

Controlling Chaos: An Analysis of Zbigniew Brzezinski's Political Theories and Foreign Policy,  
1956-1981

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Senior Honors Thesis  
History  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

March 2015

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*"History is much more the product of chaos than of conspiracy." - Zbigniew Brzezinski*

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: Brzezinski's Theories of Totalitarianism and Peaceful Engagement, 1956 – 1976.....	5
Chapter 2: Chapter 2: Brzezinski's Foreign Policy and Negotiation Methods, 1977-1980.....	34
Conclusion.....	60
Bibliography.....	62

## *Introduction*

Zbigniew Brzezinski is a man of extremes. He asserts an idea and defends it. Whether in casual conversations or foreign negotiations, he does not compromise. It seems Brzezinski has done everything possible to earn his reputation. To his fans he is a hero, the man who “cracked the Kremlin.”<sup>1</sup> To his opponents – some of whom have worked by his side – he is nothing more than a “rat terroir” who “never accepted a defeat as final.”<sup>2</sup> The intensity of these reactions are not surprising. Through his sixty years of work, Brzezinski has never sugarcoated his opinion and many times his ideas have failed to conform to mainstream thought. His ideas and the way in which he asserts them are extreme. It would only seem his reputation would follow in a like manner.

Many look to his childhood as the reason for his personality and anti-Soviet agenda. Born in 1928 in Warsaw, political hostility plagued Brzezinski’s early years. Tadeusz Brzezinski, his father, was a member of the Polish Foreign Ministry. In 1931, Tadeusz was transferred to Berlin and Brzezinski spent the first ten years of his lives watching the rise of the Third Reich.<sup>3</sup> When Tadeusz was relocated to Soviet-controlled Ukraine in 1936 he did not take his wife and children with him. During his term in Ukraine Tadeusz discovered that many of his acquaintances were disappearing and never heard from again. The diplomat accepted a job at the consul in Canada in 1938 out of fear for his and his family’s safety. Only months later the Nazi-Soviet Pact divided Poland. The Brzezinski family remained in Canada and watched Germany and the USSR tear their home country to pieces.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Andrzej Lubowski, *Zbig: The Man Who Cracked the Kremlin* (New York: Open Road Distribution, 2011), 215-220.

<sup>2</sup> “Brzezinski Bumbled, Says Hodding Carter.” *The Spokesman Review*, December 31, 1980, A1.

<sup>3</sup> Gati, Charles. *Zbig: The Strategy and Statecraft of Zbigniew Brzezinski*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013. 237.

<sup>4</sup> Lubowski, *Zbig*, 11.

Brzezinski adjusted to his new surroundings well. He attended McGill University in 1945 for his Bachelors and Masters degrees, Harvard in 1950 for his doctorate, and began his teaching career at Columbia University in 1959. He founded the Research Institute on Communist Affairs at Columbia and became involved in a variety of think tanks and foreign policy teams. In 1977, he made his national debut by becoming National Security Adviser in the Carter administration. By this time, he had published over seven major works related to the Soviet Union. Scholars, adversaries, and newspapers are quick to draw a line between Brzezinski's childhood and his academic and political views. The common claim is that the events of his childhood instilled his firm anti-Soviet persona. This answer oversimplifies the man and does him little justice.

Surprisingly, there is little work on Brzezinski. Only recently scholars have begun reevaluating his academic and political contributions. The works he published from 1956 to 1976 have not been consecutively analyzed in decades. With the fall of the Iron Curtain, it is time scholars reopen Brzezinski's books and reexamine his ideas. The studies of Brzezinski's term as National Security Adviser from 1977 to 1981 are also lacking. Many fail to look beyond the hyperbolic opinions of his fans and opponents during the administration. It is time to approach Brzezinski's term in the White House and seriously analyze how his actions effected American foreign policy during the Cold War and what consequences our nation is still dealing with.

These periods of Brzezinski's life are intellectually connected. Through the mid-twentieth century, he used his theory of totalitarianism to build a tower of ideas that he has never stopped adding to. By his own admission, most of his adult life "was spent strategizing how to undermine the Soviet bloc." In reference to his publications and term as National Security Adviser, Brzezinski claimed that he "had a whole theory of how to do it, a concept which goes

back to the 1960s.”<sup>5</sup> There is a clear progression of Brzezinski’s ideas demonstrated through his published works from 1956-1977 and his activities as National Security Adviser from 1977-1981. He develops an interpretation of the Soviet system through his totalitarian model, constructs a foreign policy plan through his theory of peaceful engagement, and then tests these ideas during the Carter administration.

Brzezinski’s consistent goal was to cause the collapse of the Soviet system and assert American dominance. He believed that the Soviet system, the totalitarian machine that sought ideological uniformity throughout the Communist world, was outdated. He predicted its inevitable failure, claiming that political revisionism in the satellite states would slowly tear the Communist nations apart. Peaceful engagement sought to encourage revisionism through cultural, political, and intellectual exchange between the West and East. The American government would interject in Eastern European politics and border disputes, acting as the peaceful overseer of negotiations. By giving the satellite states incentive to look to America for leadership, Brzezinski sought to prepare the United States for an era when the USSR did not exist.

He further developed these ideas during his term as National Security Adviser. His focus shifted to the Carter administration’s humanitarian policies during this time. Brzezinski integrated his Soviet-centric ideas with Carter’s human rights campaign, creating an invaluable political tool that would put Moscow on the ideological defensive. In particular, Brzezinski’s greatest success was recovering five political prisoners from the Soviet Union, simultaneously shaming the USSR for its human rights abuses and offering a message of hope and moral superiority to his fellow American citizens. Moreover, Brzezinski’s methods of negotiations developed during this time. In his meetings with the Special Coordination Committee, prisoner

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<sup>5</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski and Brent Scowcroft. *America and the World: Conversations on the Future of American Foreign Policy*. New York: Basic Books, 2008. 7.

negotiations with Soviets, and quiet conversations with Carter, Brzezinski gained a reputation as an assertive and uncompromising statesman.

These two sections of Brzezinski's life are also important because together they illustrate the intellect's vision for the world. His pre-Carter publications analyze how the world operates and what future is in store for humanity. Brzezinski predicted a world that would become globalized under the banner of democratic ideas. In this vision, the United States leads humanity intellectually and politically while the USSR becoming increasingly irrelevant to international affairs. Brzezinski's term as National Security Adviser demonstrates how he believed the United States needed to operate in order to reach this vision. Most importantly, he believed that the American government needed to assert its policies and refuse to terms that did not benefit them. Brzezinski's refusal to compromise SALT II details or submit to Soviets terms of the 1979 prisoner exchange testify to this conviction. Together, these periods of Brzezinski's life illustrate his complete vision of an American-lead world.

*Chapter 1: Brzezinski's Theories of Totalitarianism and Peaceful Engagement, 1956 – 1976*

“My view of America’s role in the world is still an optimistic one,” Zbigniew Brzezinski wrote in 1970. “I truly believe that this society has the capacity...to surmount the difficulties inherent in this current historic transition.”<sup>6</sup> Imbedded in this statement lies the argument that only the United States had the capability to advance humanity towards a stable future of globalization. Its institutions of liberalism and democracy acted as the fire in which grand ideas were forged. This creative fever established a precedent of determination and exceptionalism in America that was unmatched by any other society.

Despite these almost sacred beliefs regarding the United States, most of Brzezinski’s work focused on the USSR and its political system. While America was destined to nourish humanity’s future, its antagonist the Soviet Union was inherently defective and a burden on the progression of humankind. The obsolete ideological foundation from which it shouted its “faded revolutionary slogans” would eventually crumble under the pressure of ideological revisionism.<sup>7</sup> For the United States to succeed as world leader, it first needed to accelerate the collapse of the USSR by encouraging this revisionism through foreign policies aimed at politically neutralizing satellite states of the Communist camp.

Within Brzezinski’s broad vision of humanity and the US-USSR rivalry, he constructed theories that analyzed how the Soviet system functioned, how it changed, and what role the United States needed to assert in response to the actions of the USSR. In particular, Brzezinski’s model of totalitarianism deconstructed the nature of the Soviet system and his theory of peaceful engagement offered policies to stimulate its disintegration. These theories relied on each other

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<sup>6</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Between Two Ages: America’s Role in the Technetronic Era* (New York: Viking Press, 1970), 6.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.



for legitimacy as Brzezinski referred to earlier theories throughout his career in order to justify new arguments. While the continuity provided a cohesion throughout his theories, it also entrenched the defects of his earlier arguments throughout all of his publications. Many of the weaknesses within Brzezinski's theories developed from his narrow understanding of ideology.

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The 1970s were the most critical decade for the Cold War. During this decade, the world both renounced its aged assumptions derived from the ashes of World War II and sought new answers to the postwar international dilemmas. Policy makers, with the lessons of the 1950s and 1960s in mind, constructed alternatives to the inflexible strategies of the early Cold War. The strategies of the 1970s did not solely concern the basic survival of nations, but rather looked ahead towards an era of dependable international cooperation. In order to fulfill this vision, policy makers of the 1970s had to bridge the gap between an outdated bipolar world and a secure, interconnected one. How they would accomplish this unprecedented goal of global stability and what this stability would specifically look like were issues debated throughout the decade. Thus, the 1970s were not only a time of unparalleled ambition, but also a time when “communist cynics confronted liberal skeptics” in order to formulate new ideas and historical interpretations.”<sup>8</sup> For the United States, its goal to make “the world safe for interdependence” was never a straightforward mission during this decade, but instead an ongoing debate with world security at stake.<sup>9</sup>

The Nixon administration saw itself as the bringer of this new era of international cooperation and called for a completion of “what man's genius [had] begun” with “new

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>9</sup> Daniel J. Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed: The Remaking of American Foreign Relations in the 1970s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 230.

beginnings.”<sup>10</sup> To President Richard Nixon and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, these “new beginnings” would develop from a thawing of international relations also known as “détente.” Despite its determination to alter American foreign policy, the administration’s assumptions and underlying objectives regarding the Soviet Union would not significantly differ from previous generations. The essential goal of détente from the White House, after all, was to contain Communism and halt the power of Moscow.<sup>11</sup> The uniqueness of the Nixon administration’s policy was the way in which it sought to restrict Moscow’s reach – the administration took a dramatic and unprecedented diplomatic step by setting aside ideological differences in order to stabilize relations.<sup>12</sup> This easing of tensions produced substantial results: SALT I and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty were tangible developments that indicated a momentous change in how Washington and Moscow interacted. Moreover, these treaties could only have come from the climate of détente. In the eyes of the Nixon administration, a disregard for ideological differences was a prerequisite for global stability.

Détente also offered intellectuals and policy makers the opportunity to reinterpret the American-Soviet rivalry. To many Soviet-centric political scientists, détente was a long-awaited first step towards the inevitable total cooperation between the United States and the USSR. Russian-American sociologist Pitirim Sorokin first outlined such a hypothesis during the 1940s under the name the “convergence theory.” Sorokin proclaimed that the bureaucratic, industrial, and societal developments in both countries would become increasingly similar and that these similarities would stimulate cooperation regarding global affairs.<sup>13</sup> Supporters of the

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<sup>10</sup> Richard Nixon, “Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union,” January 22, 1970. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu>.

<sup>11</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 295-305.

<sup>12</sup> Jussi M. Hanhimäki, *The Rise and Fall of Détente: American Foreign Policy and the Transformation of the Cold War* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2013), 144-147.

<sup>13</sup> Pitirim Sorokin, *Russia and the United States* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2007).

convergence theory argued that the US and USSR would eventually become democratic socialist societies “through liberalization in the East, and through socialization in the West.”<sup>14</sup> This conclusion asserted that both countries had a crucial element that the other needed, placing them as antagonistic equals who would eventually become almost indistinguishable partners. Within this hypothesis, détente was hailed as a crucial stepping stone to total convergence. Andrei Sakharov, in his influential essay that began his clash with the Soviet government, asserted that the capitalist and communist worlds would not only naturally merge, but that if they resisted the implementation of détente that such resistance would spell out the “suicide of mankind.”<sup>15</sup>

To Brzezinski, the convergence theory did little more than calm the fears of those idealistic enough to support it.<sup>16</sup> The very basic philosophical foundations of both societies – communism and liberalism – had developed into two systems which maintained themselves through opposing methods. The strengths of the Soviet system flowed “from the supremacy of its political ideology...and the political leaders’ ability to control,” while the advantages of the American system derived “from the close unity between society and polity.”<sup>17</sup> The strengths of each system contradicted the strengths of the other. In order for these two societies to converge, both would have to incrementally shift towards the other. There was no incentive for either society to change as both had been highly successful “each in its own way.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, détente was not an indication that the Soviet and American systems would converge.

Nor was the easing of tensions sustainable. Ideology would unavoidably reemerge as the great global divider as communism and liberalism provided a contrasting “global sense of

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<sup>14</sup> Maurice Duverger, *The Idea of Politics*, trans. Robert North and Ruth Murphy (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1966), 222.

<sup>15</sup> Andrei D. Sakharov, *Progress, Coexistence, and Intellectual Freedom*, trans. *The New York Times* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1968), 78-79.

<sup>16</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski and Samuel Huntington, *Political Power: USA/USSR* (New York: Viking Press, 1965), 13-14.

<sup>17</sup> Brzezinski and Huntington, *Political Power: USA/USSR*, 409.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 436.

mission” for both societies.<sup>19</sup> Philosophical differences would trounce efforts to “shape a new framework for international politics” because communism and liberalism had opposing long-term priorities, however vague these priorities could be at times.<sup>20</sup> Momentarily, détente would curtail the superpower rivalry, but SALT I and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty only assured a shallow unity between Moscow and Washington – and not one that gave Brzezinski confidence in future cooperative endeavors. “Rivalry between nations [was] inherent...without global consensus,” and global consensus was impossible with both Moscow and Washington at the helm of humanity.<sup>21</sup> The competition between the superpowers was inevitable.

The fault for détente’s eventual failure would belong to the USSR. Through the 1970s, Soviet leaders would have to balance cooperating with leaders of the United States while simultaneously maintaining an obsolete ideologically-based political system. The “little help” the international sphere was receiving from the Soviet Union was likely to diminish as the Soviet system could not execute both a progressive international partnership and a domestic totalitarian system.<sup>22</sup> When these contradictory goals collapsed on each other, Moscow would be forced to turn away from a global leadership role that it was inherently unprepared to accept.

Brzezinski asserted these predictions with such confidence because he built them on political theories that he had formulated early in his career. These theories focused almost exclusively on the Communist world, only referring to the role of America when it was in response to the Soviet system. First conceived during his doctorate years, his model of

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<sup>19</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Alternative to Partition: A Broader Conception of America’s Role in Europe* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), 44.

<sup>20</sup> Brzezinski, *Between Two Ages*, 104. Brzezinski fails to go into detail about these long-term priorities, but bases his argument on ideological differences, i.e. Marxism’s desire to cause global worker revolution and American desires to encourage liberalism, and the basic struggle of both powers to economically and militarily dominate the other.

<sup>21</sup> Brzezinski, *Between Two Ages*, 107.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

totalitarianism deconstructed the USSR in order to analyze how it operated and how it would disintegrate. This model laid the foundation for the rest of Brzezinski's intellectual career. In order to understand Brzezinski's grand vision – which extended far beyond the 1970s – one must first analyze his model of totalitarianism.

Totalitarian dictatorships, Brzezinski argued in his 1965, were a “historically unique” phenomenon and systematically different from any other form of government.<sup>23</sup> Totalitarianism developed from an autocratic precedent and carried on the basic characteristics of the latter. Most importantly, both had absolute power concentrated in one ideologically-charged individual. What divided the autocracies of the past and the totalitarian dictatorships of the twentieth century was the advent of modern technology. With the industrial revolution, a government had the ability to control virtually all aspects of society and could indoctrinate its population an ideological message in an effort “achieve the isolation of the individual and...mass monolithic homogeneity.”<sup>24</sup> The uniqueness of a totalitarian government derived from its technological magnitude.

Unlike the autocratic governments of ancient Greece, Bonapartist France, or Tsarist Russia, totalitarian dictatorships access to modern technology allowed it to control “every nook and cranny” of a citizen's life.<sup>25</sup> From a central location, the totalitarian government monopolized communications, propaganda machines, education, and police terror.<sup>26</sup> These dictatorships would then use these government bodies for the purposes of “control and manipulation of the masses,” in which an ideological doctrine was force-fed to society in order to

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<sup>23</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski and Carl J. Friedrich, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), 5.

<sup>24</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Ideology and Power in Soviet Politics* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), 18. To see a complete comparison between Russian autocracies and the Soviet Union, see Brzezinski's essay “Patterns of Autocracy.”

<sup>25</sup> Brzezinski and Friedrich, *Totalitarian Dictatorship*, 105,

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-11.

further dominate it.<sup>27</sup> Suddenly, the dictator's message penetrated the home, school, and workplace unlike ever before possible.

This element of ideology was the most critical component in a totalitarian empire because it both propelled the actions of its leaders as well as justified these actions, both sought the control of society in order to manipulate humanity's trajectory and authorized this manipulation. In his earliest publications, Brzezinski identified a total of six characteristics of totalitarian dictatorships – including a centralized political party, the use of terror, government monopoly of communications, government monopoly of the military, and a directed economy – but placed the use of an official ideology as the crown jewel of totalitarianism as the other elements of totalitarianism depended upon it.<sup>28</sup>

When analyzing ideology, Brzezinski specifically referred to a definition of his own design. In *Ideology and Power in Soviet Politics*, he defined ideology as:

“an action program suitable for mass consumption, derived from certain doctrinal assumptions about the general nature of the dynamics of social reality, and combining some assertions about the inadequacies of the past and/or present with some explicit guides to action for improving the situation and some notions of the desired eventual state of affairs.”<sup>29</sup>

In this narrow definition, ideologies include a “doctrinal component” as well as an “action program.”<sup>30</sup> The doctrinal component provides answers to key philosophical questions regarding the nature of humankind, historical developments, and the ultimate objectives of

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<sup>27</sup> Brzezinski, *Ideology and Power in Soviet Politics*, 127.

<sup>28</sup> Brzezinski and Friedrich, *Totalitarian Dictatorship*, 10-11, and Brzezinski, *Ideology and Power*, 19-20.

<sup>29</sup> Brzezinski and Friedrich, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, 4-5.

<sup>30</sup> Brzezinski and Huntington, *Political Power: USA/USSR*, 21.

society. It identifies the illness of a society and inspires the antidote – also known the “action program.”<sup>31</sup> This action program responds to ideological doctrine by fulfilling its tenets through political and social methods. Devotees, with a “religious-like fervor,” work through the action program as a means for altering society.<sup>32</sup>

Adherents may at times alter specifics of the action program as geographical, cultural, and historical contexts call for different activity in order to best fulfill doctrinal tenets. Consequently, the doctrinal component is static – Communists from all generations may quote Karl Marx and agree to the same broad ideological concepts – while the action program is dynamic. The various action programs, however, must not deviate too far from each other or too far from the dominant ideological supervisor, who seeks to control these action programs through its totalitarian machine. In order to legitimize differences in action programs, deviants must claim that their action programs will lead to the same objective as their ideological overseer.

Brzezinski applied this precise analysis of ideology to the Communist world. The USSR acted as the ideological overseer that attempted to control the political and social programs of all other Communist states. The goals of Soviet Communism that it forced upon its associates included the total defeat of capitalism, the success of an international worker’s revolution, and global centralization under Moscow.<sup>33</sup> These goals were derived from the works of Karl Marx by

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<sup>31</sup> Brzezinski, *Ideology and Power in Soviet Politics*, 68-69.

<sup>32</sup> Brzezinski and Friedrich, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*

<sup>33</sup> Brzezinski differentiates “Communism” from “Soviet Communism.” “Communism” is used to refer to the ideology in a broad sense, either encompassing all forms of Communism or else in reference to the early works of Karl Marx. “Soviet Communism” or “Soviet ideology” is the ideological action program specifically from the USSR as opposed to the evolving action programs of Communism in satellite states, Yugoslavia, Cuba, and China. Although many of the broad characteristics and goals of all of these forms of Communism overlap, Brzezinski specifically focuses on Soviet Communism as the proselytizing ideology that threatens American security and seeks domination of all other Communist action programs. For more, see Brzezinski’s essay “The Challenge of Change in the Soviet Bloc” and Chapter 19 “Ideology and Power in Relations Among Communist States” in *The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict*.

the USSR and - with perhaps the exception of the last ambition - were broadly agreed upon by most Communist states.

But while most Communist governments agreed to the ends of Soviet Communism, they rarely agreed on the means by which to get there. As the twentieth century wore on, the action programs throughout the Communist world began to increasingly differ from each other. When similar disagreements occurred in autocracies of the past, empires split, governments dissolved, or else a new, more equal relationship formed between the ideological overseer and its adherents. However, the sheer magnitude of an ideology coupled with modern technology halted this natural disintegration of power. Indeed, Brzezinski predicted that the domination of totalitarian governments would only enlarge in response to the revised action programs of its subordinates.<sup>34</sup> For the Soviet Union, this struggle to maintain absolutism would characterize its future existence and doom it to a slow and painful erosion.

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Totalitarian ideologies are based on “absolute assumptions concerning reality.”<sup>35</sup> A hundred years after the publication of *The Communist Manifesto*, leaders in Moscow continued to proclaim the same principles of class struggle and worker solidarity that Karl Marx first described during the mid-nineteenth century. This doctrinal component of ideology cannot be questioned or altered, lest it risk its very existence as a philosophy of certainty. In Soviet ideology, there is only one correct interpretation of history, one set of means to correct society, and one utopia to be reached. This claim to “infallible ideological insight,” Brzezinski lamented, produced the “arrogant self-righteousness so characteristic of contemporary Communism.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Brzezinski and Friedrich, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, 294.

<sup>35</sup> Brzezinski and Huntington, *Political Power*, 21.

<sup>36</sup> Brzezinski, *Ideology and Power in Soviet Politics*, 7.



Such assertions of ideological absolutism were also outdated because of their static nature. Specifically, Communism was “dead as an ideology” because it had nothing intellectual to offer the world by the mid-twentieth century as it resisted new ideas that threatened its existence.<sup>37</sup> In his grand scheme of intellectual history, Brzezinski categorized Marxism to an “age of volatile belief” along with nationalism and Christianity. These “institutionalized beliefs” contributed to the “maturing of man’s universal vision” in their prime, allowing man to reevaluate his existence and basic assumptions of society.<sup>38</sup> These belief systems had bettered humanity during their intellectual peak. Marxism in particular had served as a bridge between preindustrial and industrial society as it mobilized the masses and centralized governments. The age of volatile belief was a critical phase for the intellectual development of humanity.

However, this age was supposed to naturally end when these ideologies came into conflict with ideas conceived after them. In the case of Communism, it outgrew its use when it became an “impediment to intellectual adaption.”<sup>39</sup> Liberalism and democracy – not coincidentally born of the West - should have usurped its foundation in Eastern society. Instead, because of the industrial boom of the USSR, autocracy grew into totalitarianism and totalitarian forces were able to halt the influence of democracy, acting on the belief that their ideology was infallible. Totalitarianism was a perversion of the natural flow of humanity’s intellectual journey. It kept its population hostage in a prison of Marxist design, not allowing society to move forward in the natural evolution of intellectualism.

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<sup>37</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski. *The Implications of Change for United States Foreign Policy*. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Public Affairs, July 1967. (General Foreign Policy Series 220).

<sup>38</sup> Brzezinski, *Between Two Ages*, 34.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

In literal terms, the USSR resistance to progressing beyond the age of volatile belief meant that it was becoming increasingly “irrelevant” on the world stage.<sup>40</sup> As it clung to Communism it could only watch as the West advanced intellectually and politically. The USSR was a static society, upholding “faded revolutionary slogans of the past” while America actively constructed new solutions to the dilemmas of the twentieth century.<sup>41</sup> If the Communist world continued to resist the influx of new ideas and revised action programs, then it would eventually crumble under the weight of its own claims to infallibility.<sup>42</sup>

Brzezinski believed that this process of disintegration had already begun to materialize. The proof lay with the constantly devolving relationship between the Soviet system and the rest of the Communist world. In *The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict*, Brzezinski analyzed the advancement (spread of) of Soviet ideology following World War II, arguing that the association between Moscow and its weaker Communist neighbors had been a constant balance between “ideological unity and a recognition of domestic diversity” in which the Soviet government strove to claim and maintain dominance through its totalitarian reach.<sup>43</sup>

This precarious relationship began once Soviet-supported Communist parties began to take control of their governments in the latter years of World War II. Under the protection of the Red Army, Eastern Europe became a “zone of eventual revolution” in which the Soviet government collaborated with local Communists in order to rebuild the war-torn countries in the name of Communist ideology.<sup>44</sup> Subsequently, communism in satellite states took on various forms through locally distinct action programs, with ideological modifications made when local necessities called for such.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>42</sup> Brzezinski, *Ideology and Power in Soviet Politics*, 7

<sup>43</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 493.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 6.

At first the allowance for ideological diversity developed from a genuine concern that Eastern Europe was not “ripe” for a duplication of the Soviet experiences.<sup>45</sup> The Soviet government was satisfied to compromise Soviet absolutism in the short term as it allowed Moscow to penetrate the political systems of Eastern Europe for long term gains.<sup>46</sup> Perhaps most noteworthy, the USSR sanctioned Communists throughout Eastern Europe to identify with local nationalist sentiments just as strongly as they did Communist doctrine. This maneuver was not considered a loathsome ideological concession, but rather a “sensible adjustment to the requirements of the situation” during the late 1940s.<sup>47</sup>

This allowance for diversity ended during the postwar years when it had “outlived its usefulness.”<sup>48</sup> Immediately following the war and under the leadership of Josef Stalin, the Soviet government insisted that “its experience in building socialism be the slide rule for all domestic calculations of the ruling Communist parties.”<sup>49</sup> The 1950s and 1960s were characterized by Moscow forcing ideological uniformity on Eastern Europe in order to stay dominate. Satellite governments ceased being “candidates for partnership” with the USSR and instead “became the embryos” for the totalitarian Soviet system<sup>50</sup>. Although this policy change was sudden, the USSR’s implementation of uniformity was an ongoing process in which Soviet leaders still had to allow some levels of ideological diversity, if only to lessen the chances of open rebellion or American intervention.<sup>51</sup> Despite this allowance, Moscow’s longstanding aim was to curtail ideological diversity and bring all Communist societies under Soviet Communism.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 496.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 496.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 41.

Stalin's particular form of Soviet Communism was rather persuasive as it included mass violence and waves of purges. At first this strategy garnered success. Brzezinski argued that Eastern European leaders rushed to proclaim their "blind devotion to the USSR" and Soviet doctrine during the Stalinist period because they calculated close relations with Moscow to be politically and personally advantageous.<sup>52</sup> The cult of Stalinism swept through the governments of Eastern Europe as Communist leaders emulated the methods of Stalin, sanctioned the dramatic increase of political purges, and the Soviet model became "duplicated in every factory, enterprise, town, or village."<sup>53</sup> The sudden increase in ideological uniformity in the Communist camp was so great that it even brought the "very purpose of separate statehood" into question as some called for the disintegration of borders and complete political solidarity of all Communists.<sup>54</sup>

These achievements did not last long. Several events occurring at once brought Stalin's policies to a grinding halt and prompted the "search for a new formula for unity" between Communist states and the USSR.<sup>55</sup> With Stalin's death in 1953, Communist leaders lost their source for political inspiration. Never again would a Soviet leader generate a cult-like following that included such a thorough emulation of style. Paradoxically, Communist leaders also lost the "personal fear" they had felt towards Stalin.<sup>56</sup> Now, satellite states and the populations within them could speak more openly regarding their nation's individual needs without the anxiety of being purged.

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., *Conflict*, 87 – 113.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 83. Brzezinski goes on to argue that this question was only halted because of Tito's Yugoslavia and the emergence of Communist China, both of which significantly differed in their ideological interpretations.

<sup>55</sup> Brzezinski, *Ideology and Power in the Soviet Politics*, 143.

<sup>56</sup> Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict*, 155.

Despite the general success of Stalin's Soviet Communism as a unifying force, the calls for reform quickly rose after 1953. The nationalist sentiments within the satellite states had never fully submitted to the Soviet-centric Communist agenda and as the decade wore on it became apparent that Soviet methods of Communism were not always so easily applied to other states. The call for ideological revisionism echoed throughout the Communist world - populations and leaders demanded the freedom to create action programs based on their own national, economic, and cultural needs. Likewise, the growing tensions between Yugoslavia and the People's Republic of China towards the USSR demonstrated that Communist ideology could be reinterpreted and applied successfully outside the watch of Moscow. The smaller members of the Communist world could not help but notice the rift between these larger states and wonder if they too could achieve a higher level of ideological flexibility.<sup>57</sup>

Within the context of these post- Stalin developments, fragmentation ensued and the ideological "thaw" under Nikita Khrushchev turned into a "deluge."<sup>58</sup> In 1955, diplomatic relations between Yugoslavia and the USSR officially ended due to Josip Tito's continued refusal to submit to the demands of Moscow. Yugoslavia became a Titoist island in a sea of post-Stalin ideological turmoil, "export[ing]" a message of self-determination to the rest of the Communist world.<sup>59</sup> This message did not fall on deaf ears. In 1956 and 1968 Hungarians and Czechoslovakians rose up against the dominance of Moscow and demanded greater autonomy from the ideological overseer. These revolts ended with Soviet tanks rolling down city streets, mass arrests, and the tightening of the totalitarian's grip. The USSR would not easily submit to ideological dissent.

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 194-201.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 209.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 198.

The most “tragic disaster” for international Communism occurred in 1961.<sup>60</sup> The Sino-Soviet split was largely caused by disagreements regarding revisionism over ideology that resulted in an inter-continental power struggle.<sup>61</sup> After Stalin’s death, the People’s Republic of China had increasingly challenged the USSR on international issues and in 1961 publically accused Moscow of desecrating Marxist doctrine. A permanent divide ensued, and the antagonism became the turning point in the USSR’s pursuit of ideological conformity. The Soviet system never recovered from the ideological implications of the split. The USSR could continue to criticize the island of Titoism and suppress revisionists in the satellite states, but it could not so easily conceal the ideology-fused divergence between itself and the second largest Communist power in the world. The split discredited Communism as an international solidifying force and “ideologically demoralized the true believers.”<sup>62</sup> The PRC’s mere existence proved to the world that ideological absolutism was obsolete and that revisionism was a legitimate foundation from which to build a Communist society.

Brzezinski argued that these ideological cracks would eventually lead to Soviet system’s shattering. Revisionism and nationalism would only increase in frequency as Eastern European leaders “inevitab[ly]” developed “greater confidence in ruling” without direct Soviet management.<sup>63</sup> The chaos also offered new diplomatic options to Communist states. Complete subordination or division became extreme positions on a scale of diplomatic possibilities. Poland, for instance, enjoyed a level of domestic autonomy under Wladyslaw Gomulka and Albania remained an official political partner of the USSR despite growing tensions between the

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 397.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 399. Also, see all of Chapter 16: The Sino-Soviet Conflict

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 433.

<sup>63</sup> Brzezinski, *Alternative to Partition*, 13.

two.<sup>64</sup> With the fragmentation of the Communist world, the USSR had to negotiate its relations with each individual state, sometimes conceding its demand of absolute political unity. To do otherwise risked losing more members of its Communist camp, who could then form alliances with Yugoslavia or the PRC.

These were ideological and political concessions that the Soviet system had to endure in order to survive. The USSR could not return to a time of Stalinist Communism in which Moscow squeezed its neighbors into submission. Doing so would be to admit to the world that internationalist Communist harmony was little more than a façade. Brzezinski also questioned the USSR's ability to militarily challenge the PRC or reach such distant opponents such as Albania.<sup>65</sup> By the mid-1960s, the Soviet government was forced to accept that ideological revisionism would continue despite its long-term "apocalyptic significance."<sup>66</sup> The question became not how the USSR could effectively halt revisionism, but how much revisionism it could allow before it threatened to divide and destroy the entire totalitarian regime.<sup>67</sup>

The political balancing act that was to follow would be drenched in blood. Brzezinski envisioned future oscillations between stability and terror within the Soviet bloc: stability when Moscow quietly allowed revisionism and terror when that revisionism grew to outright threaten the USSR's power. Uprisings similar to those that had occurred in Hungary and Czechoslovakia would increase, calling for the Soviets to either violently repress such rebellions or else submit to a curtailment of power. The USSR would eventually be forced to relent after waves of revisionism and violence had eroded the Soviet system. Militarily, the Soviets would not have the resources to continue suppressing its neighbors, diplomatically, the West would be morally obligated to cut

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<sup>64</sup> Brzezinski, *Ideology and Power in Soviet Politics*, 154.

<sup>65</sup> Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict*, 503-504.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 512.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 103-110.

off economic and political ties to the Soviets, and ideologically, the Soviets would be forced to recognize the legitimacy of alternative forms of Communism. With this loss of power and ideological absolutism, the totalitarian empire would one day crumble.

Brzezinski refrained from predicting precisely how future uprisings would develop or how Moscow would respond to such uprisings. Revisionism was certain as was its ability to undermine the Soviet system, but the details of how and when were mere speculation. He claimed that “splits or...the development of a silent agreement to disagree” were both equally plausible.<sup>68</sup> The bloc was “not splitting and...not likely to split” in the near future, indicating that he thought Moscow would allow an amount of ideological flexibility in the political agendas of its neighbors.<sup>69</sup> However, he simultaneously warned that the USSR may reassert itself ideologically, demanding submission from satellite states and using terror to ensure such. Soviet ideology could no longer “meaningfully reflect or shape reality in the Eastern European context” without the use of violence.<sup>70</sup> The ‘conservative’ forces of ideology,” he cautioned, had not “lost their capacity to exert influence” and would not relent power without a struggle.<sup>71</sup> The USSR was still totalitarian and at its core would likely “become more total” as totalitarian machines tended to do.<sup>72</sup> Brzezinski fully expected the Soviets to use every last resource to protect their empire.

The inconsistency of this last piece of Brzezinski’s totalitarian model suggests that aspects of the entire theory be questioned. Much of Brzezinski’s model argues the inevitable: the inevitability of a Soviet-American rivalry, the inevitability of ideological revisionism, and the inevitability of future Soviet terror all leading to the inevitability of the USSR’s disintegration.

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>69</sup> Brzezinski, *Ideology and Power in Soviet Politics*, 152.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>72</sup> Brzezinski and Friedrich, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, 300.



However, he fails to adequately explain why these individual events are unavoidable. Brzezinski predicts a future of fluctuation between ideological revisionism and Soviet terror within the Communist world and argues that the totalitarian grip will not lessen until it is absolutely forced to do so. This is not a prediction of voluntary reform, but one of messy, horrifying collapse. Is it not possible that at some point the USSR may willingly chose to reevaluate its diplomatic system without first exerting every last resource at its disposal? Could not the totalitarian fist open, if only incrementally?

Perhaps the prediction of unavoidable events becomes more understandable within the context of Brzezinski's definition of ideology. His narrow definition was crafted specifically concerning totalitarianism and does not apply to any other form of government. Indeed, the characteristics of Brzezinski's definition of ideology do not apply to non-totalitarian governments as the concepts of absolutist doctrine and action programs remain foreign in Western governments. Brzezinski specifically avoids associating the United States with an ideology, at best calling mainstream American thought a "value system."<sup>73</sup>

Brzezinski's argument that totalitarianism is an anomaly of history holds up against scrutiny – the industrial revolution significantly effected almost all forms of government – but one must question the value of a definition formulated within a Soviet-centric bubble. The overriding issue with Brzezinski's definition of ideology is that it acts as proof of his predictions instead of history verifying his definition. According to his interpretation of ideology, the world should expect the totalitarian USSR to refuse to lessen its grip because of its inherent ideological nature. Such a precise analysis of the Soviet system would certainly come into problems when a wave of ideological revisionism occurs, as it did during the late 1950s and 1960s. The success of this revisionism, although limited, throws an unforeseen complication at the totalitarian model

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<sup>73</sup> Brzezinski and Huntington, *Political Power: USA/USSR*.

that Brzezinski struggles to reconcile within his grand vision. If the USSR were completely true to its absolute ideology as Brzezinski claims, then it would not have allowed any form of revisionism to occur.

Paradoxically, this complication supports Brzezinski's argument regarding the age of violate belief. Brzezinski argued that Soviet Communism perverted the natural journey of humankind by forcing intellectualism to come to a halt. Through claims of absolutism, ideology kept humankind prisoner in the age of violate belief. Revisionism contradicted this absolutism by demonstrating that ideology was susceptible to change without risking the whole of its existence. The revisionism of the 1950s and 1960s proved that the age of violate belief had ended.

Despite the inconsistencies found throughout Brzezinski's theory, he maintained many of his broader claims throughout his early career. Throughout his many publications, he specifically warned that the impending implosion should "be awaited with a great deal of patience."<sup>74</sup>

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"The prophets of history may be gradually becoming its prisoners," Brzezinski proclaimed in 1962, "and the time has now come for the West to prod history along."<sup>75</sup> These concluding words of *Ideology and Power in Soviet Politics* broadly illustrate the grand mission the Polish-born academic envisioned for the United States. American exceptionalism, conceived from its institutions of liberalism and democracy and its genius of creativity, destined the country to lead the world in the development of a "global human conscience."<sup>76</sup>

Much of America's immediate role in the world would be in response to the dramatic changes occurring in Eastern Europe. Brzezinski constructed this role through a dual policy he labeled "peaceful engagement." Within Brzezinski's grand scheme of humanity, peaceful

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<sup>74</sup> Brzezinski, *Ideology and Power in Soviet Politics*, 94.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 161.

<sup>76</sup> Brzezinski, *Between Two Ages*, 28.

engagement would demonstrate America's political and moral superiority as well as its ability to lead the world into an era of intellectual, political, and economic globalization. In the immediate decades, it incorporated strategies concerning both Communist regimes and "the peoples they rule[d]" by focusing on cultural, intellectual, and economic reform as well as specific Europeans problems.<sup>77</sup> Peaceful engagement's comprehensive goal was to accelerate ideological revisionism in the Communist world in order to hasten the Soviet system's eventual collapse. However, this policy risked creating mass unrest and lacked a formulaic role of Soviet dissidents who were a significantly component to the dismantling of the Soviet system.

America purpose in the twentieth century was to act as both a "social pioneer and...guinea pig" for humanity.<sup>78</sup> It thrived as the greatest creative force in history because it allowed its social, economic, and political forces to "openly clash," encouraging an everlasting competition of ideas.<sup>79</sup> This process was both creative and destructive as it continually brought about domestic "metamorphic changes" in which only the optimal solutions survived.<sup>80</sup> Whereas the Soviet system attempted to control the influx of ideas through "indoctrination and direct politization of its citizens," the American system openly encouraged its populace to produce and debate ideas.<sup>81</sup> While the American system was admittedly more chaotic, it was ultimately more successful. The progression of ideas could be momentarily impeded by totalitarian efforts, but it could never be fully stopped.

The United States' ability to export its ideas abroad meant that it had the moral and political responsibility to influence the trajectory of humanity. American international

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<sup>77</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski and William E. Griffith, "Peaceful Engagement in Eastern Europe," *Foreign Affairs* (July 1961): 642.

<sup>78</sup> Brzezinski, *Between Two Ages*, 28.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>81</sup> Brzezinski and Huntington, *Political Power: USA/USSR*, 410 – 412.

involvement was already “prompting a far-reaching cumulative transformation” throughout societies, but needed to be further expanded so that the United States could lead the world into an era of intellectual and political globalization. Brzezinski insisted upon the crucial nature of this responsibility: The United States’ success in creating “a healthy democratic society” held “promise for a world...dominated by ideological and racial conflicts, by economic and social injustice.”<sup>82</sup> America was to lead by example and aid the transformation of societies into an era of international cooperation under its guidance. The United States success would be humanity success, its failure, humanity’s failure.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, the superpower had the obligation to accept this historically monumental role as the country’s “disinvolvement” would allow the Soviet Union to expand its sphere of influence and subsequently cause “international chaos of enormous proportions.”<sup>84</sup>

America had not always readily accepted this leadership position. Brzezinski argued that in the postwar years the American government never offered “a realistic and effective foreign policy concerning Eastern Europe.”<sup>85</sup> The policy of containment, passive and vague in its approach, had resulted in the Soviet domination of Eastern Europe because it did not directly challenge Communist expansion.<sup>86</sup> During the 1950s and 1960s, the American government verbally castigated Moscow for its brutality against the Hungarian and Czechoslovakian people, but was unwilling to become directly involved in such disputes. To Brzezinski, these instances of American reluctance demonstrated to the USSR that it would not become involved in future

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<sup>82</sup> Brzezinski, *Between Two Ages*, 98.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>84</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski. *The Implications of Change*, 4.

<sup>85</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski and William E. Griffith, “Peaceful Engagement in Eastern Europe,” *Foreign Affairs* (July 1961): 642.

<sup>86</sup> Brzezinski and Griffith, “Peaceful Engagement,” 642.

conflicts, but quietly submit to the Soviet Union's brutal foreign policy.<sup>87</sup> The United States needed to reverse this trend of compliance and assert a clearer stance against the totalitarian regime in order to subvert the USSR and demonstrate its commitment to international liberalism.

Détente did not offer a long-term framework for such a modification of American foreign policy, particularly because it further signified American unwillingness to confront the Soviet empire. The "dissipation of American leadership" began once the superpowers established ideological neutrality and thereby threatened to further reduce the United States' involvement in Eastern Europe.<sup>88</sup> Thus, détente favored the USSR because it granted Moscow the right to supervise the Communist camp according to its own political agenda instead of under an international partnership. The easing of tensions was not an endgame of the Cold War as many Americans understood it to be, but rather a momentary lapse of the United States' power and political sensibility that left the nation – and states dominated by the totalitarian giant - exposed and politically paralyzed.

Despite the weaknesses of détente, Brzezinski argued that American policy makers could take advantage of the long-term changing global environment if they reformed their strategies to include a clear policy towards Eastern Europe.<sup>89</sup> Peaceful engagement would offer an active strategy that aimed to encourage "a greater measure of political independence" for satellite states. Eventually, this would lead to "the creation of a neutral belt" of nations which "would enjoy genuine popular freedom of choice in internal policy while not being hostile to the Soviet Union and not belonging to Western military alliances."<sup>90</sup> Peaceful engagement did not seek to rip Eastern Europe away from the USSR as this would cause international turmoil. Instead, its

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<sup>87</sup> Brzezinski, *Alternative to Partition*, 118.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>90</sup> Brzezinski and Griffith, "Peaceful Engagement," 644.

goal was to increase the power of Eastern European states, diminish the strength of the Soviet Union, and encourage “the American long-range goal of a free and pluralistic world with diversity of political and social structures.”<sup>91</sup>

An increased cultural, and intellectual exchange between the West and East would act as the first step to fulfilling these goals. In order to increase the flow of ideas across the Atlantic, exchange could not be limited to only scientific and artistic fields as it had been in previous decades. The American government needed to encourage at least a “balanced representation...of the humanities and social sciences” in an effort to directly subvert the impact of Soviet Communist ideology on Eastern Europe.<sup>92</sup> Reawakening prewar relations between Western and Eastern Europe, investing in “popular goodwill” projects such as the reconstruction of the Royal Castle in Warsaw, and offering more American-funded university scholarships to Eastern European students would serve as threads in a larger tapestry of change.<sup>93</sup> The United States government also needed to fund non-government organizations such as Free Radio Europe, whose semiofficial status permitted it to comment on international affairs freely.<sup>94</sup> Free Radio Europe’s ability to penetrate the iron curtain elevated its status to that of an irreplaceable weapon for the West that the American government needed to maintain at all costs.<sup>95</sup>

The United States also needed to expand its economic ties with Eastern Europe. By developing stronger economic partnerships, Communist states would begin looking towards the West for political inspiration. The “nonideological character” of economic and industrial developments particularly threatened “the ideological structure that reinforce[d] the...political division of Europe” because it gave Eastern European states incentive to uphold long-term

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 644.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 646.

<sup>93</sup> Brzezinski, *Alternative to Partition*, 158-159.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>95</sup> Brzezinski and Griffith, “Peaceful Engagement,” 648.

peaceful relations between the West and East despite political differences.<sup>96</sup> The American government needed to install a policy of economic rewards regarding the Communist camp in order to accelerate this process of economic relations. A European country would be rewarded whenever it “increas[ed] the scope of its external independence from Soviet control” or “appreciably liberaliz[ed] its domestic system.”<sup>97</sup> Satellite states would be tempted by such candid policy, which would help to fulfill the consumer demands of their populace.

Peaceful engagement also included strategies to settle many of the traditional antagonisms in Europe, in the goal of moving the continent into a globalized era under American supervision. Specifically, peaceful engagement designed formulas to reconcile relations between West Germany and East Germany, settle the Oder-Neisse border dispute between Germany and Poland, and mediate Czechoslovakia’s ethnic tensions.<sup>98</sup> These ambitious goals were vital in the context of the US-USSR rivalry. As the Soviet Union had failed to reconcile these intrinsic problems on its own accord, the United States could fulfill the vital role as international negotiator. By leading these compromises in the USSR’s sphere of influence the United States would signify its preponderance as the superior world power and set a precedent of Eastern Europe deferring to the West for stability and leadership.

The extensive goals of peaceful engagement were not ends in themselves, but rather interlaced policies meant to lay a foundation for American global leadership. While the ambition of peaceful engagement was moral as well as political, Brzezinski specifically warned that “without clearer and more reasoned answers” American policy would “become dissipated in a

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<sup>96</sup> Brzezinski, *Alternative to Partition*, 74.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>98</sup> Brzezinski and Griffith, “Peaceful Engagement,” 648-654. For a deeper analysis of peaceful engagement’s policies regarding individual Communist states, see also *Alternative to Partition* chapters three and four: “The European Stalemate” and “Peaceful Engagement in Europe’s Future.”

euphoria of politically meaningless goodwill.”<sup>99</sup> In order for peaceful engagement to be successful, the United States needed to approach all of its ambitions with a singular immediate objective: to undermine the Soviet system.

Brzezinski designed his policies to fulfill this goal. As the USSR was to fall victim to ideological revisionism, the policies of peaceful engagement – from its cultural and intellectual exchange and economic incentives as well as its formula for settling European tensions – were essentially revisionist programs sponsored by the American government. The elements of peaceful engagement sought to alter the ideological foundations of the Communist world by driving a wedge between Moscow and its neighbors, allowing the latter the freedom to interpret and apply Communist doctrine as they saw appropriate. These policies offered Eastern European countries the opportunity to participate in America’s globalization effort as well as the motivation to uphold peaceful international relations. Within a few decades time, American-approved revisionism would have worn away at the totalitarian giant, creating a neutral region of nations and allowing the United States to advance humanity into an era of globalization unhindered.

However, peaceful engagement failed to account for its radicalizing effect on the populations of satellite states. The strategies of peaceful engagement reached out to Eastern European governments and citizens alike, offering alternatives to their society’s fundamental principles. Although this long-term plan was not meant to haphazardly “liberate” states of the Communist camp from Moscow’s domination, it aimed to thoroughly convert Eastern European populations to a more liberal lifestyle and political structure.<sup>100</sup> However, peaceful engagement failed to directly explain how the American government was to generate this conversion without

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<sup>99</sup> Brzezinski, *Alternative to Partition*, 131.

<sup>100</sup> Brzezinski and Griffith, “Peaceful Engagement,” 644.



overly radicalizing Eastern European populations. Is it not possible that an American attempt to instigate modest reform would open the floodgates of chaotic revolution? Could the supporters of the Hungarian and Czechoslovakian uprisings, the nationalists of Ukraine and Romania, and reformists of Albania interpret peaceful engagement as their opportunity to fully break with Moscow?

Such hypothetical events increase in possibility within the context of Brzezinski's analysis of the Soviet system's collapse. According to his analysis, revisionism would cause an oscillation between reform and Soviet terror in which the slow break down of Soviet power would occur. Although the end to the Soviet system was inevitable, this process of reform and violence, according to Brzezinski, would endure for generations. By encouraging revisionism, the United States risked causing mass violence as peaceful engagement did not describe how to effectively generate reform without provoking Soviet reaction. Brzezinski criticized the policies of containment and détente because they failed to assert American leadership, but if the events of the Hungarian or Czechoslovakian uprisings were to reoccur, would the United States be prepared to involve itself directly in these conflict? Would not peaceful engagement signal to the satellite states that they had American support? Revisionism had the potential to unravel into turmoil and the populations of Eastern Europe would be the victims of this American-induced chaos.

This oversight left Soviet dissidents and reformers – two categories which commonly overlapped - exposed. Brzezinski's exclusion of dissidents from peaceful engagement derives not from his assumption that they did not exist or would not increase in number, but rather from the simple fact that they did not so easily integrate into his foreign policy. Indeed, from his earliest writing Brzezinski proclaimed that even within totalitarian regimes “some people manage to

maintain themselves aloof, to live in accordance with their personal convictions, and perhaps to organize some minor opposition.”<sup>101</sup> Passive and active resistance occurred in the religious, family, intellectual, and military spheres, and promoted nationalist or liberalist agendas. That these forms of opposition broadly ranged in goals and identity and existed under the watch of a government that sought to crush them meant that all expectations for their isolated success in overthrowing the totalitarian government were “utopian delusions.”<sup>102</sup>

Yet despite the shortcomings of these dissident groups, resisting the totalitarian machine was “morally required” of all humanity.<sup>103</sup> For dissidents in Eastern Europe this meant risking their lives by calling for reform, while for the American government it meant incrementally aiding reformers on a broad scale via peaceful engagement. Brzezinski failed to adequately connect these two roles: peaceful engagement encouraged activism from reformers and dissidents with the intention of using their efforts to slowly undermine the Soviet system, but excluded a plan to protect these groups from potential Soviet backlash.

Brzezinski’s predictions concerning the near future of the Communist world complicated this oversight. He foresaw a dramatic increase of nationalist and intellectual dissidents, specifically calling attention to Andrei Sakharov’s manifesto of international cooperation and its declaration of Communist reform.<sup>104</sup> Brzezinski also fully expected the Communist world to experience a synergy of resistance from students and ideological dissenters in the coming decade.<sup>105</sup> The “outbursts of 1968,” which included student protests in the USSR and Poland as

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<sup>101</sup> Brzezinski and Friedrich, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, 239.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 239. For a full analysis of resistance within totalitarian governments, see section VI: “Islands of Separateness.”

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 288.

<sup>104</sup> Brzezinski, *Between Two Ages*, 65.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

well as the Czechoslovakian uprising, were to be “repeated in the 1970s.”<sup>106</sup> According to Brzezinski’s prediction regarding the oscillation between reform and Soviet terror, the Soviet system would respond to these non-conformists with a wave of violence. As peaceful engagement offered no comprehensive strategy to protect these reformists, one can only assume that Brzezinski was willing to risk mass violence in order to achieve the goals of his policy.

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Brzezinski’s arguments are neither simple nor easily distilled. He used the two decades prior to his position as National Security Advisor to progressively develop theories that he believed could alter the Cold War and, indeed, the destiny of humanity. In 1970, when he published the most distinguished book of his pre-Carter career, *Between Two Ages: America’s Role in the Technetronic Era*, he still referred to his early totalitarian models that he had constructed during his doctorate years. This continuity provides a layer of cohesion within his arguments which allows the reader to better comprehend Brzezinski’s short-term concepts within a larger context of his grand vision for the world.

However, this continuity also entrenched the shortcomings of Brzezinski’s early arguments into all of his later work. Most of the defects found in Brzezinski’s theories derived from his understanding of ideology. His insistence that ideology only existed as an absolute philosophy did not reconcile with the revisionism that occurred during the late 1950s and 1960s. Communist ideology survived these early stages of reform. In response to these unforeseen events, Brzezinski altered his theory of absolutism to argue that revisionism acted as the chisel that chipped away at the totalitarian monster, but still failed to account for the details of how this disintegration would occur. Additionally, this failure to describe the collapse of the totalitarian giant percolated into his theory of peaceful engagement. By not understanding the details of how

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 72.

revisionism would take place within the Communist world, Brzezinski did not account for the protection of dissidents and reformers despite peaceful engagement relying in part on their participation. This hole in his foreign policy potentially submitted the populations of Eastern Europe to a revival of Soviet aggression.

Both the successes and failures of Brzezinski's work would play an active role in how he performed his duties as National Security Advisor in the Carter administration. While his specific intellectual shortcomings regarding Soviet dissidents played only a minor role in his broad scheme of the USSR's collapse pre-1977, the human rights goals of the Carter administration would have Brzezinski reconciling the role of dissidents within American foreign policy.

*Chapter 2: Brzezinski's Foreign Policy and Negotiation Methods, 1977-1980*

Brzezinski's pre-Carter analyses focused on the early twentieth century and offered a vision of a future era, but failed precisely describe how America was to operate in order to reach this future. With his advancement to National Security Adviser under President Jimmy Carter, Brzezinski was able to test many of his ideas regarding the Soviet system and demonstrate how the government should act in order to fulfill his vision of American supremacy. The humanitarian focus of the administration offered him the opportunity to reconstruct many of his policies. Although his interaction with human rights organizations before 1977 was limited, Brzezinski readily integrated his analysis of the Soviet system with Carter's human rights crusade. The result of this integration was the use of human rights as a political tool that he used to undermine the Soviet Union. Brzezinski used this political tool throughout his White House career with mixed success

Brzezinski's term as National Security Adviser is critical because it demonstrates how he believed the United States needed to act during the current period of the Cold War. His involvement with the Sakharov letter, SALT II proposals, and 1979 prisoner exchange show that Brzezinski believed an assertive policy was the only policy for the United States. Much of his confidence came from his belief that détente would eventually fail and that the Soviet system would inevitably crumble. However, this strategy succeeded only when the Americans had the initial advantage.

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In addition to his scholarly works, Brzezinski's political endeavors aided his transition into the Carter administration. He accepted a teaching position at Columbia University in 1959

and founded the Research Institute on Communist Affairs. Over the next decade and a half, he advised Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon on foreign policy affairs and took the role of director in Vice President Hubert Humphrey's foreign policy task force.<sup>107</sup> His rise to prominence – as well as his quick-witted and short-tempered personality – did not go unnoticed by the nation. "...Even those whom he sometimes rubs the wrong way," a 1966 *Newsweek* article claimed, "readily admit that Brzezinski is a veritable dynamo of fresh ideas."<sup>108</sup>

During this time, Brzezinski also gained membership to both the Council of Foreign Relations and the Brookings Institution. He gained international experiences outside of Eastern Europe through these organizations. Most notably he published *The Fragile Blossom: Crisis and Change in Japan* in 1972 after a one year study in Tokyo and participated in an analysis of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in 1974 and 1975.<sup>109</sup> Alongside David Rockefeller, Brzezinski also founded the Trilateral Commission, a multinational non-government think tank that analyzed global challenges. In his everlasting search for talent, Brzezinski requested extending membership of the Trilateral Commission to an eager Georgian politician who was quickly advancing through his state's political ranks. In 1973, Brzezinski welcomed Jimmy Carter into the commission. The following year Carter declared his candidacy for President.

Brzezinski supported Carter's bid for the White House early in the presidential race when most thought that the Georgian governor would be fortunate to be considered for the vice presidency. Yet, Carter's enthusiasm to understand global affairs and his genuine and kind demeanor made Brzezinski a "believer" of the southern candidate's ambition to lead the nation. This new believer approached Carter, offering his intellectual and political support to which

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<sup>107</sup> Betty Glad, *An Outsider in the White House* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2009), 21.

<sup>108</sup> Andrzej Lubowski, *Zbig: The Man Who Cracked the Kremlin* (New York: Open Road Distribution, 2011), 30.

<sup>109</sup> Charles Gait, *Zbig: The Strategy and Statecraft of Zbigniew Brzezinski* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 9-11.

Carter readily accepted. Brzezinski began submitting to him foreign policy papers on a regular basis and eventually became his chief foreign policy adviser.<sup>110</sup>

As adviser, Brzezinski shaped many of the would-be President's foreign policy opinions as Carter had limited foreign policy training. Brzezinski calculated Carter's inexperience as a potential opportunity for himself to play a deeply compelling role in the administration. In Brzezinski's own words, Carter "needed someone like me to do what I was doing," which meant asserting policies that put the Soviets on the defense and holding firm in these policies.<sup>111</sup> Not coincidentally, these policies were almost always of Brzezinski's own design. Carter, who admired Brzezinski's depth of knowledge, considered himself "an eager student" of the Sovietologist scholar and accepted Brzezinski's analysis of the Soviet system as a totalitarian empire.<sup>112</sup> A complex but close relationship formed.

Brzezinski supported and respected Carter because of the candidate's human rights advocacy, which he interpreted as having potential for the American government both morally and politically. From the first policy papers he submitted to Carter during the election, Brzezinski sought to combine the Georgian's idealistic human rights campaign with his own interpretation of international relations. "Power," Brzezinski claimed, needed to be used "for attaining morally desirable ends," which included undermining the Soviet system through the

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<sup>110</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser 1977 – 1981* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1983), 6-7.

<sup>111</sup> Glad, *An Outsider*, 29.

<sup>112</sup> Jimmy Carter, *Keeping the Faith: Memoirs of a President* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), 51. Brzezinski had access to Carter more than almost anyone else on staff. From Carter's *White House Diary*, "I've been determined to have Dr. Brzezinski be a constant source of stimulation for the Department of Defense and State, but always work in the role of a staff person to me. In fact, I've pledged that none of the members of my staff would dominate members of the cabinet. Zbig agrees completely with this, and because of his constant access to me several times each day, perhaps second only to Hamilton Jordan in frequency, his influence over my thinking and judgment, ultimate decisions, is certainly adequate." To see Carter's ideas regarding totalitarianism in the USSR, see *Speaking out for Human Rights* in *Keeping the Faith*.

political reforms Brzezinski had promoted in peaceful engagement.<sup>113</sup> Although the Columbian professor had limited experience with humanitarian activism, he “felt strongly that a major emphasis on human rights as a component of US foreign policy would advance America’s global interests by demonstrating...the reality of [America’s] democratic system.” The United States’ human rights campaign was not just for the domestic population, but also a statement to the world that American was protector of the oppressed.

Despite the global appeal Brzezinski believed this message would have, he intended the USSR to be the focus of the American government’s efforts. Brzezinski wanted to emphasize Soviet human rights abuses so that the administration could manipulate these abuses into a political tool. By focusing on abuses in the USSR, Washington could both embarrass Moscow on the world stage and rally the West under American authority. The most advantageous way to “answer the Soviets’ ideological challenge” and demonstrate global leadership was to “commit the United States to a concept which most reflected America’s very essence,” meaning the expansion and protection of human rights.<sup>114</sup> Although he successfully integrated Carter’s idealism with his own analysis of US-USSR relations, Brzezinski’s argued that human rights best served the American government as a political tool while Carter considered them to be the inherent “fundamental spiritual requirements” of a government.<sup>115</sup> The realist and idealist could agree upon a policy centered on human rights, but for strikingly different reasons.

Despite this difference, both men believed human rights would play a critical role in the future of humankind and international relations. Carter believed that “the expansion of human rights might be the wave of the future throughout the world” and “wanted the United States to be

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<sup>113</sup> Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 49.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>115</sup> Jimmy Carter, Commencement Speech (Notre Dame University, May 22, 1977), Teaching American History. [Teachingamericanhistory.org](http://Teachingamericanhistory.org).



on the crest of this movement.” This desire to set an example to the world justified basing relationships with other governments off of “their performance in providing basic freedoms to their people.”<sup>116</sup> To Brzezinski, a presidency under Carter would be a fulfillment of the Polish-American’s vision for the world. Human rights would be a significant component of evolving global consciousness and America’s role as leader of the free world would “hold promise” for societies struggling to transition into this era of international cooperation.<sup>117</sup> Both men based their claims on the idea that human rights were not a momentary phenomenon, but rather an element of an approaching era in which the expansion of natural rights would liberate undemocratic societies and globalize the world. As the crusade grew internationally, the United States would be hailed as the conductor and protector of freedom.

With the inauguration of Carter in 1977 and his advancement to National Security Adviser, Brzezinski had the opportunity to demonstrate how the United States would fulfill this long term vision. Brzezinski’s pre-Carter publications failed to explain how American foreign policy needed to operate in the immediate era in order to reach its long term goals of world leadership and revisionism in Eastern Europe. His term as National Security Adviser would fill this void in his thinking by directly showing how he believed the American government needed to act in the present time.

Brzezinski first demonstrated how he believed the American government to act by constructing a list of ten goals for the administration. The National Security Adviser placed American-Soviet relations as forth on this list, first citing SALT II’s desired deadline for early 1978 in the effort to quickly and effectively “lay the basis for a more stable relationship” with the USSR. He also maintained that “the United States would counter Soviet ideological claims

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<sup>116</sup> Carter, *Keeping the Faith*, 144-145.

<sup>117</sup> Brzezinski, *Between Two Ages*, 98.

by assuming a more affirmative commitment to human rights.” This commitment extended to rebuffing “Soviet incursions...by supporting friends,” which included any political body or persons who supported the United States extending its influence into Eastern Europe. Human rights, which had its own category as ninth on Brzezinski’s list, specifically included the goal to expand America’s refugee programs for “those fleeing oppressive left-wing and right-wing regimes.”<sup>118</sup>

The synergy between Brzezinski’s Soviet-centralism and human rights created a policy that aimed to both negotiate with the Soviet Union as well as directly criticize them. Brzezinski did not consider putting the Soviet Union “ideologically on the defensive” while holding SALT II talks to be contradictory.<sup>119</sup> He was confident that the Soviet system was inherently unstable and would eventually collapse no matter what the negotiation details of SALT II. Brzezinski was also optimistic that history would approve of the Carter administration’s decision to place such a high value on human rights as the next era of humanity would be based on a liberal global awareness. Thus, these certainties - derived from his pre-Carter analyses - gave Brzezinski the confidence to implement a human rights-based policy that sought to both shake hands with Moscow while wagging a stern finger at its leaders.

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The opportunity to test Brzezinski’s policy arose almost immediately. On January 21, the day following Carter’s inauguration, Soviet physicist Andrei Sakharov wrote a letter to the President in which he appealed to Carter’s humanitarian convictions and asked for help in the protection of Soviet dissidents. Without Sakharov’s knowledge, the letter was handed over to the

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<sup>118</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977-1980, Volume I, Foundations of Foreign Policy, Document 36. See also Itai Nartzizenfeld Sneh, *The Future Almost Arrived: How Jimmy Carter Failed to Change U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 67-70.

<sup>119</sup> Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 149.

American media which widely published it. This publicity meant that the Carter administration needed to respond openly to the dissident. To do otherwise would risk a comparison to President General Ford's 1975 refusal to meet with Soviet activist Aleksandr Solzhenitzyn and tarnish Carter's image as a President who genuinely believed in human rights.

However, at the same time of the Sakharov letter the administration was attempting to establish relations with General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev in an effort to develop a "personal relationship" between the leaders. Brzezinski suggested that Carter write to Brezhnev and "assure" him that the administration's human rights goals would not solely focus on the USSR, but be global.<sup>120</sup> While this claim was not true, Brzezinski calculated that such a letter would reinvigorate American-Soviet relations and help make way for a quick SALT II agreement. Brzezinski played a major role in both of these exchanges, constructing the response to Sakharov as well as working alongside Secretary of State Cyrus Vance in order to write to Brezhnev. These correspondences were the first test of Brzezinski's dual policy of criticizing the Soviet Union while simultaneously trying to negotiate with its leaders. He failed to satisfactorily fulfill either of these goals.

Brzezinski's first opportunity to put the Soviet's on the ideologically defense came in the form of Sakharov's letter. The scientist's appeal to Carter developed out of a renewed human rights crusade in the USSR during the late 1960s and 1970s. Through Basket III of the Helsinki Accords, nations vowed to "respect human rights and fundamental freedoms" which derived "from the inherent dignity of the human person."<sup>121</sup> The international agreement became the catalyst for the reawakening and reorganizing of the Soviet dissident cause. Days after the signing, members of Congress visiting the USSR were pleasantly surprised to find activists,

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>121</sup> The Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, August 1, 1975, 14 I.L.M. 1291 (Helsinki Declaration).

including Sakharov, assembling an organization that would eventually become the Moscow Helsinki Watch Group. The organization had the potential to greatly influence international perception of human rights in the USSR as it drew legitimacy from Basket III and also benefitted from an invigorated solidarity between literary, religious, and political activists.<sup>122</sup> The Moscow organization quickly inspired the creation of watch groups throughout the Soviet Union, formulating “small but highly active opposition organizations” that were significantly more centralized than previous groups.<sup>123</sup>

The Soviet government became aware of the Moscow Helsinki Watch Group immediately, noting with alarm that the organization planned to rely heavily on “Western public opinion to put pressure on the Soviet government.”<sup>124</sup> Moscow responded by persecuting dissidents of the organization. In the weeks surrounding the new year of 1977, Soviet police searched homes, arrested activists, and interrogated its founders with the intention of eradicating the group before it gained mass appeal. To add to the internal tension, a bomb exploded on January 8 in the Moscow subway system, maiming and killing passengers. Soviet journalists quickly blamed dissident groups for the terrorist activity, despite lack of evidence to support their claims.<sup>125</sup>

In an attempt to save his fellow dissidents from further persecution, Sakharov reached out to the West for assistance as he believed Carter’s commitment to human rights was “serious and sincere.”<sup>126</sup> “It’s very important to defend those who suffer because of their unviolent struggle for openness, for justice, for destroyed rights of the other people. Our and your duty,” he wrote,

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<sup>122</sup> Roy Aleksandrovich Medvedev, *On Soviet Dissent* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 116.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>124</sup> Soviet Document 118, “Andropov to Central Committee, November 15, 1976, “Establishment of the Moscow Helsinki Watch Group,” in Joshua Rubenstein and Alexander Gribanov, *The KGB File of Andrei Sakharov* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 218.

<sup>125</sup> Joshua Rubenstein, *Soviet Dissidents: Their Struggle for Human Rights* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), 233.

<sup>126</sup> Andrei Sakharov, *Memoirs* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), 464.

“are to fight for them.” Sakharov summarized the conditions that dissident groups worked under, citing police brutality, murder, and persecution.<sup>127</sup> He ended with a list of sixteen political prisoners whom he felt needed aid through the efforts of the administration.<sup>128</sup> From his apartment in Moscow, he handed over the letter to Martin Garbus, an American lawyer, for delivery and patiently waited for the American government’s help, believing Carter’s response would be private.<sup>129</sup>

Garbus promptly gave the American media Sakharov’s letter. Newspapers latched onto the event, printing Sakharov’s letter and calling for Carter to respond and fulfill his campaign promises. When the administration did not immediately answer Sakharov’s letter, newspapers questioned Carter’s commitment to the cause of human rights.<sup>130</sup> Many articles began to include an ominous telegram written by Soviet dissidents that had followed Sakharov’s letter. This telegram, pleading with the administration to protect the beloved scientist from arrest and punishment, informed Carter that “Sakharov [was] in...mortal danger” and asked Carter “to use [his] authority to defend” him.<sup>131</sup> Sakharov and his fellow dissidents fully expected Carter to openly and positively respond to these messages and ensure their protection to the best of the American government’s ability. To the American public, this exchange was the first test of the administration’s idealist ambitions. Hope and expectations ran high.

Brzezinski considered the media sensationalism to amount to no more than “public flap.”<sup>132</sup> Sakharov’s letter had been an unexpected obstacle and cut short any honeymoon period

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<sup>127</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977-1980, Volume VI, Soviet Union, Document 2.

<sup>128</sup> Sakharov writes in his memoirs that he listed the names of sixteen activists, although most American newspapers only list fifteen.

<sup>129</sup> Sakharov, *Memoirs* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), 464.

<sup>130</sup> “Carter Backs but Didn’t Clear the Statement of Sakharov.” *The Washington Post*, January 31, 1. “Sakharov Sends Letter to Carter Urging Help on Rights in Soviet.” *New York Times*, January 29, 1.

<sup>131</sup> “Sakharov Pleases for Carter to Aid Soviet Dissidents: SAKHAROV ASKS CARTER’S AID,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 29, 1977, A1.

<sup>132</sup> Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 125-126.

the American government could have used to its diplomatic advantage. How the Carter responded to Sakharov would affect relations with the Soviets for the next four years and had the potential to significantly damage SALT II negotiations. To add to the dilemma, Brzezinski informed the President that his response would have to be open so as to reaffirm the administration's human rights commitment to the American public.<sup>133</sup>

The National Security Adviser began to demonstrate doubts concerning his initial policy to use human rights as a weapon against the USSR. The need to both respond to Sakharov and reach out to Brezhnev called for an adjustment in how the administration interacted with dissidents. Discarding some of the idealism from the administration's early ambitions, Brzezinski suggested that a reply to Sakharov "expressing...general sentiments on the issue" would be "less inflammatory" to Soviet leaders.<sup>134</sup> Unlike Sakharov's letter, Carter's tone needed to be impersonal and the letter's content needed to exclude specifics. This decision to construct a lukewarm letter demonstrated that Brzezinski believed establishing relations with Brezhnev took precedent to the dissident cause.

While the Department of State accepted Brzezinski's framework and began writing a response to Sakharov, the National Security Adviser constructed a letter to Brezhnev with the assistance of Vance. Brzezinski "tightened" sections of the original letter that the Department of State had penned, believing the letter to sound "too gushy and naïve."<sup>135</sup> As a draft of the letter graced the President's desk for his approval, the adviser included a memo specifying what further revisions he believed necessary. Carter read Brzezinski's memo and subsequently "assimilated" its suggestions into the final letter, making the message to Brezhnev friendly, yet

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 155-156.

<sup>134</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977-1980, Volume VI, Soviet Union, Document 2.

<sup>135</sup> Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 151.

formal and substantive.<sup>136</sup> The letter openly confirmed Carter's ultimate goal of nonproliferation as it called for a SALT II agreement "without delay" with the intention that other weapons-reducing agreements would follow. The administration avoided specifically referencing its human rights campaign, only stating that both countries could not "be indifferent to the fate of freedom and individual human rights."<sup>137</sup> The letter both intentionally deemphasized the Carter administration's humanitarian character and readily expressed an eagerness to settle SALT II details.<sup>138</sup>

Meanwhile, the American public awaited the Carter administration's response to Sakharov. On February 5, the long anticipated letter was made public. Its content conformed to the National Security Adviser's guidance as it was short, impersonable, and lacked the usual zeal of the Georgian crusader. It simply assured Sakharov that the American government would continue its "firm commitment to promote the respect for human rights not only in [the United States] but also abroad" and vaguely promised to seek the protection of dissidents in every nation.<sup>139</sup> The letter conformed to Brzezinski's decision to give precedent to relations with Brezhnev over correspondence with Sakharov. Specifically, the letter did not mention the USSR's human rights abuses but instead expanded the protection of freedom to a global scale in an effort to preemptively appease the Soviet government. The letter fulfilled its minimal requirement of refusing the media any opportunity to "draw analogies with Ford and Solzhenitsyn," but then ventured no further.<sup>140</sup> Brzezinski believed that he accomplished both

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>137</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977-1980, Volume VI, Soviet Union, Document 1.

<sup>138</sup> Even with the final revisions to the letter, Brzezinski considered the letter "a little too eager" in regards to SALT II and nonproliferation. He feared that expressing such an eagerness would weaken the United States' negotiating flexibility. Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 151.

<sup>139</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977-1980, Volume VI, Soviet Union, Document 5.

<sup>140</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977-1980, Volume VI, Soviet Union, Document 2.

establishing stable relations with the Soviets while successfully reassuring the American people of the administration's authenticity.

He judged incorrectly. The White House received a "brutal, cynical, sneering, and even patronizing" letter from Brezhnev on February 25.<sup>141</sup> The Soviet leader did not interpret Carter's response to Sakharov as the politically necessary acknowledgement that Brzezinski had intended. Instead, Brezhnev considered the letter to be a component of the "so called question of 'human rights'" that the administration was using to pressure the Soviet government. Carter's response to Sakharov- although mild in Brzezinski's opinion - was a direct and aggressive "interference" into internal Soviet affairs.<sup>142</sup> Indeed, the government in Moscow had interpreted the correspondence from the President as an American "guarantee" of Sakharov's "personal immunity" and became furious that they were unable to manage Sakharov as they saw fit.<sup>143</sup>

The General Secretary ended his message with a warning that the administration's actions were "not the way to deal with the Soviet Union" and reminded Carter that the stability of American-Soviet relations were at stake. He expressed a coolness towards Carter's SALT II and nonproliferation goals, perceiving no significant changes from previous administrations. Carter's "statements of a general nature" correlated with the Soviet government's ambitions, but Brezhnev offered no words of encouragement or particular enthusiasm.<sup>144</sup> The letter's "chilling manner" offered little confidence in future correspondence, let alone a positive start to SALT II negotiations.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Brzezinski, *Power and Principle* 155.

<sup>142</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977-1980, Volume VI, Soviet Union, Document 12.

<sup>143</sup> Soviet Document 122 "Andropov to Central Committee, February 9, 1977, Correspondence between Andrei Sakharov and Jimmy Carter," in Joshua Rubenstein and Alexander Gribanov, *The KGB File of Andrei Sakharov* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 222.

<sup>144</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977-1980, Volume VI, Soviet Union, Document 12.

<sup>145</sup> Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 155.



The nature of Brezhnev's letter astonished Brzezinski. The National Security Adviser believed that Carter's letter to Sakharov should have assured Brezhnev that Carter's "concern was global in character." Brzezinski also had expected the Soviet leader to understand the Carter administration's need to respond to the physicist in order to satisfy the domestic demand. The Soviet leader, he claimed, should have "simply ignored, or at least played down, the matter" so as to not interfere with Carter's genuine attempt to establish a personal relationship. Brzezinski incorrectly assumed that the Soviet government considered a secure partnership with the United States more advantageous than rebuffing American humanitarian policy.<sup>146</sup>

Brzezinski's miscalculation had dire consequences as the incident cast a dark cloud over the next four years. To the Soviets, the letter to Sakharov proved that Carter was a wolf in sheep's clothing, a man bent on dominating Moscow through a rhetoric of human rights. It destroyed the opportunity for the world leaders to develop the level of familiarity that Brzezinski had hoped to accomplish. As a result, SALT II's negotiations would begin the following month in a tense and distrusting atmosphere. Brezhnev would never forgive the American government for involving itself in domestic Soviet affairs.

Moreover, Brzezinski's actions also failed to substantively aid the dissident cause. Following the correspondence between Carter and Sakharov, Moscow noted a sharp increase in the number of American politicians and activists entering the Soviet Union and feared that these visitors were interacting with dissidents. Believing the influx of Americans with "pertinent instructions" to be connected to Sakharov's letter, Soviet police arrested the physicist in March.<sup>147</sup> Although further American intervention protected Sakharov from long term

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>147</sup> Soviet Document 123 "Andropov to Central Committee, February 18, 1977, U.S. government activities in defense of human rights," in Rubenstein and Gribanov, *The KGB file*, 223-225.

imprisonment, Carter's correspondence had directly caused the Soviet government to increase its harassment of the activist.

Sakharov also questioned the administration's success regarding the protection of dissidents. Ten years after his arrest, Sakharov reflected on his correspondence with Carter and expressed his disappointment. Too often, he wrote, Western statesmen behaved as though they existed "in isolation," and did not consider the direct consequences that their actions had on the Soviet population. American politicians needed to have a genuine desire to assist the oppressed instead of "picking each other to pieces" for domestic political gain. Sakharov believed Carter was sincere, but that he failed to rise above mainstream American politics in order to expand human rights. Most of Sakharov's criticism regarded the general breakdown of the administration's humanitarian policies that would occur as the administration continued, but the scientist also speculated that Carter's public response to his letter led to the arrests of two of his close associates, Yuri Orlov and Aleksandr Ginzburg.<sup>148</sup>

Even Brzezinski concluded that the letter to the Soviet activist had failed. Along with Sakharov, he too believed that the letter directly caused the Soviets to increase "their suppression of human-rights activists" in subsequent months.<sup>149</sup> The letter itself only worsened the conditions of dissidents and raised the Soviet government's suspicions of human rights activists and American interference. Indeed, the American government had put the Soviet Union on the ideological defensive just as Brzezinski had wanted and Moscow responded by demonstrating that it did not care about being put on the defensive.

The letter did meagerly succeed to reassure the American public of Carter's humanitarian intentions. However, it accomplished this at the irreversible cost of damaging relations with the

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<sup>148</sup> Sakharov, *Memoirs*, 464 – 466.

<sup>149</sup> Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 156.

Soviet Union. Letters between Carter and Brezhnev continued for the rest of the administration, but they failed create the personal atmosphere between the leaders that Brzezinski had wanted. Carter's sincere aspirations to expand human rights confused and angered Brezhnev, who did not understand why the American President insisted on involving himself in Soviet internal affairs. When SALT II negotiations reopened in March 1977 – only two months after Carter took office - the American-Soviet relationship was already strained. It would take two years for the superpowers to negotiate the content of SALT II instead of the one year the Carter administration had aimed for. Brzezinski's failures were responsible for much of this tension. In his bid to both satisfy the Soviet dissident movement and establish stable relations with Brezhnev, Brzezinski failed succeed in either attempt.

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Brzezinski greatly influenced SALT II. Although he was not directly involved with negotiations, he greatly influenced the proposals Vance presented to the Soviets. He headed the Special Coordination Committee, the White House group responsible for SALT II negotiations and retained an unusually tight grip its activities. For instance, Brzezinski insisted retaining the proposals and negotiation instructions from the Department of State until the instant Vance was ready to leave for Moscow.<sup>150</sup> Brzezinski very much controlled the environment in which the negotiations were shaped. The National Security Adviser's close relationship with Carter also helped him influence SALT II. Brzezinski had much greater access to Carter than any other adviser, sending him Weekly National Security Reports and meeting with him several times a day. Through Carter, Brzezinski was able to interject his voice at paramount moments, effectively influencing the most significant treaty of the administration.

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<sup>150</sup> Gati, *Zbig*, 73.

SALT II negotiations had begun during the Nixon administration and had dragged on through the 1970s. While the focus of the 1972 SALT I treaty had been the limitation of conventional weapons, SALT II sought the reduction of nuclear weapons. In 1974, Ford and Brezhnev met at Vladivostok and agreed that their countries would maintain an equal number of weapons. This unofficial agreement claimed that both countries would hold no more than 2400 intercontinental launchers by 1985. The Vladivostok Summit left out critical SALT II topics, including limitations on the Soviet Backfire bomber and the newly developed American cruise missiles. The Soviet government was insistent that SALT II follow the 2400 limit created at the Vladivostok Summit. To the American people and Carter administration, the validity of this agreement was questionable as neither party had signed a treaty.

The Carter administration used the Vladivostok agreement as a starting point. However, true to Carter's wish for deep cuts, the committee constructed their proposals around the desire to decrease the 2400 limitation on ICBMs. Under Brzezinski, the SCC constructed three proposals: 1) delay SALT II so that details regarding the Backfire bomber and US cruise missiles could be specifically negotiated, with an agreement to uphold the 2400 ICMB limit, 2) a 150 limit on heavy ICMBs which would include the Backfire bomber, a 2500-kilometer limit on all cruise missiles, and a reduction of ICMB to 1800, or 3) a split between the first two proposals.<sup>151</sup>

Brzezinski supported the second of these options, believing that the first would unnecessarily delay an agreement and that the third did not demand enough limitations on the Soviets. The National Security adviser was concerned that the 2500-kilometer limit on cruise missiles, which favored the United States, would be too heavy a concession for the Soviets.<sup>152</sup> During the last SCC meeting before Vance's trip to Moscow, the SCC agreed that the Secretary

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<sup>151</sup> Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 159 -160.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

of State would show the Soviets only the first two proposals. By concealing the third option, they hoped to pressure the Soviet government into choosing an option more appealing to the administration. Brzezinski anticipated the difficulty in the plan and “foresaw” its failure. In his journal he described his concern that the United States would have to agree to the third proposal, which would progress US-USSR relations but not significantly give America any advantages. However, “if we can stand fast and not be intimidated and keep pressing, it is conceivable that the Soviets will...accept our first proposal,” he wrote on March 25.<sup>153</sup> Brzezinski’s strategy was one of aggression. Although he had doubts that the Soviets would initially accept the terms from either the first or second proposal, he believed that Vance needed to push these agreements. The Polish-born adviser believed that the Soviets could be pressured into concessions if the Americans were willing to assert themselves.

Just as Brzezinski predicted, the proposals were rejected as “cheap and shady” by the Soviets.<sup>154</sup> Their loudest complaint was that both proposals deviated too far from the Ford-Brezhnev agreement and believed that Carter could not be serious about the options Vance had put before them.<sup>155</sup> Much to Brzezinski’s frustration, the Secretary of State was unwilling to defend either proposal when they came under Soviet scrutiny. On March 30 after the Soviets had rejected both proposals, Vance cabled the White House, requesting permission to offer the third proposal. Brzezinski refuted this request, calling Vance’s suggestion “weak-kneed” and advising President Carter to not allow Vance to reveal the third proposal.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>154</sup> “Gromyko Blasts U.S. Arms Tactics.” *Los Angeles Times*, April 1, 1977, 2-B1.

<sup>155</sup> Dunbabin, *The Cold War*, 393.

<sup>156</sup> Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 162.

The blunt rejection from the Soviets surprised the President, who had believed that the Soviets would “meet us halfway and negotiate in good faith.”<sup>157</sup> Carter agreed with Brzezinski’s suggestion and cabled to Vance that he was to push forward with only the first two proposals.<sup>158</sup> In the following weeks of the negotiations, Brzezinski would continue to hold fast and refuse to consider offering the last proposition to the Soviets. Most members of the SCC felt pessimistic and even President Carter submitted that they were “a long way from a comprehensive agreement.”<sup>159</sup> Despite waves of criticism from the American media and the general defeatist attitude of the SCC, Brzezinski refused to label the first round of negotiations a “breakdown” of relations. He continued to assert a headstrong policy, believing that the Americans could obtain agreeable terms if they did back down from their position. While most members of the committee began to reconstruct proposals in the hopes of gaining Soviet approval, the National Security Adviser believed that they had offered enough options to Moscow and that “the ball was in the Soviet court.”<sup>160</sup>

As the SCC regrouped and SALT II negotiations continued through 1977 and 1978, Brzezinski focused his attention to another matter. In July 1978, he saw the opportunity to pressure the Soviets politically and ideologically. The FBI had apprehended two Soviet spies operating as UN employees in May and, much to the embarrassment and anger of Moscow, the US courts sentenced both spies to fifty years in prison.<sup>161</sup> Brzezinski saw their sentencing as an opportunity to bargain the release of Soviet dissidents.

Brzezinski believed that this exchange would be mutually beneficial to the United States and the Soviet Union. As the Soviet government was so furious at the sentencing of their spies,

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<sup>157</sup> Carter, *White House Diary*, 35.

<sup>158</sup> Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 162.

<sup>159</sup> FRUS, 1977-1980, Volume VI, Soviet Union, Document 19.

<sup>160</sup> Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 164-165.

<sup>161</sup> “2 Soviets Convicted on Espionage Charges.” *Chicago Tribune*, October 14, 1978, 2-s1.

the National Security Adviser was certain that they would agree to an exchange of prisoners and that he had the advantage. He also had high expectations for the exchange. When presenting the idea to Carter, he claimed that it would “contribute to a better atmosphere” between the two nations and would “make SALT II ratification easier.” Furthermore, when the adviser had secured an agreement with Dobrynin, he planned to uphold the success in front of the American public as proof that the human rights campaign was alive and well.<sup>162</sup> He was confident that this exchange could not fail. The President signed off on Brzezinski’s idea immediately.

The American side was entirely the handiwork of the National Security Adviser. Unlike the Sakharov letter, this exchange was hidden from the public and would only be revealed when the Brzezinski had achieved success. The negotiations with Soviet Ambassador Anatoliy Dobrynin were unconventionally conducted in Brzezinski’s office and home as well as in Dobrynin’s apartment over the next year. This privacy allowed Brzezinski the flexibility to alter his demands as negotiations developed without facing media criticism that had plagued the Sakharov episode.<sup>163</sup>

Without the formality of traditional negotiations or the presence of anyone else besides Dobrynin, Brzezinski did not restrain himself. His negotiation methods were harsh. At times, the talks devolved into “heated” arguments, especially when Brzezinski insisted that the Soviet government refrain from executing prisoners that the American government wanted to protect.<sup>164</sup> He pushed through Dobrynin’s cries that Brzezinski’s demands interfered with internal Soviet affairs. More than once, Brzezinski “laughed in the Ambassador’s face, telling him...that the

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<sup>162</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977-1980, Volume VI, Soviet Union, Document 146.

<sup>163</sup> Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 338.

<sup>164</sup> It is likely Brzezinski is referring to Anatoly Filatov. Filatov was a Soviet citizen who the CIA blackmailed into spying for the American government. His spying career did not last long as the Soviet government quickly apprehended, imprisoned, and threatened to execute him. Conscious of how the American media would react to his execution, Brzezinski was able to arrange his survival as an unofficial part of the prisoner exchange. See *Power and Principle*, 338-340.

former Soviet UN employees would continue to enjoy American hospitality for the next half century” and threatening to shut down negotiations altogether.<sup>165</sup>

The National Security Adviser used the conditions of the negotiations to his benefit. He was confident that Dobrynin would concede to his demands because the Soviet government so anxiously wanted the release of their spies. Through the talks, Brzezinski focused exclusively on using the Soviet prisoners as a bargaining chip and held high his demands. Without the constant watch of the public, Brzezinski was also able to construct and reconstruct his demands as the months progressed. Initially, he had compiled a list of dissidents who he considered “suitable objects of an exchange” and presented it to Dobrynin. Brzezinski’s intention was to see how many concessions he could squeeze out of the Soviets and - with the exception of a couple of well-known activists - Brzezinski was not overly picky which dissidents the USSR agreed to release. His original list attested to his focus on numbers rather than particular persons or groups as it included nationalists, religious dissidents, and human rights activists.<sup>166</sup>

One of the few individuals Brzezinski particularly hoped to protect was Aleksandr Ginzburg. Ginzburg was one of Sakharov’s close associates who the Soviets had arrested after the Carter-Sakharov exchange.<sup>167</sup> A poet, human rights activist, and member of the Moscow Helsinki Watch Group, Ginzburg was well known in the United States for his charity work. The author operated a network of resources that aided dissidents and their families. His arrest and imprisonment were published throughout American newspapers and – much like Sakharov – the public grew captivated by his story and expected the Carter administration to act. To Americans, Ginzburg’s imprisonment was a testament of the Soviet government’s immorality. It was not interpreted as “the usual act of violence against a single dissident,” but rather the USSR’s

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<sup>165</sup> Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 338-339.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 338-339.

<sup>167</sup> “Russia Needles Carter.” *The Guardian*, February 5, 1977.



attempt “to crush by hunger and poverty thousands of families...and to force thousands of others into fear and silence.”<sup>168</sup> Brzezinski had appealed for Ginzburg from the beginning of negotiations with Ambassador Dobrynin, knowing that his safety would reinvigorate public support for Carter’s human rights crusade.

After months of “quibbling over numbers and people,” Brzezinski succeeded in obtaining an agreement that included the release of Ginzburg. Along with the poet would be four other dissidents: Gyorgi Vins, a Baptist and activist; Valentyn Moroz, an Ukrainian nationalist, and Edward Kuznetsov and Mark Dymshits, two Jewish dissidents. The National Security Adviser was satisfied with the release of Ginzburg as well as the number of other dissidents he was able to obtain. Furthermore, by securing a variety of activists the administration’s message of hope would cast the widest possible net, rallying Americans from all walks of life to support the prisoner exchange.<sup>169</sup>

On April 27, two of Brzezinski’s staff traveled to New York in order to welcome the five prisoners to the United States. They found all five “cramped in a small cabin, each seated next to several KGB guards, and unsure of what exactly was taking place.”<sup>170</sup> Once their arrival became known, it did not take long for the Western world to explode in celebration. Thousands gathered in New York City to honor and welcome the dissidents.<sup>171</sup> In a highly publicized event, President Carter and Vins attended Sunday service side-by-side and prayed together.<sup>172</sup> To Carter, the

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<sup>168</sup> “U.S. Orders Ouster of Soviet Newsman in Move of Reprisal.” *New York Times*, February 6, 1977.

<sup>169</sup> Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 339.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 339.

<sup>171</sup> “Dissidents Honored at Rally by 100,000 for Jews in Soviet: Backers Parade in New York,” *New York Times*, April 30, 1979, A1.

<sup>172</sup> “Freed Ukrainian Baptist Joins Carter at Services.” *The Los Angeles Time*, April 30, 1979.

exchange was one of the most “significant things in a human way that we’ve done since I’ve been in office.”<sup>173</sup>

The moment was both a joyous occasion for the nation as well as the capstone of Brzezinski’s career as National Security Adviser. The day after the dissidents arrived, he received a touching call from Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin who expressed his gratitude regarding the rescue of the Jewish dissidents. Brzezinski recorded the conversation in his journal that evening, recalling that Begin “thanked me from the bottom of his heart and told me that I have earned a mitzvah. Mitzvah apparently is a Hebrew concept of a blessed deed for which one is grateful.” In his memoirs he expressed a similar attitude to Carter’s as he called the prisoner exchange “one of the most gratifying experiences of my four years in the White House.”<sup>174</sup>

Brzezinski had reason to celebrate. The prisoner exchange was a success as it “reflected Carter’s commitment to human rights” and demonstrated to the American public that the President had not given up on his humanitarian crusade.<sup>175</sup> Ginzburg, beloved by the American public and imprisoned by of Carter’s letter to Sakharov, was freed. For Brzezinski personally, it was also testament to his negotiation method. The American government obtained an advantageous agreement because of Brzezinski’s assertive nature and his refusal to submit to terms that he did not believe would benefit the United States. From where he stood on April 27, 1979, as the press bombarded the administration with questions, the public cheered Carter’s efforts, and the former-Soviet dissidents walked freely on American soil, it was clear that his unyielding character had been the key to conquering the totalitarian giant.

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<sup>173</sup> Carter, *White House Diary*, 316.

<sup>174</sup> Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 339-340.

<sup>175</sup> U.S. Frees 2 Soviet Spies in Trade for 5 Dissidents.” *The Los Angeles Time*, April 28, 1979.

Brzezinski's success was also due in part to the status of the US-USSR relationship in early 1979. SALT II was in its final stages and both countries wished to enter the last phase of talks on a favorable note, with such sensitive issues resolved. Ever the opportunist, Brzezinski continued to influence the SALT II negotiations through the SCC and his relationship to Carter. He asserted his advice to Carter, many times drowning out the ideas of others. The opportunities for Brzezinski to influence SALT II were often unpremeditated, with the National Security Adviser happening to be with Carter when the President needed to make a decision.

Brzezinski recalled such a particular event in his memoirs. In December of 1978, Vance was in Geneva and negotiating the final details of SALT II. Encryption was the last issue for the superpowers to resolve. Vance believed that the United States needed to submit to the Soviet proposals regarding the disagreement or else risk SALT II altogether. Arguing with Vance on the phone, Brzezinski was adamant that the US "not accept the vague formulations that the Soviets were proposing" and that the Secretary of State refuse to submit.<sup>176</sup> After arguing for some time, Vance demanded Brzezinski review the situation with Carter and call him back.

The President, who was struck with an illness at the time, was awoken at 10:30 p.m. Brzezinski gave him an assessment of the problem and advised Carter to not give into the Soviet's proposal. Brzezinski believed that a compromise "might get us SALT but it would not be in the US interests." Carter agreed with the National Security Adviser and informed him to cable Vance instructions to refuse the compromise. While it would be incorrect to conclude that the President agreed with Brzezinski because the National Security Adviser manipulated him, it is likely that Brzezinski's argument was greatly helped by the fact that Vance was not included in the discussion and that such a close relationship had formed between Brzezinski and Carter.

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<sup>176</sup> Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 329.

As Brzezinski responded to Vance, he “felt sorry” for denying the Secretary of State a quick victory, but believed that the United States would obtain an agreeable treaty only if its negotiators stood firm. Brzezinski was correct to deny the Soviets a compromise. Indeed, the following year the Soviets accepted the American proposal on encryption as well as most of the United States’ first proposals from March 1977.<sup>177</sup> While the episode only lasts a couple of pages in the National Security Adviser’s memoirs, it demonstrated the effectiveness of Brzezinski’s negotiation tactics.

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Certainly, Brzezinski’s refusal to agree to Soviet term helped the United States obtain an advantageous SALT II agreement and a favorable prisoner exchange. Brzezinski’s uncompromising methods did not produce quick agreements, but in these cases the results were benefited the United States. In the final SALT II negotiations, the Soviets agreed to a quantitative parity which included both nations dismantling some of their nuclear weapons.<sup>178</sup> This reduction of weaponry was a step towards Carter’s broad nonproliferation strategy and would not have occurred if Brzezinski hadn’t stepped into the proposal process during paramount moments. The prisoner exchange was also a success because of Brzezinski’s strategy. He asserted his demands and, while retaining a level of flexibility, expected the Soviets to fulfill his demands. With both SALT II and the exchange, Brzezinski maintained that if the Soviets would not agree to his terms, then there would be no agreement at all.

The National Security Adviser’s attitude demonstrated how he believed the American government needed to operate during this period of the Cold War. Believing that détente favored the Soviets and would eventually end, Brzezinski wanted the United States to take advantage of

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 330.

<sup>178</sup> Jozef Goldblat, *Arms Control: The New Guide to Negotiations and Agreements* (London: SAGE Publications, 2002), 83.

the easing of tensions. The best course for this was to only agree to international treaties that benefitted America and demonstrate to the world that the United States was the moral superpower. This course of action would ensure long term gains for the United States. With such confidence that détente would surely end because of the reemergence of ideological conflict, Brzezinski had no qualms about angering Soviet leaders or not obtaining SALT II.

However, Brzezinski's strategy had its flaws. The exchange of letters between Carter and Sakharov had cost the administration a constructive relationship between Carter and Brezhnev. While Brzezinski considered the letter to Sakharov mild, the fact that the administration sent it at all was too assertive for the Soviets. The results of the correspondences illustrated the deeper issue with the National Security Adviser's thinking. The Soviets were not willing to submit or ignore American interference into their affairs. While Brzezinski calculated that the Soviets would ignore the Sakharov letter, their confidence matched that of the adviser as they had no reason to submit to American wishes and responded accordingly. The flaw in Brzezinski's strategy was that it only worked the United States already had an advantage.

To the adviser, this flaw was not an overwhelming concern as he believed the Soviet system was bound to eventually crumble, but it had consequences for others involved in the US-USSR rivalry. Soviet dissidents particularly suffered from Brzezinski's strategy. After the Sakharov exchange, the Soviet government increased persecution of activists because of Carter's letter. Even the prisoner exchange – the highlight of Brzezinski's career – hurt dissident activity in the USSR. Ginzburg, Vins, and Moroz had led underground activities invaluable to the dissident movement, but with their removal from the USSR they were unable to help their fellow Soviet citizens. While Americans hailed the recovery of Ginzburg just as Brzezinski had planned, the man's removal from the Soviet Union meant that he was unable to aid the thousands

of people he reached before his arrest. He expressed his frustration with this fact. Upon being asked by a reporter how he felt about his transfer to America, he grunted, “Would you like it if you were exiled from your own country, not having been asked?”<sup>179</sup> Vins also admitted feeling guilty for his removal from his congregation and fellow activists, much to Carter’s concern.<sup>180</sup>

It is doubtful that Brzezinski particularly cared that his actions stifled dissident activity. From his earliest works he described dissidents as dreamers and idealists who at best could preserve “human beings for a better day.”<sup>181</sup> As they did not easily fit into his analysis of the Soviet system, Brzezinski decided to use them as a political tool to ideologically undermine the Soviet Union. While Carter’s human rights crusade against the USSR had its shortcomings and failed to help the broader activities of the dissidents, Brzezinski was able to uphold the successes of the campaign to the public and declare the United States the morally superior superpower. Such a claim was meant to be asserted, not compromised.

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<sup>179</sup> “Ginzburg Depressed: Exile Rejected Previously Ginzburg Says He Feels Numb From Experiences Bouquets in an Elegant Room Possibility of Incarceration,” *New York Times*, May 1, 1979, A1.

<sup>180</sup> Carter, *White House Diary*, 316.

<sup>181</sup> Brzezinski and Friedrich, *Totalitarian Dictatorship*, 239.

### *Conclusion*

By analyzing Brzezinski's early publications and term as National Security Adviser, it becomes clear that Brzezinski's ideas built upon one another. His works before the Carter administration explained his interpretation of the past and his vision for the future. This vision included a globalized world under the leadership of the United States. The USSR, with its outdated political system, would crumble and submit to American power. Brzezinski's activities during the Carter administration demonstrated how he believed the American government needed to act in order to fulfill this vision. In particular, the United States needed to assert its policies and hold firm against the totalitarian giant. Much of Brzezinski's confidence during the Carter administration came from his analyses. As the Soviet Union was inherently flawed and on an evitable path of collapse, Brzezinski had the freedom to refuse agreements that he did not think benefited America. Together, these periods of Brzezinski's life illustrate his complete vision of how the United States would become world leader.

Most of Brzezinski's ideas were successful. In 1991, when the USSR dissolved it seemed to be proof that his analyses were correct. Despite the flaws of his theories of totalitarianism and peaceful engagement, his prediction that revisionism would undermine the Soviet system to the point of collapse was true. His term as National Security Adviser also had substantial successes. Although the administration was plagued with problems, the release of Soviet dissidents and details of SALT II favorable to the US were the handiwork of Brzezinski.

Today, Brzezinski continues to build on his original ideas. When Russia invaded Crimea in February 2014, the American media rushed to hear Brzezinski's diagnosis. He immediately and fervently criticized the Russian government for its imperialist actions, drawing analogies to the USSR's actions during the 1950s. Traces of his early works can be heard through his current

speeches. He continues to refer to Russia as an ideological society - this time built on a nationalist philosophy – and labels its political and intellectual systems irrelevant on the global stage. This current analysis of Russia raises several questions. When Brzezinski examined the Soviet system he claimed that its irrelevancy was one of the reasons the USSR would collapse. Supposing that Russia is “irrelevant” in the same way, Brzezinski has yet to offer a specific view of what Russia will look like when it succumbs to the same fate.

But whatever future ideas Brzezinski offers the world, they are sure to be bold and he is sure to fight for them. He has no plans of retiring from his academic or political careers anytime soon. Brzezinski has shown himself to be an intellectual force to be reckon with over his sixty year career. When facing the chaos of international politics, the Polish-born intellect grabs hold of history and directs it to where he wants to go.



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