Defense and Arms Control in the Carter Administration (U)

Robert M. Gates

> **"The conventional wisdom is that, as the Soviets built up in the late 1970s, President Carter pursued an essential antidefense policy that weakened the country. The conventional wisdom, once again, is wrong."**

Editor's Note: The following article has been extracted from an unpublished chapter from the author's book, From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War, *published in 1996.*

In December 1997, I reluctantly left the NSC Staff to return to CIA, taking my cue from the fact that the last time there had been a change in party control of the White House, virtually the entire NSC Staff had been let go. I preferred to go under my own steam and at my choosing rather than let someone else make that decision for me. I had immensely enjoyed the NSC, however. Further, nearly everyone from the bureaucracy who has worked in the White House has a terrible reentry problem on going "back home." You go from writing for and assisting the National Security Adviser and the President—often very directly—to a place many rungs down the ladder in a big agency, and work you once did directly for the big boss now has to go through multiple layers of the bureaucracy—often a bureaucracy determined to put you back in your proper place as rudely as possible in order to restore your perspective and sense of reality. It was a difficult transition for me.

Carter and Defense: Perception and Reality

As the Soviets were building and deploying four new ICBMs, expanding and modernizing their ballistic missile submarine fleet, strengthening the ABM around Moscow, and developing a new strategic bomber for the first time in a generation, what was the United States doing? The conventional wisdom is that, as the Soviets built up in the late 1970s, President Carter pursued an essential antidefense policy that weakened the country. The conventional wisdom, once again, is wrong.

US defense spending by 1977 had been declining for more than a decade, especially if Vietnam operational expenses are set aside. Carter says in his memoirs that the defense budget, measured in real dollars, not counting inflation, had declined 35 percent over the preceding eight years, even as the Soviet budget had been growing at about 4 percent per year. We especially neglected investment, conventional forces, and research and development. Intelligence capabilities suffered badly, the program losing about half its budget over a dozen years.

Enter Jimmy Carter

People forget that the Democratic Party nominated its most conservative candidate in 1976. He was a graduate of the US Naval Academy who intended a career in the nuclear Navy until the death of his father led him to resign his commission and return home to Plains, Georgia. He was a fiscal conservative, a small businessman with a keen eye for the bottom line.

When the Carter administration arrived, there was no discounting the

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magnitude, reality, or importance of the Soviet strategic or conventional military buildup. But there was a desire to look at that threat in a context of national power, a broader perspective than just military capabilities. The result was the President's signature soon after arriving of Presidential Review Memorandum (PRM) 10, "Comprehensive Net Assessment." This commissioned a comparative examination of every aspect of US and Soviet national power—strategic and conventional military, economic resources and production capability, technology innovation and productivity, intelligence, political institutions, and more. National Security Adviser Brzezinski was in charge, and he brought Professor Samuel Huntington of Harvard University to Washington to manage this mammoth undertaking. CIA was a participant and an important contributor but by no means a dominant influence in the preparation of the report.

The assessment was largely complete by midsummer, and it drew the following conclusions about military capabilities:

- In strategic capabilities, the Soviets were judged to have an advantage in ICBM and SLBM launchers, megatonnage, and throw weight. The United States had the advantage in warheads, bombers, MIRVed launchers, combined bomber and missile payload, and accuracy. The assessment predicted that these capabilities would level out in the 1980s.

- In conventional forces, the report stated that, since the late 1960s, the Soviets had acquired a new main battle tank, improved their chemical and biological warfare capabilities, had new armored personnel carriers as well as self-propelled artillery, and the most comprehensive ground-based air defense system in the world. The United States had a new tank and new tactical aircraft, but its conventional forces had experienced great turbulence and attrition over the past 15 years. The United States retained a large advantage in naval forces and in its ability to move forces around the world (power projection), despite real Soviet improvements in these areas.

While PRM 10 was balanced in its evaluation of comparative national power and found that the United States had a significant economic, technological, and diplomatic advantages over the Soviets, the report was far from sanguine about the future. For example, it stated, "The striking incompatibility of most US and Soviet outlooks and values, due as much to similarities as to differences, suggests that cooperation will remain limited, misunderstanding will persist in many areas, and competition will predominate." It went on that the overlap in zones of potential military intervention by the two countries is "much greater" than before and "hence, so is the possibility of Soviet-US military interaction." Finally, "The probability is high that the Soviet Union will take one or more military initiatives during the next eight years which could produce a Soviet Union cricon [crisis/confrontation]." It went on that the Soviets' record of behavior, their new military capabilities, their redefinition of their interests in the Third World, nuclear parity, changes in the US military posture, and a possible desire by the Soviets to establish themselves as the global equal of the United States all mean that "the Soviet Union will be able to take military initiatives...with somewhat less risk that the United States will make any military response."

And the implications:

- "The most significant change that has occurred in the power relationships between the United States and the Soviet Union in recent years has been the growth in Soviet military power in relation to that of the United States."

- "At present, there is rough equivalence in strategic forces and asymmetrically in overall military capabilities. The United States is significantly ahead in most nonmilitary aspects of national power...."

- "Trends favorable to the Soviets or against the United States in key areas are: strategic forces, conventional forces in Europe, mobilization and force projection, short-run economic interaction payoffs, covert action capabilities, and diplomatic relations, especially in Africa and Latin America."

All things considered, looking back, the assessment was realistic, accurate, and fairly tough minded.

At a meeting of the Special Coordination Committee on 4 August 1997, chaired by Brzezinski, a number of guidelines were agreed on in view of the findings of the new assessment. The administration should, they concluded:

- "Maintain the overall balance of military power between the United States and its allies and the Soviet Union and its allies at least as favorable as that which now exists."

- "Prevent or counter Soviet use of military force to gain influence over other societies."

- "Attempt to achieve the above goals in collaboration with our allies, through cooperation and agreements with the Soviets when possible and through appropriate actions and programs when agreements prove impossible."

- "Enlist the participation of the Soviet Union in international institutions and secure Soviet cooperation in achieving solutions to global economic, social, and resource problems."

- "Take political, economic, diplomatic, and ideological initiatives in cooperation with our allies to reduce Soviet influence in and control over other societies where that influence adversely affects US interests and values."

- "Within approved budgetary constraints," the participants in the meeting called for US strategic and conventional military forces to pursue a number of detailed goals aimed at increasing capabilities and flexibility.

In sum, the Carter administration's view of the Soviets, their military gains of the preceding years, and their likely behavior formed a realistic basis for the formulation of strong policies. And that view in terms of military capabilities was quite consistent with the estimates prepared by the Intelligence Community in 1976. A dozen years of single-minded Soviet effort and a huge expenditure of resources had enabled the Soviets to close the strategic gap and establish a favorable military balance in Europe and offered them the potential to gain superiority in a

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number of areas, depending on what the United States did. Those who, after the Soviet Union's collapse, would argue that the Soviet military threat was overstated would have found few in either political party or in the American Government generally in 1976 or in 1977 who would have agreed. In fact, in retrospect, it is quite clear that the sober assessments were very much on the mark.

With a realistic assessment of Soviet military strength and capabilities, how then did Carter get his reputation for being antidefense? I believe it was his rhetoric, his deep-seated ambivalence toward the Soviet Union, his lack of support for defense budget increases, several of his unilateral initiatives, and because he turned down two major weapons programs that came to him during his term—the enhanced radiation weapon (ERW, neutron bomb) and the B-1 bomber. What he did ultimately support, and it was a great deal, he supported grudgingly, often under enormous pressure and usually only after agonizing indecision. With the atmospherics now so far distant, the reality is that Carter's record on defense looks more robust today than it did at the time. The peaks and valleys of the day-to-day struggle fade from view, as do the occasions when the President made a decision not because he wanted to but because his hand was forced or when he yielded to the counsel of his senior advisers.

President Carter's approach to defense looked decidedly skeptical up close:

- In January 1977, he cut his first defense budget, already barebones, by more than $6 billion. The difference in the Soviet and US reactions to this move was instructive and illustrates how differently Carter was viewed in Moscow and in Washington. On 31 January 1977, Acting DCI Hank Knoche sent a paper to the White House on the Soviet view of the proposed cuts that contended that the Soviets would welcome the cuts but would not regard them as a clear indicator of administration intentions over the longer term—and that the Soviets would not reciprocate. The Agency said that the Soviets would regard the cuts as minor adjustments resulting in only a slight reduction and forcing only small delays in strategic programs. We speculated that the Soviets saw Carter's budget decisions on the B-1 program as a step toward full authorization after further review, only slightly deferring the MX, and promising further cruise missile developments despite deferral of the submarine-launched cruise missile. At the same time, we thought the Soviets would be concerned that decisions improving the US force posture in Europe, our ability to execute war in Europe, the aircraft sheltering program, improved military storage capabilities, and the increase in the civil reserve air fleet demonstrated Carter's intent to redress weaknesses in the US posture in Europe. So, even though Secretary of Defense Harold Brown and Brzezinski would have to fight Carter every step of the way on increasing defense spending in 1977

and 1978—and usually lose—the Soviets saw in his decisions much cause for concern. In Washington, this budget decision was seen as a harbinger of an antidefense approach, with more to come:

- Carter canceled the B-1 bomber development program in June 1977 on Brown's recommendation. Carter and Brown believed that the B-1 would be vulnerable to the Soviets' extraordinary air defense system and, further, that its mission could be more effectively performed by cruise missiles and eventually (because it was still unclear whether it would work) by a new, secret weapon, the Stealth bomber. Carter believed the B-1 would be a waste of billions of dollars.

- Early in the administration, as part of a new SALT proposal, the President indicated to Secretary of State Vance that he was prepared to give up both the B-1 and the Trident ballistic missile submarine program if an agreement on deep reductions seemed possible.

- In April 1978, against the advice of Vance, Brown, and Brzezinski, Carter decided to defer production of the ERW. In so doing, he antagonized Chancellor Schmidt of West Germany and other allies. In Carter's view, no ally wanted the weapon deployed on its soil, and he also regarded it as a political liability. He perhaps did not fully realize the effort that had been made by Vance and others to shape an allied consensus to go forward with production and then to deploy if insufficient progress were made in arms control negotiations. Even Vance acknowledged later that, "The impact of the neutron bomb decision at home and abroad was very damaging."

"The KGB undertook a massive propaganda campaign in Europe against the neutron bomb in July and August 1977."

Carter's perception that the Europeans did not want the ERW and public criticism in Europe itself of ERW (which influenced the European leaders) probably were shaped to some extent by one of the most aggressive covert operations ever mounted in Europe by the Soviets. The KGB undertook a massive propaganda campaign in Europe against the neutron bomb in July and August 1977. The objective was to affect Carter's decision regarding production of the bomb. The high point of the effort was concentrated from 25 July to 14 August. On 30 July, for the first time in nearly three years, TASS issued a statement on US foreign policy denouncing the ERW. Propaganda during the week of 1-7 August focused significant attention toward support of the "Week of Action" organized by the World Peace Council, a Soviet front organization, for 6-13 August. On 9 August, *Pravda* published a statement and appeal by 28 Communist parties against production of the bomb. During 6-13 August, Peace Councils in Eastern Europe held protest meetings and passed resolutions; the Peace Committee in Istanbul sponsored a demonstration in front of the US Consulate General; front groups delivered protest notes to US Consulates in Stuttgart, Frankfurt, and Dusseldorf; and other front organization sponsored various events worldwide targeting the ERW. Many articles prepared by the front groups were published in Communist newspapers in Italy, France, Belgium, Austria, and Greece.

The second and more damaging type of commentary was coverage by the non-Communist press stimulated by the outpouring of press in the USSR and Eastern Europe. This coverage was prompted by anti-Americanism, doubts about the viability of NATO, hopes of maintaining Europe's special status with the Soviet Union, and honest dislike of the neutron bomb. There was propaganda paydirt in this kind of commentary. Papers in Europe went on an editorial binge as the essentially objective sector of the media felt obliged to carry both sides of the argument on ERW. Thus, on 23 August, the *International Herald Tribune* published a signed article by Soviet Nobel laureate Nikolai Semenov parroting the Soviet line. Although a parallel article by a US Congressman rebutted Semenov, the Soviets were ecstatic; they used the Semionov article and where it had appeared in editorial replay and broadcasts all over the world.

There was a further major effort on the propaganda front by the Soviet delegation at the Pugwash meeting in Munich in late August. The Soviets pushed a single theme—the dangers of the neutron bomb and the consequent need to mobilize world opinion and pressure against the United States. The same themes appeared in Libya, Peru, India, Cameroon, Benin, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Mauritius, Ghana, Afghanistan, Japan, and Ethiopia.

As the Agency reported to the White House in September 1977, "The volume of propaganda against the neutron bomb, the timing and programmed developments within that

outburst, and reoccurrence of identical themes suggest only one possibility: an intricate Soviet propaganda campaign involving heavy Moscow media play, an East European cacophony, international front group action, direct media placement where possible in non-Communist areas, and stimulation in the West of critical media commentary. The Soviets were successful." More than that. They had successfully exercised a propaganda infrastructure in Europe that they would expand to try to defeat deployment of NATO's intermediate nuclear response to the SS-20s in the early 1980s and again later, worldwide, against the Strategic Defense Initiative.

During the campaign, Carter had called for US troop reductions in South Korea. He reaffirmed this position as US policy in a press conference shortly after taking office, to the consternation of the South Koreans, the Japanese, and other Asians. Again, virtually all the President's senior advisers were opposed. There was also strong opposition in Congress and the Pentagon, but the President remained adamant. According to Vance, only Brzezinski supported Carter on this. The issue festered until the summer of 1979, when Carter was to visit South Korea after the Tokyo Economic Summit. A short while before the trip, the Intelligence Community got into the act by producing a National Estimate that said earlier estimates of North Korean troop strength had understated the threat by as much as a third. In fact, reviewing earlier work and revising their methodology, the intelligence experts suggested that the North had as many as nine more divisions than previously estimated. Naturally, the Estimate leaked and, for all practical purposes, the idea of troop reductions in South Korea was dead. This contribution by intelligence analysts surely did not endear them to the President, who probably thought he had been sandbagged. (I do not believe that he was. One maddening aspect of intelligence for a policymaker is that the experts are always reviewing and changing earlier assessments, particularly on numbers of troops and equipment.)

- My recollection is that Carter was most unenthusiastic about going forward with a new ICBM for the United States, the MX. Beginning in 1977, there had been continuing studies on the optimum mode of deployment for this missile to enhance its survivability in case of nuclear attack. (There were a multitude of basing schemes, ranging from the serious to the hilarious). According to Brzezinski, Carter during this period kept asking Brown if keeping the triad (ICBMs, SLBMs, bombers) was still necessary, and, at one meeting, complained that the perception of Soviet superiority had been created by "this group"—referring to his senior advisers. He ultimately approved going forward with MX but, in Brzezinski's view, only because virtually all his advisers strongly supported it, including Secretary Vance. And, because, as Senator Sam Nunn and others made clear, SALT II had no chance of being ratified without it. Carter, in fact, approved MX on 8 June 1979, only days before leaving for Vienna to sign the SALT II Treaty.

These major decisions, and a number of lesser ones, including those on the budget, formed (and form) the basis for the view that Carter was weak on defense. As in the case of the B-1, he took a great deal of time to study the issues, including the technical aspects, and I am convinced that he made up his mind based on the facts. Somehow, though, he seemed unable to stand back and see that a series of these decisions all in the same direction formed a pattern—and that pattern established the basis for the attacks on him as antidefense. He seemed not to understand the cumulative political impact of a number of discrete decisions.

These defense decisions, coupled with Soviet assertiveness in a growing number of places around the world, conveyed the impression of a weak President. It is to Brzezinski's credit, I believe, that privately he warned Carter about this. For example, as early as November 1977, Brzezinski wrote him that "Public perception of your foreign policy is that it is 'soft' because of Cuba, Vietnam, Korea, SALT, B-1. You should consider taking some 'tough' decision...."

There is another side to the Carter record on defense, however, and it looks stronger from a distance of 15 years—indeed, it looks as it must have to the Soviets at the time. Whatever may have been Carter's attitude or rhetoric, he continued the strategic modernization programs begun under his predecessors for the air-launched cruise missile, the MX, completion of the MIRVing of Minuteman, and the Trident ballistic missile submarine and new submarine-launched missile. He approved and funded development of Stealth aircraft technology that led to wholly new kinds of tactical and strategic attack aircraft. Indeed, with the sole exception of the B-1, Carter sustained virtually every major US strategic modernization program and

began an important new one. The perception of new US strategic power and strength in the first half of the 1980s as new weapons began being built and/or deployed was, in fact, Ronald Reagan reaping the harvest sown by Nixon, Ford, *and* Carter.

But there was more:

- In May 1977, at Carter's initiative, the leaders of NATO agreed to specific steps to address negative trends in the conventional and theater nuclear balance, and a long-term defense program of military improvements for the Alliance was agreed unanimously. These were major achievements.

- As an outgrowth of PRM 10, the comprehensive net assessment, Carter signed Presidential Directive 18 in late summer 1977 that established "essential equivalence" as the US strategic objective and also approved creation of the Rapid Deployment Force, the forerunner of Central Command and the military organization that commanded and fought the Persian Gulf war more than 10 years later.

- On 30 May 1978, the North Atlantic Council met in Washington and agreed to a defense program intended to build up the antitank weapons and the integration of air defenses.

- A year later, in May 1979, with Harold Brown taking the lead, the NATO Defense Planning Committee agreed that all member states would increase their spending on defense by 3 percent per year through 1985 in order to redress some of the imbalance that had development between the Alliance and the Warsaw Pact. This was a major political, as well as practical, achievement.

- In December 1979, NATO reached the all-important decision to counter the Soviets' deployment of the three-warhead SS-20 missile in the European theater (which had begun in 1976) with its own deployment of 108 Pershing II missiles and 464 ground-launched cruise missiles. Although West German Chancellor Schmidt had first sounded the alarm in a speech in London in October 1977, US leadership and pressure had been critical to the 1979 deployment decision.

- As part of the price imposed by Senator Nunn for his support of SALT II, in the summer of 1979 Carter agreed to increase the defense budget by 5 percent after inflation (the administration had been planning on 2 to 3 percent.

- With a Presidential Directive signed in November 1979, major new initiatives were begun to improve US military command and control, including greater endurance and flexibility. This also would give the United States the capability to manage a prolonged nuclear conflict.

- Following the revolution in Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, in his State of the Union address on 23 January 1980 Carter asserted America's strategic interest in the Persian Gulf. He said, "Any attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force." This statement of US policy, which became known as the Carter Doctrine, would be enforced by both Presidents Reagan and Bush.

- In March 1980, Carter signed another directive providing for the first time in a generation comprehensive guidance for mobilization.

- In May 1980, the President approved Presidential Directive 59, codifying significant changes in US strategic doctrine and targeting. Building on changes instigated by Secretary of Defense Schlesinger in the Ford administration, this new directive provided much greater flexibility in US targeting and more emphasis on military, command and control, and defense industry targets in the USSR. New and broader requirements were placed on US command and control for managing war. In essence, and as noticed by the Soviets, PD 59, together with several other directives signed by Carter in 1979-80, enhanced US deterrent capability by obviously moving toward an enhanced war-fighting capability. The President would have more options than only massive retaliation. This was not a new concept, but Carter's directives for the first time moved the Defense Department toward a comprehensive ability to acquire and implement the tools to make the concept real. (Debates over targeting resulted in some interesting ideas. The Polish-descended Brzezinski, for example, asked Defense to look at a targeting strategy in which only Russian targets were hit, sparing all the non-Russian ethnic areas of the Soviet Union. Defense politely allowed the idea to die quietly.)

- In the summer of 1980, Carter directed the development of a serious program for ensuring the continuity of government—the

survival of the presidency and executive authority—in a war.

Regardless of Carter's enthusiasm or lack of it for some (or even most) of these measures, the cumulative impact was to provide a strong foundation for Ronald Reagan to build on. The Reagan administration's diagnosis of the US strategic posture was not terribly different from the one that Brzezinski provided to Carter at the 4 June 1979 NSC meeting on MX: the United States had considerable advantages over the USSR in all nonmilitary aspects of the competition; only in combination with our allies did we have an advantage over the Soviets in military power; the strategic nuclear balance was "deteriorating faster than we had expected" and would continue to do so into the early 1980s; there would be a "strategic dip" in the early 1980s, when the United States could not maintain essential equivalence and a balance no worse than that existing in 1977; the strategic gap of the early 1980s "could produce damaging political perceptions and encourage assertive behavior." In terms of the conventional military balance, unfavorable balances existed in the Far East and the Middle East–Persian Gulf, although the balance was improving in Europe. I suspect that only in the latter case would the Reagan administration have had reservations. And this was not just the hardliner Brzezinski speaking. Vance agreed that the basic trends were adverse. Brown said that by 1985 the Soviets "would have greater strength than the United States in almost every military category, no matter what we do." CIA Director Turner and JCS Chairman David Jones agreed with Brzezinski. Only the President was skeptical.

"I believe that the Soviets saw a very different Jimmy Carter than did most Americans by 1980, different and much more hostile and threatening."

It is worth pausing to look for a moment at how the Soviets saw the strategic balance during this period, in part because I believe that the Soviets saw a very different Jimmy Carter than did most Americans by 1980, different and much more hostile and threatening.

After the normalization with China, I wrote Brzezinski on 2 January 1979 that I believed we were "entering a period of abnormally great Soviet paranoia, fed by a growing sense of isolation and Moscow's perception of a US-Chinese-Japanese-NATO cabal against the USSR." I saw three major events in 1978 that adversely affected long-term Soviet security interests and represented serious setbacks:

- The Soviets had been stunned by the suddenness of the announcement of Sino-US normalization, and they surely also had noticed that the announcement took place almost immediately after the United States said it would not oppose Western arms sales to China.
- After being wooed by both China and the USSR, Japan threw in with China in the Chinese-Japanese Treaty of Friendship to be signed in early 1979. I said I thought this was a major event and had been underreported in the West. "Asia's greatest economic power and its largest country had put aside more than half a century of official hostility and declared their desire to work together—explicitly for economic cooperation and implicitly to prevent Soviet hegemony."
- NATO, concerned over the Soviet military buildup in Central Europe, new Soviet weapon systems, and Soviet behavior in Africa, had resolved to strengthen the Alliance militarily. I noted that in the United States Democratic pressure to withdraw troops from Europe had virtually disappeared and that there was no pressure for an early MBFR agreement. I said that NATO defense spending was back on the upswing, and that all these developments marked a major failure by the Soviets in their efforts to weaken the Alliance.

In the memorandum, I cited an article in the Soviet military newspaper, *Red Star*, which dealt with normalization and the prospect of isolation. Two quotes make the point:

> *Everyone is free to choose an ally for himself as he sees fit. The Fuehrer once boasted that he was prepared to enter into an alliance with the devil himself in order to achieve victory.*
>
> *The alliance of American imperialists, Japanese revanchists and Chinese great-power chauvinists is directed against the vital interests of all peoples. It has and can have no future.*

I concluded that, "We face a much more dangerous USSR now than in recent years. Soviet options are limited. Moscow will not cede the Kurile Islands to reach accommodation with Japan, and it will not allay Western fears by ending support for

the Cubans in Africa. I believe we will see more threats (especially directed toward Western Europe) and offensive/subversive action in Africa, the Persian Gulf, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. We are in for some rough times ahead with the USSR, and we should expect no restraint from Moscow in South Asia, the Persian Gulf, or the arms race." This was nearly a year before the Soviets invaded Afghanistan.

Turner briefed Carter in more concrete terms in May 1980 about the Soviet view of the military balance. He said that the Soviets knew they faced superior NATO seapower and airpower, a cohesive Alliance with the advantages of the defender. He suggested that the Soviets felt strongest in the Third World and in areas contiguous to the USSR, where they had easy access, or where their surrogates were firmly entrenched. Turner observed that the Soviets saw their military forces as being their strongest suit and providing a "permissive environment" and vehicle for foreign policy in the Third World. The Soviets were also aware of the perception abroad that they would make further gains in the years ahead. The DCI continued that the Soviets no longer felt as constrained by the US strategic posture, but also knew well their own deficiencies and tended to overrate the West. He predicted this would lead to continued conservatism in Soviet thinking about their own force structure and size vis-a-vis the US and NATO. He also noted the Soviets' respect and envy of the US technological potential and their fear that it might be unleashed. Turner concluded that CIA expected the Soviets to continue to plug away at trying to acquire all the capabilities for war winning, even without the certainty that they would succeed in the effort. On balance, "The Soviets feel more comfortable in the 1980s with their military capabilities against the United States and more willing to use their strength as an active tool of foreign policy."

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We received a small insight into Soviet paranoia about the United States a few weeks later. On at least two occasions, there had been failures of the US early warning computer system leading to combat alerts of US forces. During the first half of June 1980, we later learned that the KGB had sent a message to all their residencies reporting this and saying that the "failures" were not the result of errors but were deliberately initiated by the Defense Department for training. The KGB circular stated that the Soviet Government believed the United States was trying to give the Soviet Union a false sense of security by giving the impression that such errors are possible, and thereby diminish Soviet concern over future alerts—thus providing a cover for possible surprise attack.

Finally, as National Intelligence Officer for the USSR, at the end of October 1980, I did my own alternative view to the conclusions of the just-published strategic estimate. Once again, I said, that from the Soviets' perspective, they were an isolated superpower facing the combined hostility of the United States, Western Europe, Japan, and China. At the same time, they faced problems in Eastern Europe, instability on their southern border, and serious economic problems. Meanwhile, in their view, the United States was pursuing programs intended to reverse strategic trends since the mid-1960s—Trident, MX, cruise missiles, TNF, a strategy aimed at a US first-strike capability, superiority and/or a European-Soviet nuclear conflict. Further, I thought the Soviets saw dim prospects for relief through SALT, no impact from SALT on forces from arms control in the 1980s, and pressures building in the United States for more programs, not fewer.

I said that I thought the Soviets saw an increasingly hostile strategic environment in the 1980s, including a major US buildup threatening Soviet military gains of the preceding 15 years; the United States adopting strategies and buying weapons raising the prospect of a first strike and possible US superiority; and little help for the Soviet Union from SALT. (This was based on programs Carter had in place.) I predicted that the Soviets would:

- Continue SALT to slow down and constrain whatever US programs they could.
- Assume no constraints due to SALT through the mid-1980s.
- Leave open the possibility of de facto observance of SALT I and some of SALT II while going all-out on weapons programs unconstrained by the treaties.

- Tighten their belts internally and try to build economic ties to US competitors.

- Pursue opportunities to create problems for the United States in the Persian Gulf, the Middle East, the Indian Ocean, Central America, and Africa, while trying to detach Europe from the United States.

Carter and SALT II: The Best of Intentions

If President Carter's principal advisers were in substantial agreement on the strategic balance and outlook, they were badly divided over what to do about the problem—and Carter himself was ambivalent. The very public disagreements between Vance and Brzezinski on how to deal with the Soviet challenge, and Carter's equally public inability to decide between them or even reconcile their views for himself, was very damaging to the administration and to the country. Nowhere was this more evident than in the President's speech on 7 June 1978 at the US Naval Academy in Annapolis. He said there that the United States was prepared for either confrontation or cooperation, but that the choice was up to the Soviets. Virtually all press accounts of the speech characterized it as a Brzezinski draft text and a Vance draft text slapped together by Carter and as symptomatic of his inability to move one way or the other. Interestingly, Brzezinski contends in his memoirs that the image of two compressed drafts is not right and that Carter developed the speech text on his own. Vance's memoirs support the press version, that Carter drew from both drafts and stitched them together.

"In SALT, as with his human rights policy, Carter broke all the rules as far as the Soviets were concerned."

Whatever the case, disarray and confusion were real, not just perceived. This led to a "push-me pull-you" dynamic that helps explain why confrontations with the Soviets too often resulted in unpredictable under or overreactions by the administration. The most common feature was mismanagement due to too many hands on the steering wheel. This helps explain why the administration bounced between harsh rhetoric and "soft" actions—and the next time reacted in just the reverse way, why the administration would seek negotiations with the Soviets on a broad range of tough issues and then watch them stall out, and how the relationship with the Soviets could be so sour virtually throughout Carter's term in office.

Interestingly enough, the one exception to this picture was SALT. There was agreement in the administration from the President on down in support of arms control in general and SALT in particular. Vance, Brown, and Brzezinski all were committed to success and worked together reasonably successfully to achieve it. They did succeed in negotiating a new agreement with the Soviets, but their handling of the treaty after signature, as well as domestic politics and Soviet actions, virtually eliminated any hope of ratification by the Senate.

In SALT, as with his human rights policy, Carter broke all the rules as far as the Soviets were concerned. In contrast to SALT I and the US negotiating position under Ford and Kissinger and under the influence of Senator Jackson, Carter was determined to seek deep reductions in the strategic forces of both sides.

Preparations were intense for Vance's first trip to the Soviet Union in March, and a number of meetings were held among Carter's senior advisers to forge a SALT proposal. Two general approaches were developed, one that would essentially pick up where the Vladivostok accords and subsequent negotiations left off with a view to reaching a quick agreement, and a second that called for significant reductions in the overall level of strategic delivery vehicles from 2,400 to 2,000. In contrast to public perceptions at the time, judging from their memoirs and my memory, while all agreed in principle on the desirability of deep reductions, Vance and Brzezinski both pragmatically preferred the first approach—modest reductions—because they believed the Soviets would reject deep cuts. It was the President himself who decided that the deep-cuts option should be the preferred alternative. A few days before his departure for Moscow, Vance called in Ambassador Dobrynin and briefed him on the deep-cuts proposal. The Ambassador reacted quite negatively, giving Vance a foretaste of what was to come in Moscow.

Unfortunately, it was only a mild foretaste. For the Soviets—Brezhnev and Gromyko—reacted quite strongly, rudely rejecting not only the deep-cuts proposal but also the fallback position that built upon the Vladivostok agreements. The impact of the rejection was magnified by what would become characteristic of the Carter administration—leaks, backstabbing, and recriminations.

After various officials who had been with Vance in Moscow and others who remained in Washington finished backgrounding the press, the news stories were full of accusations of miscalculation, of overreaching, and so on. It was not pretty, and it would not get any better.

Somewhat later, we on the NSC learned that Dobrynin had told Moscow after Vance's trip that the President's SALT proposals were simply an effort to achieve a propaganda advantage and that no consideration should be given to the idea that it was a serious proposal. He praised Brezhnev's and Gromyko's firm handling of Vance, expressing the view that Carter had calculated that the Soviets had a greater political and economic stake in détente than the United States. He also said that the Soviet position during the Vance visit had not aroused any significant criticism in the United States, and so Moscow should keep the propaganda pressure on for the Vance-Gromyko meeting in Geneva in May. Finally, Dobrynin observed that Carter wanted to reach agreement on SALT and thus would seek a compromise—that despite right-wing influence in the White House (take that, Brzezinski!) Carter might moderate his position.

We and CIA speculated that Dobrynin's harsh line might have been intended to reduce his own vulnerability because of his prediction in January that Carter's foreign policy was not likely to differ in principle from Ford's. Dobrynin admitted uncertainty that spring about Carter's future policy toward the Soviet Union, an uncertainty many of us felt was probably widely shared among Soviet leaders.

"I think Brezhnev wanted to give Carter a jolt, let him know that the Soviets could not be jerked around and that they could make life difficult for him."

CIA did an analysis of Vance's March trip to Moscow sometime later and concluded that the Soviets' reaction had reflected their irritation at losing earlier negotiating gains, amplified by their fears of new US military technologies contemplated or under development. The analysts thought that the Soviets had reacted with a hard line to redirect pressure back onto the American side, thus relieving the political and propaganda disadvantage under which they were temporarily placed and avoiding the internal difficulties of formulating new positions themselves.

I believe the Soviets reacted so strongly to Vance and the deep-cuts proposal for two reasons. First, SALT was very controversial in Moscow, with the military quite averse to the entire process, which was driven by Brezhnev. The Soviet leader had invested a lot of personal capital in the Vladivostok meeting and the arrangements that came out of it, and I believe he was angry that Carter right out of the chute wanted to junk it all and start over with a proposal that departed so far from what the leadership had worked out with the Soviet military brass. In this vein, I also think that the "deep cuts"—which were only 250 missiles and bombers lower than what Kissinger had offered—signaled a new approach toward real rather than symbolic reductions and thus departed in principle from previous SALT efforts. Second, I believe Brezhnev also was reacting not just to the SALT proposal but in response to Carter's perceived interference in Soviet internal affairs with the human rights campaign and the overall scratchy start with the new American President—who was clearly a very different breed of cat than either Nixon or Ford. I think Brezhnev wanted to give Carter a jolt, let him know that the Soviets could not be jerked around and that they could make life difficult for him.

There is no need here to repeat the subsequent, tortuous history of SALT II. Vance met with Gromyko again on May 18-20, after intensive discussions in Washington with Dobrynin that at times involved him discussing the details of negotiating positions directly with the President. The talks were back on track and focused on narrowing differences, but included reductions—though not as deep as originally proposed by the US side.

The next round of talks in September were expected to be very important, and CIA prepared a paper for the President offering a Soviet perspective on SALT. The Agency restated an old theme at the outset, that the Soviets wanted to secure and, if possible, enlarge their hard-won strategic gains of the past decade and enhance the Soviet military-political position vis-a-vis the United States while simultaneously reliably controlling the risks of nuclear war. CIA said that SALT was important to the Soviets:

- To influence the broad political environment of US-Soviet relations, including braking US arms programs even without an agreement.

- To register and reinforce the co-equal superpower status of the USSR.
- To keep the Soviet Union in the forefront of US foreign policy and security concerns.
- To maintain the strategic nuclear balance as the crux of US-Soviet relations, thus overshadowing Soviet disadvantages in other aspects of the global competition with the United States, that is, economic strength and technological prowess.
- To avert US weapons or force developments that could sharply upset the strategic balance (stopping US ABM efforts was the major case of this kind).
- To protect their strategic gains—they regarded the Interim Agreement and the Valdivostok accord as sanctioning a continued Soviet advantage in heavy ICBMs.
- To constrain future US strategic developments in the areas of likely US advantage at minimum cost to the USSR, that is, cruise missiles.

CIA told the President in this 19 September paper that the Soviets believed the "correlation of forces" was shifting inexorably, if gradually and unevenly, in their favor, but that they still "fear the potential of American technology and industrial capacity in an unconstrained arms race." It went on that "the conception of SALT as a forum in which the two sides conscientiously and jointly attempt to work out 'fair' agreements to stabilize their strategic relationship along mutual assured destruction lines is alien to the Soviet political mind." The paper said that the Soviets' strong reaction to the March US proposals had reflected

"The issue of whether progress in SALT should be linked to Soviet behavior elsewhere came to a head in March 1978."

Soviet irritation at losing earlier negotiating gains, amplified by Soviet fears of new US military technologies contemplated or under development. The Soviets had reacted with a hard line to redirect pressure back onto the American side, thus relieving the political and propaganda disadvantage under which they were temporarily placed and avoiding the internal difficulties of formulating a new position themselves.

CIA predicted that in the September talks the Soviets could be expected to:

- Exploit any openings offered by new US proposals to bring the negotiating framework back closer to the Vladivostok lines.
- Demand stringent cruise missile constraints.
- Try to work out a mutual understanding to extend the SALT I Interim Agreement and reaffirm the ABM Treaty.
- Not produce substantial new proposals of their own as long as they believe the US position on a new negotiating framework remains fluid.

Vance and Gromyko and then Carter and Gromyko met as scheduled in September in Washington, and the sessions gave the negotiations a strong push. The CIA memo had been on the mark in foreshadowing the Soviets' approach and attitude.

Despite the progress in September 1977, the issues were complicated in themselves, and they were further complicated by difficulties in the broader relationship. This, in turn, seriously aggravated the relationship between Vance and Brzezinski. The two had a fundamentally different notion of how to deal with the Soviets. Vance believed that the way to inhibit Soviet assertiveness around the world was to pursue SALT and other negotiations all the more vigorously. He wanted to contain regional problems to the region and not allow them to affect the broader US-Soviet relationship, especially SALT, which he sought to insulate from the continuing confrontations with Moscow. He saw the Soviets acting opportunistically but not as part of any larger plan. He conceded growing public and Congressional concern over Soviet international behavior, but believed most of it was generated by Brzezinski's and NSC staffers' backgrounders to the press—thus, a "self-inflicted" problem.

Brzezinski, who supported SALT throughout, also believed that the United States had to respond aggressively to Soviet interventions and meddling around the world, that the United States had to raise the cost of such adventures to the Soviets. If the Soviets and Cubans sent forces to Ethiopia, the United States should send a carrier task force to hang off the coast. And so on.

The issue of whether progress in SALT should be linked to Soviet behavior elsewhere came to a head in March 1978. In a press briefing with Vice President Mondale on 1 March, Brzezinski said that the United States was not imposing any linkage between Soviet aid to Ethiopia and new limits on strategic weapons, but he added that "linkages may be

imposed by unwarranted exploitation of local conflict for larger international purposes." He went on to observe that tensions in the bilateral relationship and increasing Soviet aggressiveness would jeopardize support for any arms agreement. Brzezinski regarded what he had said as a statement of fact, not a policy recommendation. The press portrayed it differently, and Vance saw it differently.

The next day, at the National Press Club, the President noted that Soviet actions in the Horn of Africa "would make it more difficult to ratify a SALT agreement...." He added, "The two are linked because of actions by the Soviets. We don't initiate the linkage." The same day, 2 March, Vance told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that there was no linkage between SALT and the situation in Ethiopia. This specific disagreement, and the basic difference of outlook it represented, would plague and divide the administration to the very end.

Another year was spent negotiating the significant remaining differences on SALT. During that time, substantial agreement was reached on the Backfire bomber (including a production limit of 30 per year), cruise missiles (range, definition, and numbers), and encoding of telemetry (the signals sent back to Earth by a missile, which were intercepted by both sides and enabled them to ascertain the technical characteristics of the missile). There was further infighting in the administration as Vance pushed for faster completion: "...some of the President's political advisers were worried about the attacks from the right, and were concerned about the SALT head count in the Senate. They recommended

"Turner sought a complete ban on telemetry encryption and refused to accept an agreement worked out by US and Soviet negotiators in Geneva."

that we deliberately slow down the negotiations and toughen our positions.... I disagreed emphatically." Vance also expressed his concerns that the normalization of relations with China (orchestrated for Carter by Brzezinski) had caused the Soviets to go slow on SALT.

CIA also complicated the administration's efforts on SALT by insisting that the treaty address satisfactorily the issue of telemetry encryption. Every missile being flight tested sends signals back to the ground that provide measurements of performance. US intelligence over the years learned not only how to acquire these signals from Soviet missiles, but also how to derive a great deal of information about the capabilities of the missiles from the signals. Over time, however, the Soviets increasingly encoded these signals, thus denying the United States the information it needed to inform our military and to monitor SALT agreements. In the final months of the SALT II negotiations, Turner insisted that US intelligence had to have access to unencoded telemetry signals necessary to monitor Soviet compliance with the treaty provisions. He had the administration over a barrel. Unless the DCI could assure the Senate that US intelligence could adequately monitor Soviet compliance with a SALT treaty, it had no chance of being ratified.

Turner sought a complete ban on telemetry encryption and refused to accept an agreement worked out by US and Soviet negotiators in Geneva. He worried that the Soviets would say they were willing not to encode telemetry relevant to monitoring the treaty provisions but without conceding that any telemetry actually was related to the treaty. The issue was complicated further by the fact that US intelligence had no intention of telling the Soviets which channels we needed to monitor—indeed, talking about telemetry encryption at all to the Soviets back then created consternation in the SIGINT community. Turner made himself very unpopular with Vance and others in the administration in the late winter of 1978–early spring of 1979 as he stuck to his guns on what was needed for adequate verification. At the end of the day, he failed to get all he and the Intelligence Community sought, but he achieved considerably better terms on telemetry encryption than the negotiators had been prepared to demand.

The telemetry issue was made harder by the fact that the Iranian revolution had eliminated US access to its Tacksman monitoring sites in northern Iran and significantly reduced the quality and quantity of telemetry we could collect. Those in the Senate skeptical of the treaty knew this and used it to full advantage. Brown tried to reassure the Senate publicly on 17 April 1979, when he issued a statement that said that regaining our full capabilities would take until 1983-84 but that regaining enough to verify adequately Soviet compliance with SALT II would take about a year. He concluded, "My judgment is that our monitoring will be such as to provide adequate verification as to Soviet compliance with the curbs on

new or modernized weapons." And, in fact, the senior Intelligence Community leadership, the SCC, and the Congress spent an extraordinary amount of time and effort in the spring of 1979 figuring out how to replace Tacksman. The answer was found in China.

Despite these tensions inside the administration, in a brief upturn in the relationship, SALT II was completed in May, setting the stage for a summit and signing ceremony in Vienna, Austria, on 18 June 1979.

In preparation for the summit, CIA provided a great deal of material to the White House and a major briefing on 6 June. Every summit with a Soviet leader has a certain ritual attached to it. Massive briefing books are prepared addressing every conceivable subject that might come up, the background of the issue, and a recommendation on what the President should say. It usually is pretty stilted stuff. Also, for the last 20 years, CIA has prepared a biographic video of the Soviet leader. The videos would not win any Emmys, but they gave a President who had not met his counterpart a sense of the person as an individual—his likes and dislikes from food and liquor to sports and exercise, how he moves and talks, how he deals with subordinates and other leaders. The video footage itself normally is simply from Soviet or other television files but with the narration prepared by CIA from classified sources.

The briefings for Carter were in this pattern, tackling Brezhnev's behavior as a negotiating partner, biographic material and a video, and his objectives at the summit. They also addressed more substantive issues such as the Soviet economy, foreign policy on the eve of the summit, decisionmaking, SALT III objectives, and perceptions of human rights issues in the bilateral relationship.

The CIA experts' briefing for Carter focused first on Brezhnev himself. They said there had been a significant deterioration in his physical condition, that he was now a tired old man, albeit one who could discuss substantive matters in a reasonable and responsible fashion. They told Carter that Brezhnev liked expensive clothes, fast and ostentatious cars (Nixon had given him a new Lincoln and a new Cadillac), thoroughbred horses, stiff drinks, spicy foods, soccer, boar hunting, duck shooting, and beautiful women. The experts said that Brezhnev regarded Carter as inconsistent and that the Soviet leader was clearly put off by the US human rights policy.

On substantive issues, the CIA briefers made the following points:

- As the summit approaches, Brezhnev and the Soviet leadership "can view their position in the world with considerable satisfaction. Part of the Soviet mood is a sense of momentum in the USSR's favor in the Third World."

- "The long-term outlook for the Soviet economy remains bleak." In the short term, according to the briefers, industrial production was nearly stagnant, agriculture troubled, and the near term outlook "gloomy." "The briefers also noted that longer term prospects are worse," with the Soviets facing energy problems, adverse demographic trends, and severe shortages of meat and quality food. In addition, consumer incomes and expectations are poor.

The briefers stated that, "Although the leadership recognizes the need for change, the Soviet system is not designed to make this transition easy. The foundations of the system—directive planning, centralized allocation of resources, administratively set prices, and incentives oriented toward quantitative production goals—discourage innovation and encourage redundancy and waste in the use of resources." The leadership believes it can alleviate the system-based barriers to innovation and managerial efficiency without jeopardizing strong centralized control. "We do not think halfhearted reforms will be any more successful in generating technical progress and production efficiency than they have in the past. Brezhnev and his colleagues must come to grips with hard choices over resource allocation in the very near future."

With respect to Soviet defense spending, the briefers noted that Brezhnev and Kosygin frequently alluded to the weight of the arms burden on the economy and recognized that the high levels of their defense spending impose economic costs. The experts predicted, however, that qualitative factors would push the Soviets' defense spending up in the 1980s as they pursue high-tech solutions to current force deficiencies and future US threats. They concluded by observing to Carter that the importance for the Soviets of SALT II was not in immediate savings but in future cost avoidance: "Now that the Soviets are relatively more comfortable with the strategic balance, they have a strong economic interest in avoiding an acceleration in military spending, especially in the strategic area, where the costs to them are uncertain but probably significantly higher than to us."

This briefing and others like it for a least the preceding year directly addressed the issue of Soviet economic difficulties and the potential impact on defense spending. The Intelligence Community was unusually unified at least in framing the central issue: "The Intelligence Community is largely agreed that the outlook for the Soviet economy over the next five to 10 years is more bleak and the prospects for policy choices more uncertain than at any time since Stalin's death. This leads to the question whether these bleak prospects may induce the leadership to shift substantial resources from projected defense spending to other sectors of the economy, particularly investment."

Briefings carried out, and preparations complete, we headed to Vienna. I went on the advance trip to prepare for the President's visit, and it was a pleasure to return to the city where I had spent several months on the SALT delegation. My major contribution on the advance team was to get added to the President's itinerary a stop by the world-famous chocolate shop, Demel's. Others could worry about security, SALT, and so on, but I clearly had my priorities in order.

The meetings took place in the US and Soviet Embassies in Vienna, alternating between them. As Brzezinski's assistant, I attended several of the meetings and lurked around the periphery of the others, talking to Soviets and picking up tidbits of information. Once an intelligence officer, always an intelligence officer.

I could not get over how feeble Brezhnev was by then. Going in and out of the embassies, two huge—and I mean *huge*—KGB officers held him upright

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under his arms and essentially carried him. Col. Bill Odom, Brzezinski's military assistant and a noted Soviet scholar in his own right, and I were trapped in a narrow walkway at one point and, as the KGB half-carried Brezhnev by, we were nearly steamrollered. At another point, Col. C. G. Fitzgerald, an old Soviet hand, saw Brezhnev's bodyguards literally carry him up the stairs without his feet touching the ground. When Fitzgerald was shouldered aside (as Odom and I had been) on the steps, he began to fall and one guard, still carrying Brezhnev with his left arm, reached out with his free right arm and with a "careful, Mr. Colonel," broke Fitzgerald's fall and lifted him to an upright position.

During the meetings, Gromyko and Defense Minister Ustinov did not hesitate to correct Brezhnev when he misspoke or made a mistake, and he would often turn to them with questions or for them to comment. More than once after finishing a presentation, Brezhnev would turn to Gromyko and ask "Did I do all right?" He was still clearly in charge and they clearly still deferred to him, but he was enormously dependent upon them for support. He was a very infirm old man, with a shuffling walk, slurred speech, and a puffy appearance. A doctor who observed Brezhnev in Vienna said, "He looked eerily like a zombie being wheeled from point to point, with only minimal comprehension of his surroundings." There were occasional flashes of the old Brezhnev when a subject interested him—especially hunting and fishing, teasing us Americans, or interrupting the President to agree or disagree.

I found Defense Minister Ustinov an intimidating presence. He wore his marshal's uniform (he won his marshal's baton in Party infighting, not a real battlefield) the entire time. (His rows of medals reminded me of a cartoon where a man tells a similarly decorated officer caught in the light "Hey, dim your lights!") In his mid-70s, Ustinov had headed the Soviet arms industry for the Party since the middle of World War II. He was very spry and alert. He deferred to no one but Brezhnev. He was accompanied by Chief of the General Staff Marshal Ogarkov, who also wore his uniform and came across as a very tough customer. In their meeting with Harold Brown and General Jones, Ustinov did almost all the talking, was very persistent and tough, and at times almost preemptory with the US side. Bill Odom thought he was the most impressive of the four Politburo members at the summit, and he told me that in the military meeting he thought Ustinov had seized the discussion initiative, pressed his case relentlessly, and showed great command of the issues.

Another Politburo member at the summit was Konstantin Chernenko. He gave the impression of an influential assistant to Brezhnev, which he was, but as having little authority apart from that role. He did not speak at all in the meetings or on any

issue of substance. When he was called aside by Brezhnev, it was to perform some staff-type function. When meetings would conclude and the Soviets would walk down the hall, it would be Brezhnev and Gromyko together, Ustinov and Ogarkov together, and Chernenko—white-haired and florid faced—alone, bringing up the rear. The US participants all agreed that he was not the sort to succeed Brezhnev and that he would quickly disappear with Brezhnev's departure. I shared that view and, based on what I had seen personally of Chernenko in Vienna, when I later returned to CIA, disparaged his chances of succeeding either Brezhnev or his successor, Andropov. I was wrong.

I also met Brezhnev's "national security adviser," a mousy little guy named Aleksandrov-Agentov. He carried little weight on the Soviet side, certainly far less than his American counterpart on our team. He did have a certain sense of humor. At the Vienna opera attended by the leaders, he remarked to one of our delegation, "The smaller the country, the longer the opera." He also commented, "Isn't President Carter from Georgia? We had a leader from Georgia for 30 years (Stalin)."

There is no disputing that every Soviet-American summit was a big deal. The world watched closely, hoping that the two military Goliaths would make progress toward reducing the chances of war and putting some constraints on their arms race and global competition. I helped prepare for some 10 of these meetings over a 17-year period and participated in on-site preparations for half that number. Every President, according to historians, from Franklin D. Roosevelt on, and certainly the five I watched personally, was convinced that if he could only get a Soviet leader alone, "press the flesh" and get to know him, that they could somehow break through the political and ideological blinders. I do not believe that that ever happened. But I do believe that the periodic summits, like arms control, kept the lines of communication open, allowed the leaders to take the personal measure of each other, and probably helped prevent miscalculations. They did not change the course of events in any appreciable way, but they helped keep the lid on.

It is hard to imagine two more different individuals than Carter and Brezhnev. Both were committed to achieving SALT II—it was the only arms control agreement of which I am aware that was sealed with a kiss (between Brezhnev and Carter). But their summit and that agreement was just a brief, pleasant interlude in a four-year relationship marked by confrontations, harsh rhetoric, aggressive opportunism by the Soviets, and, largely behind the scenes, an increasingly tough US reaction. Apart from normalization with China, the Carter administration's military and covert response to the Soviets was overshadowed by the President's decisions on B-1 and the neutron bomb and the rising tide of criticism that he and his colleagues were failing to react to the Soviets at all. Even as SALT II was being completed and then signed, events were under way around the world that would, by the end of 1979, make SALT II irrelevant politically and—somewhat unfairly—forever seal Jimmy Carter's reputation as a weak President.