The Guise of Rollback: When Overthrow Isn’t the End Game

A Comparison of the Truman Administration’s Actions during the Korean War to the Carter Administration’s Response to the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan
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To those who believed in me,
thank you for not giving up on me when I had all but given up on myself.

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Introduction

The formulation of United States foreign policy is often difficult to understand. In fact, the ways in which policymakers arrive at specific policies is not always clear. This paper is an attempt to clarify the role of rollback as a bipartisan foreign policy tactic when used as means to other ends. When the policy of rollback in its application to the Korean War and Soviet invasion of Afghanistan are compared, the ends sought become readily apparent; an increased military presence abroad in order to defend U.S. vital interests was the end game.

At times, an administration may be torn between two opposing policies when attempting to defend the country’s vital interests. This schism in decision-making often results in the overlap of contradictory policies at some point in the administration. More specifically, the Truman administration’s actions in the Korean War, as discussed in Chapter 1, were illustrative of this trend. In the initial stages of the war, a policy of containment was sought. However, once MacArthur’s forces successfully pushed past the 38th parallel, officials in the State Department and the Pentagon recommended that a policy of rollback or “liberation” of North Korea be pursued in its place. When the Chinese intervened and American casualties began to mount during the stalemate, the administration impetuously reverted back to a course of containment. Due to the fact MacArthur was granted limited capabilities in waging the U.S. rollback campaign, failure was eminent.
In Chapter 2, prior to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Carter administration consistently made statements affirming its desire to continue détente between the United States and the USSR. At the same time in Carter’s speeches, nuclear nonproliferation and the prevention of arms transfers regarding the sale of conventional weapons were stressed. Following the Soviet invasion, any chance at détente was effectively dashed. In response, the Carter administration chose to employ a limited policy of rollback. In a departure from his initial policies, the mujahedeen were covertly supplied with conventional weapons to counter the Soviet aggression. Overall, the policy was effective in regard to the Soviets because it kept the bear preoccupied while the Carter administration devised a strategy to deal with the growing problems in Iran.

The balance of power was a primary concern in both scenarios. Following the end of World War II, the sensitivity of postwar collective security was a primary concern. The Truman administration had attempted avoiding involvement in Korea; unfortunately, its vested interests in the postwar economic recovery of Japan were jeopardized by the potential upset of the balance of power in the Far East. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was also disruptive to the balance of power due to the fact the incursion occurred in the strategically indispensable Persian Gulf region. Since the overthrow of the Shah of Iran in early 1979 had led to the dismantling of the United States’ “Twin Pillar” policy in Southwest Asia, the U.S.’ vital interests, i.e. access to Middle Eastern oil, were now at stake in a time when inflation was already battering the post-Vietnam U.S. economy and the USSR was dangerously close to establishing a new sphere of influence in Afghanistan.
The crux of contention in this paper’s argument lies in the fact that rollback is typically exclusively associated with Republican administrations. In Chapters 2 and 3, the Eisenhower and the Reagan administrations’ utilization of policies of rollback Iran and Afghanistan, are discussed. Nevertheless, they were not alone in their implementation of this foreign policy tactic. The Truman and Carter administrations were both bold in their pursuit and application of rollback in Korea and Afghanistan. Although the outcomes of the Korean War and Soviet invasion of Afghanistan varied politically, it was the Truman and Carter administrations’ responses to these events that directly provided the U.S. with the ability to establish a military presence abroad in the Far East and the Persian Gulf region in order to safeguard U.S. vital interests; thus, fulfilling the ultimate end game objective of rollback.
Chapter 1: The Forgotten War’s Duality

The Korean War is often referred to as the “Forgotten War.” It earned the moniker due to the fact it chronologically occurred between the United States’ involvement in its largest war, World War II, and its longest war, Vietnam. Consequently, it has often been overlooked historically. Be that as it may, it does not diminish the importance of the Korean War in the formulation of United States foreign policy. The dual nature of the Korean War stems from the development of two distinctly different foreign policy strategies, containment and rollback, in response to the North Korean invasion of South Korea. Although Truman’s attempt of instituting rollback in North Korea was a failure due to the intervention of Chinese forces, the United States, nonetheless, benefited from the Korean War by securing a permanent military presence in the Far East.

Motives for U.S. Intervention

Following the end of World War II, within the domestic and international front a new political order began to emerge. Although the United States and the USSR worked together during the war, their relationship was tenuous at best and beyond strained following the war.¹ The two countries were always suspicious of one another; the primary reason they united during it was a bond forged by a mutual hatred of the Germans and Japanese. The preexisting political schism between the two subsequently ruptured at the end of the war. As the USSR transitioned from an agrarian society to an industrial,

military power, the Soviets consolidated their power in Eastern Europe and their economic situation vastly improved. In essence, their subjugation of these border countries served their own fiscal gain. Concurrently, despite its overwhelming success in World War II, a wave of paranoia swept across the United States and held the general public captive. The fear driven movement, more commonly referred to as the Second Red Scare, was spurred on by the Soviet development of atomic energy, the Rosenberg trial, the Iron Curtain dividing Eastern Europe from Western Europe, and the Communist revolution in China. The political climate was even satirically portrayed in *1984* by George Orwell. However, in reality the average American genuinely feared the prospect of an impending communist revolution. It was a widely held belief that if the United States turned “Red” its democratic and capitalist institutions would be usurped and an authoritarian ruler and a command economy imposed by force in its place.

In 1950, Joseph McCarthy, a Republican Senator representing the state of Wisconsin, became the public face of the building anticommunist fervor within the United States. On February 9, 1950, McCarthy, with the support of Senator Robert Taft and Senator William Knowland, gave a speech in Wheeling, West Virginia at the McClure Hotel. The speech, one which contained copious amounts of vivid, anticommunist rhetoric, openly accused 57 members of the federal government, who were in charge of formulating United States foreign policy, of being card carrying members of the Communist Party or at the very least, in league with the Communist Party. In subsequent speeches by McCarthy, he “focused his fire on a group of foreign service officers in the State Department’s Far Eastern Division, blaming them for the loss

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of China to the communists.”\(^3\) By the time North Korean forces invaded South Korea on June 25, 1950, the demonization of communism was already firmly on the center stage within the American political arena. The director of the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), J. Edgar Hoover was even overheard saying, “Communism, in reality, is not a political party. It is a way of life- an evil and malignant way of life.”\(^4\) In light of this, McCarthy, Hoover, and the roused American public urgently demanded that something be done in response.

Despite the growing anti-communist fervor, the United States was skeptical about getting involved in the Korean War. Being that the Korean War was the first major conflict following the end of World War II, the question of whether or not the United States should get involved was debated greatly. Isolationists, however, eventually lost the argument and intervention became inevitable. A motivating factor for U.S. involvement in Korea was the Second Red Scare and Senator Joseph McCarthy’s campaign against communism; as both were discussed above. According to Gaddis, “the looming contest [within Korea] was a struggle between good and evil, between freedom and slavery.”\(^5\)

The second motivating factor was the fragile state of postwar collective security within the global framework. As reported by many traditional conservative elites within the federal government, i.e. George F. Kennan and Dean Acheson included, “all interests had become equally vital, that any further shift in the balance of power [between the United States and the Soviet Union], no matter how small, could upset the entire structure of

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\(^5\) Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War*, 71.
From a military-strategic standpoint, Korea itself was not essentially vital. Be that as it may, two countries within a close proximity of Korea were: China and Japan. The former, China, was an ally who became a foe and the latter, Japan, was a former foe in the process of becoming an ally.

When the Japanese unconditionally surrendered to the Allied Powers in August 1945, the United States military began occupying the country. Subsequently, the U.S. thus “began a series of far-reaching reforms designed to build a peaceful and democratic Japan.” The first reform aimed to reduce the power of the Japanese military. While the second reform sought to break up the largest Japanese military cartels. However, when Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalist forces were defeated and he was ousted from mainland China to Taiwan by the victory of Zedong Mao’s Chinese Communist Party, the United States quickly reevaluated its postwar objectives in regard to Japan. Clearly, in order to thwart a revolution like the one that had occurred in mainland China, the United States’ policies in Japan could not remain as they were. The United States felt that permitting Japan to be left to its own devices may have rendered it susceptible to the subjugation of the USSR or Mao’s China; therefore, jeopardizing U.S. investments in postwar Japan. It was at this point that the “Reverse Course” was pursued and implemented. The Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP), General Douglas MacArthur’s plan focused on “strengthening, not punishing” Japan through its “the economic recovery and political

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8 Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War*, 76.
Like much else in their diplomatic relations with one another, the United States and Soviet Union remained divided, this time their division was due to Korea.

In the view of the United States, Japanese security was directly threatened by the looming Soviet presence in North Korea. To complicate matters further, the Chinese and the Japanese had a long standing rivalry as well. At the request of their respective allies, neither the Soviet Union nor the United States would consent to a unified Korea. “On August 15, 1948 the Republic of Korea (R.O.K.) was established, with Syngman Rhee as the first President. On September 9, 1948 the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (D.P.R.K.) was established under Kim Il Sung.” The terse situation building in regard to the two Koreas was muddled further by a speech given by Secretary of State Dean Acheson on January 12, 1950, in which he announced that the “American ‘defensive perimeter’ did not extend to South Korea.” This singular statement was a primary motivator in encouraging Joseph Stalin to finally consent to Kim Il Sung’s long sought after plan to unify Korea by military force. The Soviet Union, Mao’s China, and North Korea interpreted Secretary of State Acheson’s statement to mean that the United States would not intervene on behalf of South Korea if it were militarily invaded. Nevertheless, once the North Koreans began their drive southward, President Truman quickly came to the realization that he faced a situation in the Far East in which the failure to respond would jeopardize American economic stakes in Japan, which was just beginning to recover from the war, and would push America out of the Far East.

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9 U.S. Department of State, “Korean War and Japan’s Recovery.”
12 Gaddis, The Cold War: A New History, 42.
altogether. In consideration of his decision to intervene on behalf of South Korea, Truman emphatically declared in his September 1, 1950 Presidential address, “If aggression were allowed to succeed in Korea, it would be an open invitation to new acts of aggression elsewhere… We cannot hope to maintain our own freedom if freedom elsewhere is wiped out.”

The Process: From Containment to Rollback

Through June 25, 1950 and June 27, 1950, the United Nation’s Security Council passed Resolution 82 and 83. Resolution 82 condemned the invasion of South Korea, whereas, Resolution 83 recommended members of the United Nations furnish assistance to South Korea in order to “repel armed attack and restore international peace and security to the area.” Within that time frame, the USSR, a veto wielding power, was noticeably absent from the UN Security Council meetings. Beginning in January 1950, the USSR began a boycott of the UN Security Council as a form of protest in response to the representation of China’s permanent seat. The fact of the matter was that the Republic of China, the sitting government in Taiwan, not the People’s Republic of China, the presiding government of mainland China, was granted a permanent seat within UN Security Council representing China as a whole. Immediately after Resolution 83 was passed, Truman moved forward with deploying air and sea support to South Korea. By

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achieving the passage of Resolution 82 and Resolution 83, the United States’ “police action” within Korea garnered legitimacy and international support. Contrastly, the resolutions further incited the USSR, Mao’s China, and North Korea to act aggressively.

Following the successful passage of the UN Resolutions, the initial foreign policy objective desired by the United States in its response to the North Korea invasion of South Korea was one of containment. This course was chosen in favor of liberation for fear of directly engaging in a war with the USSR or Mao’s China. In response to the United States’ shift from isolationism to military interventionism post-World War II, U.S. diplomat, George F. Kennan became the foremost advocate of the defensive strategy of containment.\(^6\) He penned the ‘X Article’ of July 1947 as a vehicle for his cause. Under the pseudonym of Mr. X, he addressed the general public’s fears regarding the Soviet Union.\(^7\) Within the text he outlined that the basic goal of the policy of containment was a “long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies.”\(^8\) By employing containment in Korea, postwar collective security within the global framework could be maintained. As long as Korea remained divided as a communistic North and a democratic South, a shift in the balance of power would be prevented; thus, the United States’ vital interests would remain safeguarded and a larger war would be avoided.

National Security Council Paper Number 68 (NSC-68), a more aggressive, operative version of George F. Kennan’s policy of containment, distinctly altered the course of United States foreign policy. Truman ordered the report in order to review and reevaluate United States foreign policy. A collaborative effort between the Department of


Defense, the State Department, and the CIA, the report itself focused more specifically on the United States’ Cold War diplomatic strategy. Essentially restating the obvious, the report made note of the bipolar nature of world power following the end of World War II. The emerging globalized state of affairs dictated a departure from policies of the past; therefore, a vigilant policy of “containing” the expansion of the Soviets was only fitting.\(^{19}\) The April 1950 report recommended the United States rapidly expand its military capability, increase military aid to U.S. allies, and resort to “covert” means when necessary to achieve desired U.S. outcomes in line with U.S. interests. The price of these alleged “improvements” was costly; a reported sum of $50 billion was called for when defense spending at the time only $13 billion. Initially, Truman was not receptive to the idea of levying steep taxes on the American public in a time of peace. Be that as it may, the outbreak of fighting within Korea motivated Truman to sign NSC-68 into law in September 1950. For FY 1951, the defense budget amounted to a whopping $48.2 billion, a 257% increase over the original White House request of $13.5 billion.\(^{20}\) The increased defense spending provided the capital needed to initiate covert operations. Apparently, the fertile soil required for sowing the seeds of selective rollback had effectively been tilled.

On October 7, 1950, the United States helped draft a resolution of the same date within the United Nations which called for “a unified, independent, and democratic government of Korea and for UN (read United States) forces to remain in Korea as long

as necessary to achieve this objective.”21 This was a significant development because during the initial stages of the Korean War, the United States’ role in Korea was referred to solely as a “police action” under the aegis of the United Nations by Truman. Why did the United States’ goals in Korea shift so dramatically in such a short period of time? The answer is fairly simple: “when MacArthur’s troops began to win, the United States changed its policy to rollback communism in North Korea.” 22 The general idea was this: a) according to MacArthur, the U.S. was winning the war and had nearly made it to the Yalu River virtually unopposed, b) NSC-68 had provided the U.S. with ample fiscal opportunities to fund their campaign, and c) the U.S. was potentially able to eradicate the communistic influence from the Korean peninsula if the war was carried out as per MacArthur’s suggestions.

The policy makers who suggested changing the goals of the war were employees of the Pentagon and the State Department. According to Boldenheimer and Gould, “they sought the defeat of North Korea and the unification of Korea under a non-communist government.”23 John M. Allison, director of the State Department’s Office of Northeast Asian Affairs, bluntly stated, “A policy of appeasement [i.e. containment]...I fail to see what the advantage we gain by a compromise with clear moral principles and a shirking of our duty to make clear once and for all that aggression does not pay.”24 His feelings were also shared by General MacArthur who also felt the rollback of North Korea was feasible and would be in the United States’ best interest. Eventually, Allison would regret his choice of words and MacArthur would be dismissed from his command for publically

21 Bodenheimer and Gould, Rollback!: Right-wing Power in U.S. Foreign Policy, 18.
23 Bodenheimer and Gould, Rollback!: Right-wing Power in U.S. Foreign Policy, 18.
advocating the rollback of Mao’s China. In retrospect, the gamble they made was ill-advised because the likelihood of Mao’s troops becoming involved on behalf of the North Koreans was gravely underestimated in the conflict. Mao entered the Korean War as means to achieving a “glorious victory over the American-led United Nations (UN) forces.”25 With that said, the resulting Chinese intervention in late November 1950 vigorously tested the administration’s “strategy of flexible but limited response.”26 The Chinese intervention motivated the United States to haphazardly to return to a policy of containment.27 Truman’s refusal to utilize the United States’ nuclear arsenal as a means of demoralization was a huge factor in limiting the United States’ ability to respond to the Chinese intervention. Without nuclear weapons “liberating” North Korea was abandoned as well as the expansion of the war into China. Instead, stabilization of the front at or near the 38th parallel became the new objective.28 Over the next two years, fighting in Korea amounted to a stalemate that resembled little more than the trench warfare that plagued combatant troops during the World War I.29

**The Consequences of Division**

To the present day, a peace treaty between North Korea and South Korea has yet to be signed. Although an armistice was finally signed on July 27, 1953 in Panmunjom, Korea was an occasion in which the United States got “bogged down in a peripheral war

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with a secondary adversary.”

The three-year-long war had resulted in the boundary between the two Koreas hardly shifting from where it stood in 1950. The signing of the armistice established a 2.5 mile wide, demilitarized zone (DMZ) was established surrounding the 38th parallel; skirmishes presently continue there. Perhaps, possessing a great deal of foresight for conflicts to come, President Syngman Rhee signed the United States-Republic of Korea Mutual Security Treaty in 1953. The treaty secured long-term economic and military aid to rebuild South Korea’s economy and military following the Korean War. The treaty also stipulated the protection of South Korea against external acts of aggression. According to President Dwight D. Eisenhower, “the United States could ‘do all sorts of things to suggest…that we might very well be prepared to leave Korea, but the truth of the matter was, of course, that we couldn’t actually leave.”

By obtaining a bilateral security treaty, and a commitment from Washington to keep American troops in South Korea for as long as they were needed to ensure that country’s security, Rhee effectively ensured South Korea’s security. As Rhee gradually drifted away from his democratic roots the United States ironically enough was defending an authoritarian regime against retribution from a communistic one. In the United States’ opinion, if Rhee succumbed to political failure South Korea could be potentially absorbed by North Korea and the United States’ presence in the Far East eliminated. Essentially, Rhee had more or less blackmailed the United States for its protection.

Despite being indefinitely committed to “containing” communism from creeping past the 38th parallel, the security treaty did serve U.S. interests as well. By remaining in South Korea in the aftermath of the war, the United States expanded the perimeter of its vital strategic interests. Our expanded vital strategic interests included but were not limited to the following: South Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines. Additionally, much to Moscow’s disappointment the relationship between the United States and Japan was made even stronger economically following the Korean War. As recently as 1986, Japan still benefited immensely from South Korea’s and the United States’ ample expenditures on defense. Currently, Japan has been experiencing a host of problems due to a major earthquake and tsunami; however, the United States will likely be instrumental in helping the ravaged country regain its clout much like it did following its demise in World War II.

The greatest benefit the United States received from its participation in the Korean War was the expansion of its vital strategic interests in the Far East by the utilization and establishment of military bases abroad. One base in particular, the United States Army Garrison- Yongsan (USAG-Y) located in Seoul, South Korea, was particularly beneficial for the United States presence in the Far East. Yongsan is currently home to the headquarters for the United States military presence in Korea, also known as the United States Forces Korea (USFK), as well as the headquarters for the Eighth United States Army and Installation Management Command Korea Region.

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37 Brzezinski, *Game Plan: How to Conduct the U.S.-Soviet Contest*, 212.
There are 28,500 U.S. troops stationed within South Korea and the South Korean government has encouraged the United States to maintain its presence there despite the waxing and waning of public opinion. The reason the South Korean government wants the United States to stay is that it fears the possibility of North Korea or China militarily imposing their will. From 1910-1945, the Yongsan base was originally home to the Imperial Japanese Army; therefore, South Korean also latently fears Japan remilitarizing. During World War II, the U.S. became the primary power within the Far East by curbing the power of Japan and has remained a major player ever since. Although the U.S. Department of State suggests the U.S. has a receding role in South Korea, the United States is unlikely to depart from the peninsula anytime soon due to its pivotal role in the maintenance of Far East stability.
Chapter 2: Soviet Adventurism in Afghanistan

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 represented a radical departure from the policies of the USSR at the time. It was the first time Red Army troops had been deployed outside of Eastern Europe since World War II. The objective of the USSR in its invasion of Afghanistan was to expand the Soviet sphere of influence, much like they had in Czechoslovakia in 1948, by establishing a Soviet puppet government. The USSR’s decision to invade was made after U.S.-Iranian relations soured following the overthrow of the Shah of Iran. Consequently, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan effectively crippled the policy of détente between the U.S. and the USSR. The Carter administration responded to the invasion in two specific ways. As an initial response they issued the Carter Doctrine; a document which threatened direct military intervention if U.S. “vital interests” were compromised in the Persian Gulf. Their secondary response was the extension of existing programs and increased aid expenditures for the mujahedeen in order to roll back the Communist regime in Kabul. Beyond Afghanistan, the long term goal of the Carter administration in the Persian Gulf region was the establishment of the Persian Gulf Regional Security Framework. The collaborative effort, led to a permanent U.S. military presence in the Persian Gulf region and the preservation of the United States’ vital interests.

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The Balance of Power is Destabilized When A Pillar Falls

From 1941-1953, the United States was engaged in two major wars, World War II and Korea. Following the signing of the armistice in Korea, it became clear to the Eisenhower administration that the general American public was fatigued by living in a seemingly constant state of war for the past twelve years. Although there was still a desire to export democracy abroad to counter the menacing Soviet influence, the general American public was not interested in becoming engaged in another conflict anytime soon. An alternative to direct American intervention was the implementation of the selective rollback policy laid out by NSC-68. It provided the Eisenhower administration with the ability to utilize covert interventions and alliances with local elites in order to topple moderate left-wing governments in place of deploying U.S. military forces.\(^42\) Iran had become a target for selective rollback in 1951 when Iranian Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh pushed for the nationalization of the concessions of British owned Anglo Iranian Oil Company (AIOC).\(^43\) From the viewpoint of the United States, Mossadegh’s left leaning political views had the potential of playing into Soviet interests; therefore, it became imperative that he was immediately removed from his post. Through the collaboration of President Eisenhower and Prime Minister Churchill, the United States decided it was in their best interests to support the British plan which called for the overthrow of the democratically elected Iranian government. While it did have its share of tactical snafus, Operation AJAX’s end result pleased the CIA. To the delight of the


\(^{43}\) Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*, 121.
U.S. and British, the amenable Mohammed Reza Pahlavi was installed as the leader of in the Iranian government and the incendiary Mossadegh was effectively eradicated. In essence, Iran had been cloistered from Soviet influence and the vital interests of the United States and Britain ensured.

In the 1960’s, the United States again found itself immersed in another war in the Far East. This time though the battle was being waged in Vietnam. Due to the fact the war effectively bogged down the U.S. in Southeast Asia once more, the U.S. faced a strategic dilemma in defending the Persian Gulf region. In lieu of direct intervention, the United States smartly pursued a “Twin Pillar Policy.” The policy utilized the spending capability of regional allies, Saudi Arabia and Iran. In the 1970’s they were encouraged to spend billions of dollars to build up their respective military arsenals. Under the reign of the Shah Iran embraced the program wholeheartedly and largely outspent Saudi Arabia on its armament. However, by 1979 the world had become increasingly chaotic. Upheaval and shock were the cardinal signs of the growing instability in the Latin America and the Persian Gulf region. To make matters worse for the United States, in January of that year, the Shah had abdicated his throne.44 By February, an Islamic Revolution led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini replaced the Shah’s authoritarian government with an Islamic Republic. The absence of the Shah effectively destabilized one of the principle actors in the United States’ “Twin Pillar Policy,” therefore the balance of power within the Persian Gulf region was indefinitely upset.

It soon became increasingly apparent that the former client, Iran, under the newly formed Islamic Republic was antagonistic to its former patron, the United States. In fact,

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Ayatollah Khomeini had a special disdain for the United States. When he mentioned the United States in his rhetorically charged speeches his dysphemism of choice was “the Great Satan.” On November 4, 1979, his disdain materialized in a concrete way when the American Embassy in Tehran was overrun by a group of Islamic students and militants and 52 Americans were taken hostage. The hostages were initially supposed to be held only for a short period of time; in spite of that, popular support among the general Iranian public and Khomeini prolonged the hostages’ captivity. Those responsible for the takeover claimed that the hostages were being held for a myriad of grievances. The first stemmed from the fact that Shah was permitted to enter the U.S. to receive medical treatment for cancer at the Mayo Clinic in October 1979. The leaders of the Islamic Republic had demanded that the Shah be turned over to Khomeini’s regime so he could be tried for the crimes he committed and perpetuated while he was ruling Iran. The Carter administration adamantly refused but quietly asked the Shah to leave the U.S. for fear of retribution on the part of the Iranian government. The second grievance was twofold, resentment originating from the pivotal role the U.S. played in the overthrow of Prime Minister Mossadegh in the 1953 coup d’état and the prolonged imposition of the Shah as de facto leader of Iran. Their last grievance was Executive Order 12170 issued by President Carter on November 14, 1979. The Executive Order, which froze Iranian government assets within the U.S., was in fact designed as a response to demonstrate American displeasure with the hostage crisis itself. Curiously enough, the Executive Order was being cited as a justification after the fact for holding the hostages.

As it became more and more apparent that the hostage crisis was not going to be resolved quickly, domestic pressure mounted steadily with each passing day. Walter
Cronkite’s CBS News broadcast began nightly with a caption stating how many days the hostages had been in captivity. The reoccurring reminder amplified the general American public’s growing discontent with the situation.\textsuperscript{45} Since the United States and Iran were embroiled in a diplomatic stalemate due to the hostage crisis, a window of opportunity was now open for the USSR in the Persian Gulf region. It was only a matter of time before they took advantage of the United States’ fractured security framework.

Opportunity began knocking for the Soviet Union on April 27, 1978 in the form of a Marxist coup d’état in Afghanistan. To the knowledge of officials in the U.S. government, the leadership in Moscow was not responsible for orchestrating the overthrow and murder of Mohammed Daoud Khan; nonetheless, it was concerned about the loss of Afghanistan as a neutral, buffer state which was receptive to its vital interests.\textsuperscript{46} After the coup, the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan was established by the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (P.D.P.A.). The initial leadership consisted of President/Prime Minister Nur Mohammed Taraki, Senior Deputy Prime Minister Babrak Karmal, and Foreign Minister Hafizullah Amin.\textsuperscript{47} By July 1978, however, intraparty conflict led to Karmal being dispatched from his post to one in Eastern bloc as an ambassador and Amin ascending to a position of increasing power. A memo from National Security Council staffer Thomas Thornton to National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski analogized the leadership of Afghanistan by citing Taraki was akin

to Lenin whereas Amin was a “Stalin to the drama.”\(^{48}\) His characterization of the communistic Afghanis was spot on.

The successive influx of Soviet military and civilian advisors suggested internal strife within Afghanistan and a failure on the part of Taraki to firmly consolidate the government’s leadership from the top down.\(^{49}\) Over the course of 1978 and 1979, Afghanistan effectively became a Soviet satellite.\(^{50}\) As a security measure, the Soviet Union signed a Treaty of Friendship with Afghanistan on December 5, 1978 which ensured its vital interests. The most important section of the treaty, Article 4, permitted Soviet intervention in the event that Afghanistan needed protection from armed intervention. To the Soviet Union’s dismay, in September 1979, their plans in Afghanistan were derailed. Strongman Amin had taken it upon himself to have Afghan President Taraki assassinated only days after Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev had met with and publicly endorsed him.\(^{51}\) Although Soviet troop mobilization was not observed by U.S. intelligence until late November, Amin was the primary reason the Soviets decided to invade Afghanistan that December.\(^{52}\) In an attempt to save face, the Soviets had made an attempt to back Amin after he assassinated Taraki; however, his political progress was dissatisfying to the Soviet leadership. Amin’s program of radical socialism had stunted the growth of his political base; that coupled with the brutal oppression of his


people had served to successfully antagonize the tribal groups within Afghani society.\footnote{Article, Summer 1980, The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan: The Difficulty of Knowing Where to Stop, “Afghanistan, 5/80-1/81” folder, Box 2, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Jimmy Carter Library.}

In a letter to Carter, Brezhnev masked the USSR’s true intentions for invading Afghanistan by stating that the Red Army was \textit{asked} by Amin to intervene on December 26, 1979.\footnote{Memo, Thomas Thornton to Zbigniew Brzezinski, U.S.-Pakistan Defense Agreement, “Southwest Asia: Persian Gulf- 12/26/79-1/4/80” folder, Box 17, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Jimmy Carter Library.} Brezhnev referenced The Treaty of Friendship between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan as a justification for the Soviet invasion. The story itself would have actually been believable if Amin had not been assassinated the day \textit{after} Soviet forces arrived in Afghanistan. It was the Soviet prerogative to install Karmal as Afghanistan’s new president in order to manipulate the puppet government from Kabul. The Soviets had not initially anticipated a prolonged invasion to suppress the tribal insurrection; they figured the military operations would conclude within a few weeks at the most and then they could focus their attention on Iran.

The USSR had always considered the northern portions of Afghanistan and Iran within its security zone.\footnote{Article, Summer 1980, The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan: The Difficulty of Knowing Where to Stop, “Afghanistan, 5/80-1/81” folder, Box 2, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Jimmy Carter Library.} While Khomeini was not as vehement in his condemnation of the USSR, his regime was still hostile to the Soviets. After the Shah fell, Khomeini’s regime had effectively cut off the natural gas being supplied to the USSR from Iran and cancelled plans for the construction of a second pipeline to the USSR in Iran.\footnote{Article, Summer 1980, The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan: The Difficulty of Knowing Where to Stop, “Afghanistan, 5/80-1/81” folder, Box 2, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Jimmy Carter Library.} More than likely far from a coincidence, the Soviets began their troop mobilization after the American Embassy in Tehran had been seized. Within the Politburo, it is possible that military intervention in Iran on behalf of the Americans was a concern. Nonetheless, it appears that its members assumed the detrimental effects the USSR would incur from
invading Afghanistan would be minor in comparison to the gains it could potentially receive: a secure, warm water port in the Indian Ocean and the control of the immense oil wealth in the Persian Gulf region.\textsuperscript{57}

\section*{Divergent Personalities}

\textbf{Carter: A Contradictory Individual}

During his presidential campaign in 1976, Jimmy Carter ran a campaign that championed him as a “political outsider.” His toothy grin and Southern drawl put the American public at ease following the tumultuous Watergate scandal. On the campaign trail, peanuts became an iconic representation of Jimmy Carter. Symbolically, the peanut and Carter were one in the same in origin. In the early 1920’s, peanuts were a major factor in Georgia’s farming industry. It was in Plains, Georgia, only a short time before the precipitous collapse that was the Great Depression, on October 1, 1924, that Jimmy Carter was born. The paternal branch of Carter’s family descended from a long line of landowning, southern farmers who openly embraced the Baptist faith and segregation.\textsuperscript{58} By trade, Carter’s father, James Earl Carter, Sr., was a businessman and farmer who dabbled in local politics. More often than not, Carter’s father appeared stoic and unimpressed with his son’s accomplishments. As stated by Zelizer, “some observers blamed his father’s tough demeanor for instilling two traits in Jimmy: his propensity to


exaggerate accomplishments, which they said came from a desire to please his father, and his ability to smile in almost any situation, which he used to mask anger toward his dad.” Carter’s father pushed him to succeed by emphasizing his inadequacies; the end result was Carter consistently striving to please his him.

On the other hand, Carter’s mother’s disposition was atypical in relation to the cultural norms of the time. Due to the fact that she was trained as a registered nurse, she was accustomed to working with individuals from all walks of life. Mrs. Carter, affectionately referred to as Ms. Lillian, had the ability to look beyond the shade of an individual’s skin tone at a time when the world was anything but color blind. On the Carter family farm in Archery, Georgia, a large number of African-Americans sharecroppers worked the land beside the Carters, growing cotton, corn, and peanuts. It was in this environment that Carter befriended some of his closest friends who just happened to be African American. Carter remained close with his African American friends in high school and beyond while many individuals in a similar position severed those ties. In an abstract sense, his mother’s universal compassion influenced his desire to extend human rights domestically and internationally in his presidential years.

Due to the fact military careers were revered in the South and free in cost, Carter’s father pushed him to pursue his higher education through West Point or Annapolis. Carter chose to apply to Annapolis because an uncle he admired had once been in the Navy. There was one man in particular who Carter encountered in his naval career that perhaps influenced him more than his father. That man was Admiral Hyman

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59 Zelizer, Jimmy Carter, 7.
60 Zelizer, Jimmy Carter, 7.
61 Zelizer, Jimmy Carter, 8.
62 Zelizer, Jimmy Carter, 27.
Rickover. Rickover, initially passed over for Admiral not once but twice, was a revolutionary figure who believed nuclear power could be harnessed for constructive purposes beyond warmongering. In 1952, Carter applied for a job to work with the flamboyant and outspoken Rickover on a new nuclear submarine program. In May 1977, during a candid conversation between the two of them, Rickover had told Carter that he wished nuclear power had never been discovered since it led to its application in destructive weapons. It could be suggested that comments like these by Rickover may have reinforced Carter’s initial aim of limiting nuclear proliferation. On the other end of the spectrum, his interest in expanding the military capability of the United States may have also stemmed from having been a submarine officer in the Pacific arena during the Korean War. At any rate, Carter’s military career was cut short when his father became ill and died from pancreatic cancer.

It can be deduced that the polar nature of his parents’ respective personalities created a schism within Carter in his adult life that led him to contradict himself in his political career. One speech in particular highlighted the humanitarian influence of his mother and additionally included traces of Rickover’s cautionary advice toward nuclear technology. The speech was delivered on May 22, 1977, at the Commencement Exercises of the University of Notre Dame. Within the text, Carter acknowledged his belief in détente with the Soviet Union as a means towards peace. He also made note of his desire to limit arms within the Indian Ocean area and the worldwide spread of conventional weapons. He said with conviction, “We will, as a matter of national policy now in our country, seek to reduce the annual dollar volume of arms sales, to restrict the transfer of

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63 Zelizer, Jimmy Carter, 11.
64 Carter, White House Diary, 58.
advanced weapons, and to reduce the extent of our coproduction arrangements about weapons with foreign states. And just as important, we are trying to get other nations, both free and otherwise, to join us in this effort.”

The comments were similar to those made in his inaugural address, in which he declared his administration wished to move “one step toward our ultimate goal— the elimination of all nuclear weapons from this earth.” His comments also seemed to go in line with his 1976 campaign pledge to cut the defense budget.

While there is absolutely nothing wrong with the President making strides towards peace, the actions of Carter’s administration suggest otherwise. In actuality by 1977, plans were already made to increase defense expenditures in an effort to modernize the U.S. military since it had fallen into a state of disrepair following the Vietnam War. The concept of a Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) was also articulated in 1977. Furthermore, at the behest of a National Security Council recommendation, the RDF was created in order for U.S. strength to be demonstrated in areas where permanent forces were not stationed. By 1978, overall military expenditures rose in response to these policy objectives. Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, the President’s nuclear non-proliferation and arms restraint policies where officially scrapped.

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66 Jimmy Carter, “University of Notre Dame Address at Commencement Exercises” (lecture, Notre Dame University, Notre Dame, IN, May 27, 1977).
67 Gardner, A Covenant With Power: America and World Order from Wilson to Reagan, 212.
68 Gardner, A Covenant With Power: America and World Order from Wilson to Reagan, 212.
71 Brzezinski, Game Plan: How to Conduct the U.S.-Soviet Contest, 174.
in order to counter Moscow’s growing aggression. According to Carter, “Aggression unopposed becomes a contagious disease.” Carter’s adoptive Machiavellian tone, although strikingly similar to Truman’s in 1950, would have been more warmly received by the American public had his policies not appeared contradictory to his word.

**A Cold Warrior: Brzezinski**

Zbigniew Brzezinski was largely a product of his environment. He was born in Warsaw, Poland on March 28, 1928. Prior to his birth, his father, Tadeusz Brzezinski, was a volunteer in the Polish independence movement from 1918-1920. In fact, he had directly fought against Soviet forces in the battle of Lvov during the final Warsaw campaign of 1920. Due to his father’s diplomatic obligations, Brzezinski was forced to move frequently as a youth. A young Brzezinski witnessed Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party’s ascendance to power and Joseph Stalin’s Great Purge in Soviet Ukraine firsthand. In 1938, Brzezinski’s father was reassigned outside of Europe to Montreal, Canada. Much to the Brzezinskis’ dismay, on August 23, 1939, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, officially titled the Treaty of Non-Aggression between Germany and the Soviet Union, was signed. The nonaggression pact stipulated the neutrality of the other country in the event either nation was attacked by a third party. For Poles like the Brezezinskis, the pact was heartbreaking; it effectively assigned a protocol for the division Northern

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and Eastern Europe into German and Soviet spheres of influence. By September 1939, each country invaded their respective sides of Poland and the country lay divided between them. The action, on the Soviet Union’s part, was reminiscent of the 18th century partitions enforced by tsarist Russia and stirred up anti-Soviet sentiment from the Polish-Soviet War. Although fascism was defeated in World War II, its demise led to a communist government being installed in Poland. The negotiations that occurred at the Potsdam Conference in 1945 and the fraudulent elections held in Poland in 1947, guaranteed Poland’s transformation into a Soviet satellite. The subjugation of Poland to USSR was largely why the Brzezinskis did not return to Poland following the end of the war.

Brzezinski’s experience as a Pole had a lasting impact in his professional life. It was no surprise that Brzezinski’s career as an academic would explore his deep seeded animosity towards the Soviet Union. His Polish ethnicity and personal experiences that led up to and followed World War II, led him to view the Soviet Union as expansionist and aggressive. As stated by Brzezinski following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, “As I mentioned to you a week or so ago, we are now facing a regional crisis. Both Iran and Afghanistan are in turmoil, and Pakistan is both unstable internally and extremely apprehensive externally. If the Soviets succeed in Afghanistan, and if Pakistan acquiesces, the age-long dream of Moscow to have direct access to the Indian Ocean will have been fulfilled.”

Being that Brzezinski was an Expansionist Soviet Empire Theorist (ExSET), his claims may have seemed overstated. On March 17, 1979, however, during a crisis session of the Politburo, Yuri Andropov was quoted as saying, “Bearing in mind

that we will be labeled as an aggressor, but in spite of that under no circumstances can we lose Afghanistan.”

Andropov’s comments play into Brzezinski’s theories regarding the Soviet Union perfectly. Gaddis, who was critical of Brzezinski’s performance as National Security Advisor within the Carter administration, remarked that despite the fact Brzezinski had an academic background his writings contained no depth, consistency, or clarity. In the archival documents at the Jimmy Carter Library which related to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, it appears that Gaddis may have erred. Brzezinski’s policy formulations in response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan were consistent. In fact, he even recommended that the administration learn to speak with a consistent voice in order to keep the public well-informed and prevent alienating them further.

During a Special Coordination Committee Meeting on January 9, 1980, Brzezinski again noted the regional stability of the Persian Gulf was the administration’s primary concern following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; his comments were nearly identical to the memo he prepared for the President on December 26, 1979.

**The Covenant: Persian Gulf Regional Security Framework**

During President Nixon’s tenure in office, the duties of the National Security Advisor (NSA) were expanded immensely under Henry Kissinger. The position of NSA

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81 Special Coordination Committee Meeting, 1/9/80, Iran/Pakistan, “Meetings--SCC 247: 1/9/80” folder, Box 31, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Jimmy Carter Library.
went from one in which the advisor was merely a policy coordinator that presented policy options to the president to an individual who advised the president on various policy choices.\textsuperscript{82} Brzezinski described the transition from his own experience stating, “Far from limiting the president’s power, the [Nation Security Council] NSC [under my tutelage] became the body within which presidential policy -combining the president’s constitutional responsibility for the conduct of foreign affairs with his discretionary authority as commander in chief- was devised through consultations with a small group of advisors.”\textsuperscript{83} Brzezinski’s claims were apparently accurate. According to Carter, Brzezinski was effectively his aide-de-camp, so to speak, when it came to making policy. Carter recalled in his memoirs, “I would see him several times during the day at different hours, and in times of crisis he was either at my side or coordinating meetings with my Cabinet officers and other leaders in the Situation Room…”\textsuperscript{84} In fact, during his presidential campaign in 1976, Carter admitted to avidly studying Brzezinski’s position papers on foreign affairs while he developed answers to questions he was asked during debates.\textsuperscript{85} Over the course of Carter’s presidency, the twosome had effectively transferred the final decision making capacity on basic foreign policy from the State Department to the Oval Office.\textsuperscript{86} It was in this context that the Persian Gulf Regional Security Framework was conceptualized as a cohesive, direct strategy that would counter the effects of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan by protecting the United States’ vital interests in the Persian Gulf region.\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{84} Carter, \textit{Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President}, 51.
\textsuperscript{85} Carter, \textit{Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President}, 52.
\textsuperscript{86} Carter, \textit{Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President}, 52.
In order for the Persian Gulf Regional Security Framework to be executed it needed an avenue to come into existence. In a memo dated January 1, 1980, Brzezinski urged Carter to develop an avenue and to do it quickly. During his State of the Union address on January 23, 1980, Carter delivered his response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan: the Carter Doctrine. It contained the United States’ basic assessment of Soviet motives and actions in Afghanistan as well as a description of how the United States intended to meet the Soviet threat. Carter did not mince his words when he presented the new U.S. policy: “Let our position be absolutely clear: 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.” The Persian Gulf region was and still remains an area of vital interest to the United States because it contains more than two-thirds of the world’s exportable oil. In a report from the Special Coordination Committee dated March 25, 1980, the threat was assessed further; “the effect of the Soviet control of those resources [i.e. oil], either through overt military action or by internal subversion or political intimidation, would destroy the freemarket economies and dissolve out alliances in Europe and in East Asia.”

Truth be told, in early 1980 direct military intervention was not the preferred option for dealing with the Soviets for several reasons. The first, Vietnam Syndrome, was

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89 Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 1/15/80, SCC on Southwest Asia and the Persian Gulf, “Meetings—250: 1/14/80” folder, Box 31, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Jimmy Carter Library.
90 Memo, 2/12/80, The U.S. Response to Afghanistan, “Afghanistan, 2/80” folder, Box 1, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Jimmy Carter Library.
generated by a cultural backlash in response to the arduous length and tragic consequences of the Vietnam War. The negative details surrounding the war had remained firmly engrained in the psyche of the American people. There was a general unwillingness on behalf of the American people to commit American troops to another foreign war which did not have a perceivable benefit.\textsuperscript{92} The second reason was OPEC price increases from 1979-1980. They had effectively cut the United States’ GNP growth by 3\% and added 5.5\% to the inflation rate.\textsuperscript{93} The soaring costs made military buildup difficult. Therefore, in a Special Coordination Committee Report dated March 25, 1980, it was concluded that “any credible and coherent Western policy must move beyond Western protection of the vulnerable Gulf states to securing assured oil access at prices which do not undermine our very ability to protect it.”\textsuperscript{94} The last reason the Carter administration avoided direct military intervention was the possibility of engaging in a direct conflict with the Soviet troops and potentially inciting World War III. Allegedly, in Carter’s opinion, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan constituted “the most serious threat to world peace since the Second World War.”\textsuperscript{95} Rather than risk the loss of American lives, aggravating the rate of inflation further, jeopardizing access to Middle Eastern oil, or becoming engaged in a global war, the Carter administration pursued a policy of selective rollback. In this incarnation of rollback, a propaganda campaign that attacked the atheistic nature of the communist system was employed jointly with a limited covert action campaign that provided the mujahedeen with Soviet made weapons to counter the

\textsuperscript{92} Bodenheimer and Gould, \textit{Rollback!}, 8.
\textsuperscript{93} Carter, \textit{White House Diary}, 2010, 389.
\textsuperscript{95} Memo, 2/12/80, The U.S. Response to Afghanistan, “Afghanistan, 2/80” folder, Box 1, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Jimmy Carter Library.
invading Soviet forces.\textsuperscript{96} Like in Korea, the United Nations was used strategically by the United States to further its policy goals. In a letter titled “The Neutralization of Afghanistan: Prospects and Policy,” it was articulated that “the UN…can keep the issue [of neutralization] alive and can apply political pressure on the Soviets by drawing attention to their activities inside Afghanistan and their diplomatic isolation.”\textsuperscript{97} At a minimum, the Carter administration sought to contain the Soviet presence in Afghanistan if selective rollback could not be achieved.\textsuperscript{98}

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan did not come to a conclusive end during Carter’s presidency; yet, the Carter administration successfully achieved their policy objectives of implementing the Persian Gulf Regional Security Framework. The original plan focused on four components: military issues, foreign policy issues, economic issues, and intelligenes issues.\textsuperscript{99} For the purposes of this paper, the military objectives and economic objectives were the most critical factors in deciding on a suitable policy in response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The military objectives included a more effective command structure for the region, ground force exercises in the region, more basing access, and institutionalized security ties with Saudi Arabia. As for the economic objectives, they encompassed a larger economic and security assistance commitment by the U.S. and its allies, Pakistan, Egypt, and Turkey. More influence over Saudi aid in the region and progress on the energy conservation front and stability in the oil market were


also sought. In a memo dated August 29, 1980, the achievements of the administration were highlighted. As for the military components, the command arrangements had yet to be worked out by the Department of Defense (DoD); a comprehensive RDF exercise in the region with the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) was approved by Egypt for November 1980; basing rights were secured in Oman, Kenya, and Somalia; and lastly, basing rights and overbuilding were discussed with Saudi Arabia. The Saudis also agreed to the establishment of a Joint Military Commission (JMC). As for the economic issues, the oil outlook had improved, oil prices were more stable, and consumption in the West had decreased.

In regard to the long term prospective, Diego Garcia represented the seminal nature of the U.S. approach to facilities within the region. The use of Diego Garcia for the defense needs of the United States was formalized in an agreement signed between the governments of the United Kingdom and the United States in 1966. Accordingly, all U.S. civilian and military personnel who reside on the island are governed by British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) law. BIOT laws are not the same as those found in the United States. Therefore, the operating environment of Diego Garcia has similar jurisdictional qualities to that of Guantanamo Bay (GitMo). The Carter administration reanalyzed their use of Diego Garcia once the Shah of Iran was overthrown in 1979. During a Special Coordination Committee meeting on January 17, 1980, two issues were

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raised by Secretary of Defense Brown in regard to the present use and longer term construction of Diego Garcia.\footnote{103} Secretary of Defense for Policy, R.W. Komer, argued in favor of its expansion for a cost of $500 million over the next five years. Eventually, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) secured funding for FY 1982 and beyond; the construction was completed in 1986 under the Reagan administration.\footnote{104} As a result of the extensive construction program implemented under the Carter administration, Diego Garcia became the most dramatic military build-up of any area since the Vietnam War. Strategically, Diego Garcia’s location and extensive array of facilities continue to reinforce the stability of the Persian Gulf Regional Security Framework established by the Carter administration. It has effectively ensured the security of the United States’ vital interests in the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea.\footnote{105}

\footnotetext[103]{103} Special Coordination Committee Meeting, 1/17/80, SCC Meeting on Southwest Asia and the Persian Gulf, “Meetings--254: 1/17/80” folder, Box 32, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Jimmy Carter Library.

\footnotetext[104]{104} Memo, William E. Odom to Thomas Thornton, 1/18/80, Followup Actions on the SCC on Southwest Asia- Thursday, January 17, “Meetings--254: 1/17/80” folder, Box 32, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Jimmy Carter Library.

Chapter 3: Partisan Misconceptions

Over the past 50 years, American politics have gradually become more partisan in nature. There is less cooperation in Congress than ever as Democrats and Republicans continue to vote down the line rather than work towards reaching compromises together. It is within this operating environment that certain misconceptions have been bred as to what characteristics are indicative of Democrats and Republicans. As one could imagine, stereotypes have abounded. In the case of rollback, the general American public has consistently associated the policy with Republicans due to their propensity to be avid supporters of the military. While Ronald Reagan, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and George W. Bush are all guilty of pursing policies of rollback in some capacity, their respective Democratic counterparts, Jimmy Carter, Harry S. Truman, and Bill Clinton, are guilty of initiating policies of rollback as well. Despite the fact that rollback is actually a bipartisan foreign policy tactic, the myth continues to be perpetuated that it is not.

The Republican Application of Rollback

In 1952, Dwight D. Eisenhower made the decision to run for President of the United States of America on the Republican ticket. The incumbent, Truman, a Democrat, had decided not to seek reelection due to a significant decline in his popularity following the United States’ prolonged engagement in the Korean War. The Communist revolution in China and the brief recession only added to the unfavorable opinion of Truman. It is important to note that the election was held against the backdrop of the Second Red Scare
and Senator Joseph McCarthy’s “witch hunt” for communists within the federal
government. McCarthy had criticized Truman in the media by referring to his
administration as merely a continuation of the Democrats’ “twenty-years of tyranny.”
Since Eisenhower and McCarthy were both members of the Republican Party and
McCarthy had a high approval rating in his home state of Wisconsin, Eisenhower was
obliged to invite McCarthy to accompany him on the campaign trail. While Eisenhower
was concerned with the negative effects a communist infiltration within the federal
government posed, he did not agree with McCarthy’s methods. In McCarthy’s view,
Democrats were solely responsible for the “loss” of China. John Foster Dulles, who
campaigned for Eisenhower, only fueled the political fire by referring to containment as
an “evil doctrine” that led to the fall of China to the communists.\footnote{Bodenheimer and Gould, \textit{Rollback!: Right-wing Power in U.S. Foreign Policy}, 18.}
The 1952 Republican platform attacked the policy of containment as well; it claimed that containment was a
“negative, futile and immoral policy” which “abandoned countless human beings to a
despotism and godless terrorism.”\footnote{Bodenheimer and Gould, \textit{Rollback!: Right-wing Power in U.S. Foreign Policy}, 18.} After Eisenhower was elected, his Secretary of State
Dulles, continued to make pro-rollback statements. In one specific instance he made a
statement that equated communism to slavery and vowed American support in order to
see its eradication through.\footnote{Bodenheimer and Gould, \textit{Rollback!: Right-wing Power in U.S. Foreign Policy}, 19.}

It was assumed that Eisenhower would pursue a policy of rollback once in office.
The comments made during his campaign coupled with the overthrow of the
democratically elected government of Iranian Prime Minister Mossadegh in August 1953
perpetuated this belief. Although selective rollback had been employed in Iran, it was not
the policy that the Eisenhower administration carried out in the long term. On October
30, 1953, three months after the armistice had been signed in Korea, the National Security Council produced National Security Council Paper 162 (NSC-162).\textsuperscript{109} The document set the United States on a course that embraced a policy of containment with potential use of nuclear threat (“massive attack”) to deter communist aggression. The policy was an effort by Eisenhower to balance the military commitments of the United States with the nation’s financial resources; strategic nuclear weapons would serve as an equalizing factor if one of those faltered. By the end of 1953, in an attempt to discredit Eisenhower administration, McCarthy amended his infamous “twenty years of treason” catchphrase to “twenty one years of treason.” Politically, the move on McCarthy’s part was not wise; he had attacked an administration that was headed by his respective political party. Despite his arrogance, by January 1954 McCarthy reached a record high 50\% approval rating in a Gallup poll. However, it was the high point of an otherwise precipitous decline. His fall from grace was engineered behind the scenes by the Eisenhower administration. McCarthy’s verbal attacks on the United States Army and the president the year before had motivated the retaliatory action. As a result, McCarthy’s unsubstantiated claims and brash, bullying tactics made Republicans see McCarthy for the liability he was to their party cohesiveness. As he faded into obscurity, criticism of the administration’s less aggressive than initially promised policies toward the Soviet Union did as well and the public outcry for rollback was all but lost until the 1980’s.

When Ronald Reagan ran for president in 1980, the political landscape was evolving. Domestically, there was a growing sense of alarm in relation to Soviet expansion. The decline in Carter’s poll ratings were an indication of the general American public’s displeasure; the events of 1979 were largely to blame for this trend. In January,\textsuperscript{109} Bodenheimer and Gould, \textit{Rollback!: Right-wing Power in U.S. Foreign Policy}, 19.
the Shah of Iran abdicated his thrown and by February, an Islamic Republic, antagonistic to the United States, had been established in its place. During March, the New Jewel Movement (NJM) launched a paramilitary attack in Grenada on the government resulting in its overthrow. By July, Anastasio Somoza’s government fell to Marxist Sandinistas in Nicaragua. In November, Iranian students and militants seized the American Embassy and subsequently took 52 American hostages captive. Last but not least, the Soviets directly invaded Afghanistan in late December. The crises around the globe combined with the consistent buildup of the Soviet military, gave the impression that the Soviet Union was on a roll and the United States was on a steady decline. The high inflation rates and high interest rates were aggravating factors to the general American public as well. The resulting dissatisfaction with the incumbent administration was as strong as it had been in 1952.\footnote{Gaddis, \textit{Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy during the Cold War}, 349.} The speeches and commentaries Reagan gave during his campaign to rally political support did not put a comprehensive strategy forth for ending the Cold War. Rather, he used rhetorical language that framed the U.S.-Soviet relationship as a battle of good versus evil.\footnote{Gaddis, \textit{Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy during the Cold War}, 350.}

While president of the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) from 1947-1952, Reagan had honed his ability to present himself in a poised, controlled, and convincing manner. His professional life and political views eventually became intertwined during that period as well. His personal involvement in numerous disputes over communism in the film industry with his fellow colleagues altered his political convictions tremendously.\footnote{The White House, “Ronald Reagan,” The White House, http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/ronaldreagan/ (accessed February 25, 2011).}
Although he was once a staunch supporter of FDR’s New Deal reforms, Reagan’s experience in Hollywood was directly responsible for his political beliefs becoming markedly conservative and fervently anti-communistic. The Conservative Revolution, which Reagan eventually became the face of, was an embodiment of American frustration and dissatisfaction following the tumultuous events of the 1970’s and the failure of the Carter administration to resolve the various dilemmas and crises facing the nation.

Reagan’s criticisms largely focused on the Carter administration’s policies toward the Soviet Union. He claimed the United States did not respond as forcefully as possible in regard to the aggressive actions of the USSR. The general American public acquiesced to this argument when they voted Reagan into office in November 1980. According to Gaddis, Reagan’s “unshakable belief in democracy and capitalism” and “abhorrence of communism” resonated with the general American public.113 During his campaign Reagan spoke of an idealized America; a restoration of its former greatness as a global leader. Carter retorted that Reagan’s visions, including his reliance on the military-industrial complex to quash communism, were reckless and divisive.114 There was a paradoxical nature to their debate because over the course of Carter’s tenure in office the defense budget had grown from $108 billion in 1977 to $142 billion in 1980. The aggressive military posture Carter had taken in the second half of his presidency was the policy that Reagan initially continued when he entered office.115 Thirty years later, the fact of that matter remains that it was in fact Carter- not Reagan- who first authorized

limited covert military assistance to the mujahedeen in Afghanistan following the Soviet invasion that took place in December 1979. When Reagan became president he was simply continuing Carter’s policies in Afghanistan just on a larger scope and scale.\textsuperscript{116}

**The Republican Association with Rollback**

When Ronald Reagan delivered the ‘evil empire’ speech to the National Association of Evangelicals on March 8, 1983, he used astute simplifications to rouse the audience to his rallying cry. In the speech he said communism is “the focus of evil in the modern world” and he “believe[d] that communism is another sad, bizarre chapter in human history whose last pages even now are being written.” \textsuperscript{117} Indeed, less than 10 years after his words were uttered the Soviet Union fell but the world was not necessarily free of evil or communism. With that said, Reagan’s well intentioned words breed misconceptions. The misconceptions are essentially the product of a series of assumptions. While the exportation of communism may have led to some actions that could be characterized as evil, i.e. the North Korean invasion of South Korea and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, communism itself was not necessarily evil. Due to the fact Reagan viewed communism and any extension of it as intrinsically evil, he championed the policy of rollback like no president before him. He felt it was the only means of eradicating the Soviet menace. The reason the general American public has come to associate rollback solely with Republican presidents is telling on a number of levels. The projected public persona and policies of Ronald Reagan and Dwight D. Eisenhower have a great deal to do with this ongoing phenomenon.

\textsuperscript{117} Gaddis, *The Cold War*, 19.
By the time Eisenhower ran for president in 1952, he was already a highly decorated career military officer. In his early Army career, he served under the famed, Douglas MacArthur, the celebrated general who was later removed from his command by Truman. During World War II, Eisenhower commanded the Allied Forces landing in North Africa in November 1942 and he was the Supreme Commander of the troops invading France on D-Day 1944. Following World War II, he was celebrated and lauded for his military prowess. As a five-star general, Eisenhower evoked a patriotic allegiance from the general American public. Despite the fact Truman was not seeking reelection the continued Korean stalemate led Eisenhower to lead a pro-rollback, rhetorically charged presidential campaign in 1952, which fed upon the anti-Truman attitude pervading the nation. Initially, his administration engaged in rollback; therefore, by carrying out the promises made during his campaign, he enhanced his overall credibility. The execution of the rollback of democratically elected Iran in 1953 became the primary reason for Eisenhower’s association with rollback. At the time of Iran’s coup d’état, the rollback of the country was not severely rebuked. Unlike the Truman administration’s attempt at rollback in Korea, the rollback of Iran successfully achieved the objectives sought by the administration and the CIA in a timely fashion without an excessive loss of American lives. When Eisenhower bid farewell to the nation in 1961, the speech he delivered characterized the growing military-industrial complex. It reflected his moderate Republican views. In retrospect, his pursuit of containment during the majority of his presidency with the selective use of rollback in the initial stages, served as a foil to his heavily fortified, military background. Eisenhower warned the

nation of the dire consequences to its personal freedoms and ability to self-govern if the power of the military-industrial complex went unchecked.\textsuperscript{119} It was a forewarning of policies to come during the Reagan administration.

Reagan is perhaps the most worthy of the blame for the general American public’s association of rollback solely with Republicans. Once elected President of the United States of America, Reagan made no secret of his intentions to let détente die an expedited death.\textsuperscript{120} As an immediate order of business, Reagan extended and expanded the amount of aid provided to the mujahedeen in Afghanistan. By FY 1984, the Afghan program had $200 million being allotted to it annually with Saudis matching the CIA aid dollar for dollar. In 1981, the budget for covert aid had only been a meager $30 million.\textsuperscript{121} On February 6, 1985, during his State of the Union address, Reagan openly pledged his support for “freedom fighters.” The term, “freedom fighter,” eventually became a euphemism for American supported rebels in Third World insurgencies like Afghanistan and Nicaragua. Reagan reassured the nation by adding that “we only have a military-industrial complex until a time of danger, and then it becomes the arsenal of democracy. Spending for defense is investing in things that are priceless--peace and freedom.”\textsuperscript{122} Reagan’s vision, achieved through the “arsenal of democracy” that was the military-industrial complex was one of global rollback.\textsuperscript{123} The development of the Reagan Doctrine in 1985 presented the Reagan administration’s intentions of rolling back

\textsuperscript{122} Bodenheimer and Gould, \textit{Rollback!: Right-wing Power in U.S. Foreign Policy}, 84.
\textsuperscript{123} Bodenheimer and Gould, \textit{Rollback!: Right-wing Power in U.S. Foreign Policy}, 24, 48, 82.
Third World communist countries in an effort to destroy the USSR, structurally and economically.

The singular event that firmly etched rollback in the minds of the general public as a Republican tactic was the Iran-Contra affair. Reagan had created the climate in which his administration had broken the law, prompting a constitutional crisis over executive power and the legitimacy of the policy of rollback. The Reagan administration’s motives, returning the American hostages from Lebanon, may have been admirable but the means in which they were sought was not. Subsequently, the news media descended upon Reagan’s every action and word with a high pressure intensity. Effectively, cooperative relations between the president’s communication staff and the press had broken down. Following the bombshell revelations that fateful November 25, 1986 news conference, Reagan took a four month hiatus from any type of news conference. President Reagan even feigned laryngitis at one point to avoid an inquiring reporter’s questions! The administration’s communication staff thought it was unnecessary to respond to the initial outbreak of the negative coverage surrounding the administration’s policy of global rollback. Meanwhile, the constitutionality of President Reagan’s executive actions was called into question. The attempted suicide of former NSA Robert C. McFarlane shortly before the Tower Commission report was released only intensified the cloud of negativity surrounding the administration. The sum of these events resulted in a public criticism of the policy of rollback but a lasting association of it with Reagan and the Republican Party.
The Myth Prevails…

When one thinks of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 come to mind. The attacks permanently changed the way Americans valued their domestic security. The coordinated suicide bombings by members of al-Qaeda upon the World Trade Center, Pentagon, and a lone field in Shanksville, PA, had a profound emotional impact on the United States’ diverse population. At a later date, not too long after these attacks, President George W. Bush, a Republican, vowed to obtain justice for the 2,977 victims who perished that fateful day. When the War on Terror had informally begun, the general American public rallied around Bush administration’s vigilant pursuit of Osama bin Laden and his religiously fanatical cronies. In a post-9/11 world, terrorism had effectively become persecuted with the vigor that communism was once.

With that said, Bush’s War on Terror ushered in a new error of paranoia on behalf of the American people. Many civil liberties were forgone with the enactment of the USA PATRIOT Act. The words behind the acronym spelled out the general premise behind the bill, Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism. The controversial bill, a throwback to McCarthyism, was eventually repealed in 2009 due to its unconstitutionality. Presently, American troops remain stationed in the Middle East. Recall on May 1, 2003, President George W. Bush stood on the deck of the USS Abraham Lincoln. He triumphantly declared under a banner reading “Mission
Accomplished” that the “major combat operations” in Iraq would be coming to an end.124 Whereas the combat mission may have just recently ended in Iraq as of the summer 2010, the American occupation continues since the Iraqis still do not possess the ability to defend themselves. Active engagement in Afghanistan currently drags onward and the escalation of troops appears to be inevitable because Osama bin Laden and his terrorist organization still remain at large.

The road to rollback in Iraq was not all Bush’s doing though. In 1998, President Bill Clinton, a Democrat, signed the Iraqi Liberation Act into law. It stated that the policy of the United States would be to support democratic movements in Iraq. At the time, Saddam Hussein still maintained authoritarian control of Iraq. In October 2002, the Iraqi Liberation Act was used as a justification for using military force in Iraq to effect a regime change; in other words, the Bush administration was seeking the overthrow or rollback of Saddam’s Ba’athist regime. The extension of democracy to oppressed people was the stated objective for entering Iraq; similar justifications were given for aiding the mujahedeen in the 1970’s and 1980’s. However, the historical view shows that the decision to invade Iraq was the outcome of a long-standing, quite unabashed policy aimed at military supremacy in the oil-rich Persian Gulf that grew from goals outlined within the Carter Doctrine. The administration of George W. Bush unwisely departed from policies implemented by [Republican] President George H.W. Bush, who wisely stopped short of overthrowing Saddam, and President Bill Clinton, who chose not to pursue direct military intervention in Iraq. The Bush administration felt that toppling Saddam’s regime was in their best interest in late 2001 despite repetitive warnings from

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124 F. Gregory Gause, III, *The International Relations of the Persian Gulf* (New York: Cambridge University, 2010), 152.
the domestic and international communities. Foolishly, the Bush administration accepted exceedingly optimistic projections about the difficulties and costs of stabilizing post-Saddam Iraq.

Even though rollback has always been a bipartisan policy through the course of its application in United States foreign policy, the myth of it being a Republican device prevails. Apparently, the general American public has an associative memory. The Republican Party is typically associated with aggressive foreign policy tactics that rely heavily on the support of the military for their implementation. For example, Eisenhower, Reagan, and Bush, are Republican presidents who tend to evoke thoughts of the American military. For instance, Eisenhower was a decorated general who facilitated the armistice that ended American involvement in the Korean War. In 1953, his administration successfully rolled back the democratically elected government in Iran. However, Eisenhower eschewed the military-industrial complex. Reagan, the stereotypical embodiment a Republican embracing rollback, was an avid supporter of the military-industrial complex and successfully rolled back the government of Grenada during his tenure in office. Reagan also attempted to extend rollback to the governments in Afghanistan and Nicaragua. Bush is associated with the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. Afghanistan is still in the process of being rolled back, whereas Iraq has already been successfully overthrown. The aforementioned Republican presidents demand a comparison between their Democratic counterparts who preceded them. Although policies of rollback were initiated by Truman in Korea, Carter in Afghanistan, and Clinton in Iraq, the general American public does not associatively identify rollback with

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Democrats. Instead, trivial asides come to mind. When Truman’s presidency is discussed the two year long stalemate that characterized the majority of the Korean War and MacArthur’s subsequent firing are mentioned in tandem. As for Carter, the Iranian hostage crisis and the crippling rates of inflation have forever marred the perception of his presidency. Lastly, with the exception of the strong economic growth under his leadership, Clinton’s two terms amounted to the gossip fodder that emanated from his personal life: a nearly, career ending sex scandal between a former White House intern and himself. Although rollback has been demonstrated to be a bipartisan policy, with use by both Republicans and Democrats alike, it nonetheless remains associated as a partisan foreign policy tactic. It appears that the strong association between the military and the Republican Party has led to an unbalanced emphasis on Republican presidents’ use of rollback.
Conclusion

The origins of U.S. foreign policy remain difficult to understand without recognizing the interconnected nature of one president’s foreign policy to another. In the context of the Korean War, the continuity between the foreign policy tactics of the Truman and Eisenhower administrations was demonstrated by their corresponding applications of a policy of containment. Additionally, both Truman and Eisenhower resorted to rollback within their presidencies as well, in divergent cases though. For Truman it was Korea, whereas Eisenhower chose to employ the tactic in Iran. Truman’s attempted use of rollback led to the fulfillment of the end game; it was realized in the establishment of a lasting U.S. presence in the Far East at Yongsan base in Seoul, South Korea. In a six degrees of separation context, the Eisenhower administration’s actions to selectively rollback the democratically elected government of Iran and installation of the Shah as an authoritarian power, led to the political nightmare and strategic dilemma that Carter faced in January 1979, when the Shah abdicated his throne.

With the collapse of the “Twin Pillar” policy, Carter faced a growing Soviet threat. His response was the authorization of covert aid to the mujahedeen in an effort to selectively rollback the Soviet influence in Afghanistan. His policy was eventually continued by Reagan albeit greatly expanded to encompass a global rollback policy that relied heavily on the military-industrial complex. Furthermore, the development and implementation of the Carter Doctrine following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, laid the foundation for future incursions on behalf the United States’ vital interests. However, it must be recognized that selective rollback and global rollback were designed for the
overthrow of Third World governments, namely ones courting communistic influence, which were antagonistic to U.S. vital interests.

Following the events of September 11th, the Bush administration announced its War on Terror. This “war” was an effort to eradicate terrorism from America and the world at large. The rhetorically charged environment generated by the Bush administration had created an aura of McCarthyism that hung like a heavy cloud in the political arena. Indeed, the fear of terrorism, exaggerated namely by the color coded security system in the news media and coverage of various anthrax scares, preoccupied the general American public much like communism did prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, there is one large difference; communism was an actual political system. When rollback was sought in regard to a Third World communist government, there was a very real possibility of eradicating it from said government, as was done in Grenada in 1983. Terrorism, on the other hand, is not a political system. Terrorism is a systematic manufacturing of fear, declaring a war on it legitimizes it; it does not eradicate it. Fighting a war against terror is about as effective as fighting the war on drugs was; there is not a tangible benefit or definitive end to it.

Much like Eisenhower had warned, the iron triangle established by the military-industrial complex, greatly expanded by the Reagan and Bush administrations, has once again used the general American public’s fears against itself to open a gateway for military intervention. The lingering legacies of the Carter Doctrine and Clinton’s Iraqi Liberation Act have also brought the United States to where it stands today. The U.S. is still rolling back Third World countries for the sake of the end game: the protection of U.S. vital interests. The completed expansion of the Diego Garcia military complex in
1986 and the current U.S. presence in Afghanistan and Iraq are all efforts in the quest to ensure the United States has access to Middle Eastern oil in the Persian Gulf Region. It has been a largely bipartisan effort to get there.
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