1, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library.
[204] Vance, *Hard Choices,* 408.
[205] Turner, *Terrorism and Democracy* 105.
[206] Vance, *Hard Choices,* 409.
[207] Turner recounts that Christopher does in fact make an impassioned argument against military action.
[208] Vance, *Hard Choices,* 409.

reprise of a more emotional private meeting between him and the President earlier that morning."[209]

In the days following the NSC vote, Vance told a few close colleagues that he could no longer in good conscience continue as Secretary. He relayed this sentiment to the President on April 17. Carter saw this as a threat and wrote afterwards that, "this [the threat to resign] happens every time we get into a real crunch and have to make a difficult decision, but after he goes through a phase of uncertainty and disapproval, then he joins in with adequate support for me."[210] The Secretary of State had previously threatened to resign on multiple occasions, but no prior disagreement had become as heated and combustible as Vance's opposition to the rescue mission. Yet the same day, Carter noticed that in his recent interactions with the Secretary of State, Vance seemed depressed and defeated.[211] On the morning of April 21st, three days before the operation, Vance handed the President his letter of resignation. No matter the outcome of the operation, he told the President, he was done.

The Brzezinski and Vance partnership was supposed to be the new model of government teamwork and success. But Vance's fears about Brzezinski's NSC system, one that the National Security Advisor himself created, would be realized. Brzezinski's Special Coordinating Committee's (SCC) ill-defined parameters allowed Brzezinski to lead meetings on issues that he determined, much like Kissinger's Washington Special Action Group. The SCC would meet throughout the multiple Iranian crises. The National Security Advisor's control over the Presidential Directive system meant that Carter routinely received only one perspective, Brzezinski's. This allowed Brzezinski to gradually gain influence and monopolize policy. The position's lack of oversight allowed Brzezinski to move unilaterally on a series of issues. The

[209] Turner, *Terrorism and Democracy,* 109.
[210] Carter, *Diary*, 419.
[211] Carter, *Diary,* 419.

National Security Advisor was able to push for a coup of the Iranian government multiple times, all while going behind the back of the Secretary of State. Later he used the resources of the Joint Chiefs and intelligence agencies to plan a military hostage rescue without the cabinet's knowledge. None of the fixes implemented to prevent another Kissinger had worked. Brzezinski used the same mechanisms in the NSC system to sideline Vance and control policy from the White House.

Conclusion

In the years after the Carter administration, there was no effort to reform the institutional structures that allowed for the National Security Advisor to take control of policy. Even with more recent attempts to reform the system, the circumstances that allowed Kissinger and Brzezinski to outmaneuver the State Department still exist. Yet the role of the National Security Advisor has seemingly diminished in the decades that followed. There are several factors that explain why we have not seen other Kissingers and Brzezinskis.

The first is the reappearance of the strong Secretary of State. Every Secretary since Vance has had extensive foreign policy or cabinet experience. While Vance had bureaucratic experience as Secretary of the Army and Deputy Secretary of Defense, he only had a year of diplomatic experience under his belt. Rogers had no diplomatic experience. Interestingly, many of the same names reappear throughout the decades. The Reagan administration saw two powerful Secretaries of State: General Alexander Haig, who had served both as Kissinger's deputy at the National Security Council and Nixon's chief of staff and George Shultz, who served from 1982 until the end of Reagan's second term in 1988.[212] Shultz served in four

[212] Ironically, Haig clashed with Reagan, because the Secretary thought the President should have stayed out of foreign policy. The general's previous experiences may have played a role in this philosophy. After serving as

different cabinet positions for two different presidents. His background in government allowed him to navigate the Reagan bureaucracy and ascend to the foreign policy throne. The next two Secretaries of State were veterans of U.S. foreign policy as well. James Baker served as head of the State Department for George H.W. Bush's term and previously served as Reagan's chief of staff for five years. Longtime Vance Deputy Warren Christopher was Bill Clinton's first Secretary of State. He had also taken over from Vance, as interim Secretary in the last year of Carter's presidency. During the second Bush administration, Colin Powell served at the helm of the State Department. He had previously been Reagan's last National Security Advisor and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs during George H.W. Bush's presidency. Condoleezza Rice followed in Powell's footsteps. She was the National Security Advisor during Powell's stint at the State Department and subsequently replaced him. Barack Obama's choices have deviated from the pattern. Hilary Clinton and John Kerry were both major presidential candidates and senators.

The second factor is the increasing bureaucracy of the National Security Council. Kissinger had expanded the staff to allow the White House the resources to conduct its own foreign policy. Since the end of Brzezinski's term, the size of the NSC has grown both in terms of bureaucratic and personnel size. In 1981, the Reagan NSC was divided into more offices than previous iterations. Each office had specific regional focuses. By the end of Reagan's second term, the NSC staff had eighty personnel, almost thirty more staff members than Kissinger's staff had at its peak of fifty. Reagan's NSC structure added a Legislative Affairs Liaison and a Legal Affairs position as well. These positions theoretically provided more oversight, but they didn't really because they functioned as part of the NSC, instead of independently of the council. The

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deputy National Security Advisor, Haig became Nixon's chief of staff. He reportedly ran the White House when Nixon withdrew to the Executive Mansion during the Watergate scandal.

Bush administration halved the size of the NSC from an unwieldy eighty, but kept the larger number of departments. Tony Lake, Kissinger's former assistant in the NSC, served as National Security Advisor during the beginning of Clinton's term. He oversaw the integration of the National Economic Advisor into the NSC staff. More importantly, the Clinton administration added speechwriting, communications and public affairs offices to the NSC. There was now an important and official public element to the NSC and National Security Advisor role.

The 9/11 terrorist attacks drastically changed the NSC structure as the NSC staff grew (again) to over one hundred staff members and over forty divisions. At its peak, the Bush NSC staff had over two hundred and twenty members. A Washington Post article, from June 2015, cited the Obama National Security Council staff at over four hundred members. As some national security experts have noted, the National Security Council has become a department in and of itself. As a Brookings Institution report observed, "As the NSC has become more like an agency, it has become less flexible and less adaptable, and its procedures more rigid and bureaucratic."[213] This also requires the National Security Advisor to spend time managing the large bureaucracy, instead of focusing on policy. As a large, bureaucratic organization, the flexibility and independence that gave the National Security Advisor and his staff so much power, has now seemingly become a thing of the past.

There is a third factor as well. It is possible that we just do not know about the extent of the National Security Advisor's role in recent events. Hundreds of boxes of national security files from the Carter administration have yet to be declassified. Even with Presidential Archives and Freedom of Information Act requests, national security documents are often protected from the public eye and some are still redacted. Additionally, advances in technology and media have

[213] I.M. Destler and Ivo H. Daadler, "A New NSC for a New Administration," The Brookings Institution, November 15, 2000, http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2000/11/governance-daalder.

affected the way government functions and keeps secrets. While the Internet and the ability of the press to disseminate information have helped to reveal more of the inner machinations of government, these advances have also changed the way officials communicate. In the end, there is just too much we don't know about the foreign policy apparatus to make any definitive judgments about the continued evolution of the role of the National Security Advisor in U.S. foreign policy making.

There have been subsequent efforts to reform the National Security Advisor position itself, but none have been successful. Some have called for Presidential nomination and Senate confirmation for the position. However, this would deprive the President of the right to choose his or her own advisors. The most recent development was a 2008 federally funded report by the Project to Reform National Security. Titled *Forging a New Shield*, the report called for the disassembly of the National Security Council and Advisor, arguing that the structures put in place by the 1947 National Security Act were to deal with the Cold War. The report suggested that the country's national security is at risk with the current system. It recommended a new, Senate-confirmed Director of National Security.[214] Despite this report, there have been no major legislative attempts to fix or change the system. In fact, only recently it was revealed that a new National Security Council committee would oversee drone strikes against terrorists.[215]

America was founded on the idea that no person should have absolute power. Over the years, the people of the United States have implemented checks and balances, oversight and systems to maintain the transparency of government. The structures of government are

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[214] James R. Locher, III, "Forging a New Shield: Adapted Essay," The American Interest, December 31, 2008, accessed March 29, 2016, http://www.the-american-interest.com/2009/01/01/forging-a-new-shield/.
[215] Greg Miller, "Plan for Hunting Terrorists Signals U.S. Intends to Keep Adding Names to Kill Lists," Washington Post, October 23, 2012, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/plan-for-hunting-terrorists-signals-us-intends-to-keep-adding-names-to-kill-lists/2012/10/23/4789b2ae-18b3-11e2-a55c-39408fbe6a4b_story.html?tid=a_inl.

continuously reevaluated and revised. Yet quietly, even today, within the annals of the West Wing, sits a person, innocuously named as an ‘advisor’, that is free to pursue an agenda without oversight and with unfettered access to the President.

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