



Luis Miguel da Vinha

Re-Mapping the Carter Doctrine Geographic Mental Maps and Foreign Policy Change

Doctoral thesis in International Relations, specialisation in International Politics and Conflict Resolution,
supervised by Professor José Manuel Pureza and submitted to the School of Economics of the University of Coimbra

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UNIVERSIDADE DE COIMBRA



FEUC FACULDADE DE ECONOMIA
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Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Supervisor: Professor José Manuel Pureza

Coimbra, 2014

Para a Ângela, o Miguel, e a Sofia

Com amor

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The US has always had an interest and been involved in the Middle East. However, it was the Carter Administration that ultimately gave the Middle East its pivotal role in US foreign policy. It was the Carter Doctrine, enunciated in 1980 which effectively coupled the security of the Persian Gulf region with American global security. The assertion of the Carter Doctrine has traditionally been viewed as a watershed transformation of the Carter Administration's foreign policy. It allegedly signalled the end of détente and turn towards a more assertive military posture towards the Soviets and a more decisive US commitment to Middle Eastern security. It overturned many of the Administration's prior foreign policy initiatives, such as nuclear non-proliferation, demilitarisation of strategic regions, curtailment of conventional arms transfers to Third World countries, and the promotion of human rights. In their place emerged a policy which emphasised a massive military build-up, increased military supply to Third World nations, and increased US global military presence. In particular, the Carter Doctrine represented a momentous shift in US geopolitical and geostrategic considerations by transforming the Middle East into a new critical defence zone.

The Carter Doctrine has received widespread scholarly attention over the last three decades. Nevertheless, research has focused almost exclusively on explaining *why* the Carter Administration radically altered its foreign policy, particularly regarding the Middle East. Numerous accounts have emphasised the systemic and domestic forces underlying such change. Most conventional accounts tend to point out a series of crises arising midway throughout the Carter Presidency as responsible for the change in foreign policy. While there are many different theses regarding *why* the Carter Administration's foreign policy changed, few endeavours have been made to explain *how* it changed. In fact, most accounts of the emergence of the Carter Doctrine do not provide a precise theoretical framework for understanding its origins and development.

Accordingly, the current study argues in favour of three broad and provocative propositions. The first proposition claims that, while not explicitly acknowledging it as

such, the majority of the accounts explaining the change in the Carter Administration's foreign policy and the development of the Carter Doctrine use theoretical assumptions intrinsic to punctuated equilibrium and planned change models. The second proposition argues that the development of the Carter Administration's Middle East policy and the emergence of the Carter Doctrine is best understood using an emergent change approach which highlights the continuous and cumulative policy adaptations and adjustments that decision-makers enacted to try to deal with their perceived international environment since the beginning of the Carter Presidency. Therefore, the change in the Administration's foreign policy resulted from the incessant dynamics involved in foreign policy decision-making. It was the product of intentionally planned endeavours, as well as of the unexpected opportunities and consequences ensuing from the continued interactions between decision-makers.

Finally, it asserts that considering the well defined spatial nature of the Carter Doctrine, geographic mental maps provide the most appropriate conceptual framework for identifying and assessing the emergent dynamics of the Carter Administration's foreign policy decision-making process. In light of this, it is posited that the Carter Doctrine resulted from the continuous reconstruction of the Carter Administration's geographic mental maps. As international and domestic events compelled decision-makers to evaluate the political environment, the Administration's problem representation of the Middle East was in constant flux. Accordingly, while the Middle East was initially viewed optimistically as a place of cooperation and reconciliation, the continuously changing nature of the Administration's mental maps ultimately mapped a region fraught with danger and conflict.

Key words:

Carter Doctrine; communicative interaction; continuous change; emergent change; foreign policy change; geographic mental maps; planned change; punctuated equilibrium.

Os EUA sempre estiveram envolvidos no Médio Oriente, contudo foi a Administração Carter que atribuiu um papel crucial ao Médio Oriente na política externa Americana. A Doutrina Carter, anunciada em 1980, efetivamente agregou a segurança do Golfo Pérsico à segurança dos EUA. A afirmação da respetiva Doutrina tem tradicionalmente sido encarada como uma transformação histórica da política externa da Administração Carter. Alegadamente marcou o fim do desanuiamento e um compromisso Americano definitivo com a segurança do Médio Oriente. Alterou muitas das iniciativas iniciais da Administração tal como a não-proliferação nuclear, a desmilitarização de regiões estratégicas, a redução da transferência de armas convencionais para o Terceiro Mundo e a promoção dos direitos humanos. No seu lugar a Administração Carter instituiu uma política que favorecia o rearmamento massivo, o acréscimo de apoio militar ao Terceiro Mundo e o aumento da presença global das forças armadas Americanas. Acima de tudo, a Doutrina Carter representou uma alteração monumental das considerações geopolíticas e geoestratégicas dos EUA ao transformar a região do Medio Oriente numa nova zona de defesa crítica.

A Doutrina Carter tem sido alvo de um amplo debate académico ao longo das últimas décadas. Todavia, os estudos têm-se centrado essencialmente em explicar porque é que a Administração Carter alterou radicalmente a sua política externa, particularmente em relação ao Médio Oriente. Vários estudos realçaram os fatores sistémicos e domésticos catalisando a mudança. A maioria das explicações tradicionais aponta um conjunto de crises que surgiram a meio da presidência como sendo responsáveis pela mudança. Embora haja muitas versões que explicam o *porquê* da mudança na política externa da Administração Carter, poucos esforços têm sido dedicados a explicar *como* é que a política se alterou. De facto, a maior parte dos estudos sobre o surgimento da Doutrina Carter não oferece um enquadramento teórico adequado para compreender o seu começo e desenvolvimento.

Por conseguinte, o presente estudo apresenta três proposições amplas e provocadoras. A primeira afirma que, embora nem sempre explicitamente assumido, a maioria das explicações da transformação da política externa da Administração Carter e do surgimento da Doutrina Carter utilizam pressupostos teóricos inerentes aos modelos de equilíbrio pontuado e mudança planeada. A segunda preposição argumenta que o desenvolvimento da política para o Médio Oriente durante a Administração Carter e o desenvolvimento da Doutrina Carter deve ser compreendido através de uma abordagem de mudança emergente na qual se foca nas adaptações e nos ajustamentos políticos contínuos que os decisores políticos promoveram para tentar lidar com a sua perceção do ambiente internacional desde o início da presidência Carter. Desta forma, a transformação da política externa da Administração Carter resultou da dinâmica constante inerente ao processo de decisão política. Resultou tanto de iniciativas planeadas, bem como das oportunidades inesperadas e consequências resultantes das interações contínuas entre os decisores políticos.

Finalmente, o estudo argumenta que devido à natureza nitidamente espacial da Doutrina Carter, os mapas mentais geográficos fornecem o enquadramento conceptual mais apropriado para identificar e aferir as dinâmicas emergentes no processo de decisão de política externa na Administração Carter. Neste sentido, alega-se que a Doutrina Carter foi o resultado de reconstruções contínuas dos mapas mentais geográficos da Administração Carter. Conforme os eventos internacionais e domésticos obrigavam os decisores a avaliar o ambiente político, a definição da situação no Médio Oriente percecionada pela Administração estava em constante transformação. Desta forma, embora o Médio Oriente fosse inicialmente encarado com otimismo e como sendo um lugar de cooperação e reconciliação, a natureza dinâmica dos mapas mentais da Administração acabou por revelar uma região repleta de riscos e conflitos.

Palavras-chave:

Doutrina Carter; equilíbrio pontuado; interação comunicativa; mapas mentais geográficos; mudança continua; mudança de política externa; mudança emergente; mudança planeada.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|------|
| LIST OF FIGURES | xii |
| LIST OF TABLES | xiii |
| TIMELINE | xiv |
| ABBREVIATIONS | xix |
| MAP OF THE MIDDLE EAST (SOUTHWEST ASIA) | xxii |
| | |
| 1. INTRODUCTION: THE PUZZLES OF THE CARTER DOCTRINE | 01 |
| 1.1) The General Argument | 07 |
| 1.2) Developing the Argument | 12 |
| 1.3) Mapping the Argument | 21 |
| | |
| PART 1: MAPPING THE CARTER DOCTRINE: TRADITIONAL APPROACHES | |
| | |
| 2. EXPLAINING <i>WHY</i> FOREIGN POLICY CHANGED DURING THE CARTER PRESIDENCY | 27 |
| 3. EXPLAINING <i>HOW</i> FOREIGN POLICY CHANGED DURING THE CARTER PRESIDENCY | 47 |
| 3.1) Punctuated Equilibrium | 48 |
| 3.2) Planned Change | 68 |
| 4. RETHINKING THE CONCEPT OF FOREIGN POLICY CHANGE | 89 |
| | |
| PART 2: GEOGRAPHIC MENTAL MAPS AND FOREIGN POLICY CHANGE | |
| | |
| 5. GEOGRAPHIC MENTAL MAPS AND FOREIGN POLICY DECISION-MAKING | 111 |
| 5.1) Defining Geographic Mental Maps | 115 |
| 5.2) Placing Geography in the Mental Map Concept | 120 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 5.3) From a Cognitive Psychological to a Social Psychological Approach to Geographic Mental Maps in FPA | 126 |
| 6. SOCIAL COGNITION AND INFORMATION PROCESSING | 137 |
| 6.1) The Convergence Process: From Individual Mental Maps to Shared Mental Maps | 151 |
| 7. THE MECHANISMS OF CHANGE: COMMUNICATIVE INTERACTION | 159 |
| PART 3: RE-MAPPING THE CARTER DOCTRINE: THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S GEOGRAPHIC MENTAL MAPS | |
| 8. FOREIGN POLICY DECISION-MAKING IN THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION | 195 |
| 8.1) The Decision-Making Structure in the Carter Administration | 197 |
| 8.2) The Decision-Making Process and Dynamics | 218 |
| 9. MAPS OF HOPE AND PEACE | 243 |
| 9.1) In Search of a Comprehensive Peace | 250 |
| 10. BEYOND WISHFUL THINKING | 277 |
| 11. <i>HIC SUNT DRACONES</i> : DANGERS ON THE EDGE OF THE MAP | 299 |
| 12. IRAN AND THE ARC OF CRISIS | 325 |
| 13. ADJUSTING TO A CHANGING MIDDLE EAST | 355 |
| 13.1) Assuring the Possible Peace | 335 |
| 13.2) Probing the New Regime in Iran and Re-evaluating US strategy in the Middle East | 373 |
| 14. MAPS OF FEAR AND WAR | 389 |
| 14.1) The Iranian Hostage Crisis | 389 |
| 14.2) Soviet Involvement in Afghanistan and the Consolidation of the Carter Doctrine | 398 |
| 14.3) Securing the Release of the Hostages | 414 |
| 15. CONCLUSION | 421 |
| 15.1) Issues of Contention and Debate | 425 |

| | |
|-------------------|-----|
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 437 |
| Primary Sources | 437 |
| Secondary Sources | 449 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | |
|---|-----|
| FIGURE 1 – PERIODS OF STABILITY AND TRANSITION IN FOREIGN POLICY | 64 |
| FIGURE 2 – DIFFERENT MODELS OF CHANGE | 96 |
| FIGURE 3 – APPROACHES TO CHANGE | 104 |
| FIGURE 4 – AGGREGATION VS. INTERACTION | 152 |
| FIGURE 5– CONVERGENCE PROCESS | 153 |
| FIGURE 6 – A MULTILEVEL PERSPECTIVE ON GROUPS | 162 |
| FIGURE 7 – THE PROCESS OF CHANGE THROUGH COMMUNICATION | 178 |
| FIGURE 8 – THE FEEDBACK VIEW OF THE WORLD | 186 |
| FIGURE 9 – PRESIDENTIAL MANAGEMENT MODELS | 199 |
| FIGURE 10 – NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE | 217 |
| FIGURE 11 – FREQUENCY OF NSC MEETINGS PER YEAR, 1947-1992 | 221 |
| FIGURE 12 – THREE CONCURRENT STRUCTURES OF NATIONAL SECURITY DECISION-MAKING | 225 |
| FIGURE 13 – INTERACTIONS AMONG CARTER AND HIS CLOSEST ADVISORS, 1977 | 226 |
| FIGURE 14 – INTERACTIONS AMONG CARTER AND HIS CLOSEST ADVISORS, 1979 | 226 |
| FIGURE 15 – PRINCIPAL PRESIDENTIAL ADVISORS IN THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION | 228 |
| FIGURE 16 – WRITTEN INTERACTION BETWEEN CARTER AND BRZEZINKI | 238 |
| FIGURE 17 – MAJOR MIDDLE EAST OIL SUPPLY DISRUPTIONS AND PRICE IMPACT | 246 |
| FIGURE 18 – ISRAELI TERRITORY AFTER THE SIX DAY WAR (1967) | 259 |
| FIGURE 19 – THE SHABA CONFLICT | 300 |
| FIGURE 20 – THE HORN OF AFRICA | 304 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | |
|---|-----|
| TABLE 1 – SKIDMORE’S COMPONENTS OF CARTER’S INITIAL ADJUSTMENT STRATEGY | 34 |
| TABLE 2 – FAMILIES OF IDEAL-TYPE THEORIES OF SOCIAL CHANGE | 92 |
| TABLE 3 – COMPARISON OF EPISODIC AND CONTINUOUS CHANGE | 100 |
| TABLE 4 – THE CARTER CABINET | 205 |
| TABLE 5 – WHITE HOUSE OFFICE STAFF: RELEVANT ACTORS | 206 |
| TABLE 6 – FOREIGN POLICY DEPARTMENT HEADS AND STAFF | 209 |
| TABLE 7 – NSC MEMBERSHIP ACCORDING TO PD-2 | 213 |
| TABLE 8 – PRINCIPAL NSC STAFF MEMBERS | 216 |
| TABLE 9 – CARTER ADMINISTRATION NSC MEETINGS | 222 |
| TABLE 10 – SUMMARY OF SUBSTRATEGIES ACCORDING TO PRM-10 | 283 |
| TABLE 11 – ALTERNATIVE INTEGRATED MILITARY STRATEGIES (AIMS) | 284 |

TIMELINE

1977

| | |
|-------------|---|
| January 20 | Presidential Inauguration |
| January 21 | Presidential Review Memorandum-3 (Middle East) signed |
| January 21 | Presidential Review Memorandum-8 (North-South Strategy) signed |
| February 14 | Secretary Vance begins eight-day trip to Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Syria |
| February 18 | Presidential Review Memorandum-10 (Comprehensive Net Assessment and Military Force Posture Review) signed |
| March 07 | Prime Minister Rabin and President Carter meet in Washington |
| March 08 | FNLC forces invade Zaire's Shaba province (beginning of the Shaba I crisis) |
| March 16 | Soviet Union rejects SALT II proposals |
| March 17 | President Carter addresses United Nations General Assembly, describing his philosophies on human rights |
| March 23 | Presidential Directive-7 (SALT Negotiations) signed |
| April 04 | Presidents Sadat and Carter meet in Washington |
| April 25 | King Hussein and President Carter meet in Washington |
| May 05 | Presidential Directive-12 (US policy on Korea) signed |
| May 09 | Presidents Al-Assad and Carter meet in Geneva |
| May 13 | Presidential Directive-13 (Convention Arms Transfer Policy) signed |
| May 20 | Presidential Review Memorandum-28 (Human Rights) signed |
| May 24 | Saudi delegation headed by Crown Prince Fahd meet with Carter in Washington |
| May 28 | Mobutu declares victory against FNLC invasion (end of the |

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| | Shaba I crisis) |
| June 21 | Likud coalition headed by Begin wins Israeli elections |
| June 30 | President Carter cancels B-1 Bomber Production |
| July 08 | Presidential Review Memorandum-28(Human Rights) study submitted |
| July 13 | Somali forces invade the Ogaden region (Ogaden War begins) |
| July 19 | Prime Minister Begin and President Carter meet in Washington |
| August 01 | Secretary Vance trip to Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Syria |
| August 24 | Presidential Directive-18 (US National Security) signed |
| September 07 | Panama Canal Treaty signing |
| September 09 | Presidential Directive-20 (US SALT position) signed |
| September 13 | Presidential Directive-21 (Policy towards Eastern Europe) signed |
| September 27 | Agreement with Soviet Union on SALT II |
| October 05 | President Carter signs International Covenant on Human Rights |
| November 19 | President Sadat visits Israel to address the Knesset |
| December 10 | Secretary Vance begins trip to Israel, Jordan, and Syria |
| December 16 | Prime Minister Begin visits Washington and presents proposal for Palestinian "home rule" |
| December 26 | Ismailia Summit between Egypt and Israel begins |
| 1978 | |
| January 01 | President Carter visits Iran |
| January 08 | Demonstrations in Qum (Iran) break out in violence |
| February 04 | President Sadat meets with Administration officials at Camp David to develop negotiation strategy |
| February 17 | Riots break out in Tabriz (Iran) |

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| February 28 | Presidential Directive-32 (US policy towards the Horn of Africa) signed |
| March 08 | President Siad of Somalia informs President Carter that an agreement had been reached for withdrawing his forces from the Ogaden region (end of the Ogaden War) |
| March 16 | Senate ratifies the first Panama Treaty |
| April 27 | PDPA seizes power in Afghan coup |
| May 13 | FNLC forces invade Zaire's Shaba province (beginning of the Shaba II crisis) |
| July 18 | Leeds Castle meetings between Egypt, Israel, and US begin |
| August 24 | Presidential Review Memorandum-42 (Framework of US Strategy for Non-Military Competition with the Soviet Union) signed |
| August 24 | Presidential Review Memorandum-43 (United States Global Military Presence) signed |
| September 04 | Camp David Summit begins |
| September 08 | Jaleh Square massacre (Iran) |
| September 08 | Shah imposes martial law in major Iranian cities |
| September 17 | Camp David Accords signing |
| October 12 | Blair House talks begin |
| November 06 | General Reza Azhari appointed Prime Minister of Iran |
| November 09 | Ambassador Sullivan sends message from Iran titled "Thinking the Unthinkable" |
| December 12 | SCC meeting discusses Ball report on Iranian crisis |
| December 15 | Announcement of normalisation of relations with the People's Republic of China |

1979

| | |
|------------|--|
| January 01 | US and China establish formal diplomatic relations for the first time since 1949 |
|------------|--|

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| January 02 | Shapour Bakhtiar appointed Prime Minister of Iran |
| January 05 | General Robert Huyser arrives in Iran to help the military deal with the transition of power |
| January 16 | Shah leaves Iran |
| January 19 | Deng Xiaoping visits Washington |
| February 01 | Ayatollah Khomeini returns to Iran |
| February 05 | Khomeini appoints Mehdi Bazargan as provisional Prime Minister of Iran |
| February 14 | Assault on the American Embassy in Tehran |
| February 16 | US announces it will maintain normal diplomatic relations with new Iranian regime |
| February 21 | Camp David talks between Vance, Dayan, and Khalil |
| March 01 | US recognises Taiwan as a part of China, and the countries exchange ambassadors and establish embassies |
| March 08 | President Carter's trip to Egypt and Israel |
| March 26 | Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty signing |
| June 18 | Signing of SALT II Treaty in Vienna with Brezhnev |
| July 17 | President Carter asks his cabinet to resign in an attempt to restructure his administration among growing domestic criticism. Thirty-four officials submit resignations |
| August 30 | Soviet troops reported in Cuba (Soviet Brigade incident) |
| September 16 | Amin seizes full power in Afghanistan after a coup |
| October 22 | Shah arrives in the US for medical treatment |
| November 04 | American Embassy in Tehran overrun (beginning of the Iranian hostage crisis) |
| November 06 | Bazargan government collapses and the Revolutionary Council assumes full political authority in Iran |
| December 25 | Soviet invasion of Afghanistan begins |

1980

- January 04 Address to the Nation on the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; sanctions announced
- January 23 State of Union Message outlining the "Carter Doctrine"
- January 26 Egyptian and Israeli border opened after Israeli interim withdrawal of the Sinai is completed
- February 20 Decision to boycott 1980 Summer Olympic Games in Moscow
- February 26 Diplomatic relations established between Egypt and Israel (with exchange of ambassadors)
- April 07 US breaks diplomatic relations with Iran and imposes economic and political sanctions
- April 11 Decision to attempt hostage rescue mission
- April 21 Cyrus Vance resigns as Secretary of State
- April 24 Hostage rescue mission fails
- July 25 Presidential Directive-59 (Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy) signed
- September 22 Iraq invades Iran
- November 04 Reagan defeats Carter in Presidential election
- December 07 President Carter warns Soviets against military intervention in Poland

1981

- January 15 Presidential Directive-62 (Modifications in US National Security) signed
- January 15 Presidential Directive-63 (Persian Gulf Security Framework) signed
- January 16 Final terms for release of American hostages negotiated
- January 20 Ronald Reagan inaugurated as President; hostages released in Tehran

ABBREVIATIONS

- AIMS – Alternative Integrated Military Strategies
- APNSA – Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
- ASC – American Security Council
- ASEAN – Association of Southeast Asian Nations
- AWACS – Airborne Warning and Control System
- CAT – Conventional Arms Transfer
- CIA – Central Intelligence Agency
- CNA – Comprehensive Net Assessment
- CPD – Committee on the Present Danger
- ESF – Economic Support Fund
- EUCOM – European Command
- FAZ – *Forces Armées Zairoise*
- FLEC – *Frente para a Libertação do Enclave de Cabinda* [Front for the Liberation of the Cabinda Enclave]
- FMS – Foreign Military Sales
- FNLC – Front for the National Liberation of the Congo
- FPA – Foreign Policy Analysis
- FRG – Federal Republic of Germany
- GNP – Gross National Product
- IDF – Israeli Defence Forces
- IFI – International Financial Institution
- IR – International Relations
- ISA – Assistant Secretary of Defence for International Security Affairs
- JCS – Joint Chiefs of Staff
- MAD – Mutual Assured Destruction
- MBFR – Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions

MPLA – *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* [Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola]

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation

NSC – National Security Council

NSDM – National Security Decision Memorandum

NSSM – National Security Study Memorandum

OAU – Organisation of African Unity

OECD – Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development

OPEC – Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries

OSD – Office of the Secretary of Defence

PACOM – Pacific Command

PD – Presidential Directive

PDB – President's Daily Brief

PDPA – People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan

PGSF/SCC – Persian Gulf Security Framework/Special Coordinating Committee

PLO – Palestine Liberation Organisation

PRC – Policy Review Committee

PRM – Policy Review Memorandum

RAM – Rational Actor Model

RDF – Rapid Deployment Force

RDJTF – Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force

REDCOM – Readiness Command

SACEUR – Supreme Allied Commander Europe

SALT – Strategic Arms Limitations Talks

SCC – Special Coordinating Committee

SDS – Social Decision Scheme

SJS – Social Judgment Scheme

SLOC – Sea Lines of Communication

STRICOM – Strike Command

TFAI – *Territoire français des Afars et des Issas* [French Territory of Afars and Issas]

UN – United Nations

UNITA – *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* [National Union for the Total Independence of Angola]

UNSC – United Nations Security Council

US – United States of America

USSR – Unions of Soviet Socialist Republics

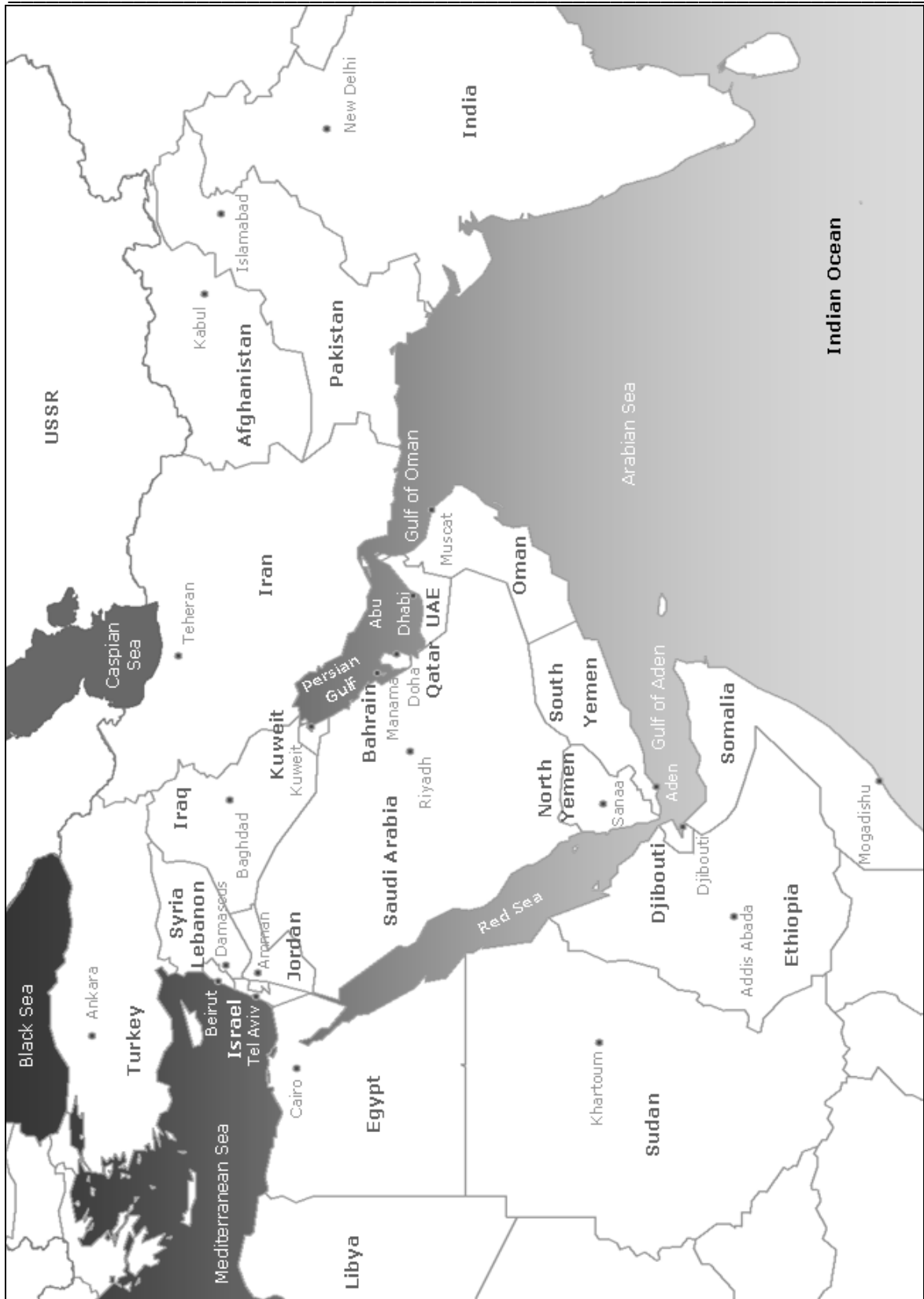
V-B-B – Vance, Brown, and Brzezinski (luncheon)

WHO – White House Office

WMD – Weapons of Mass Destruction

WP – Warsaw Pact

MAP OF THE MIDDLE EAST (SOUTHWEST ASIA)



“The world that we have to deal with politically is out of reach, out of sight, out of mind. It has to be explored, reported and imagined. Man is no Aristotelian god contemplating all existence at one glance. He is the creature of an evolution who can just about span a sufficient proportion of reality to manage his survival, and snatch what on the scale of time are but a few moments of insight and happiness. Yet this same creature has invented ways of seeing what no naked eye could see, of hearing what no ear can hear, of weighing immense masses and infinitesimal ones, of counting and separating more items than he can individually remember. He is learning to see with his mind vast portions of the world he could never see, touch, smell, hear, or remember. Gradually he makes for himself a trustworthy picture inside his head of the world beyond his reach.”

(Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion*)

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INTRODUCTION: THE PUZZLES OF THE CARTER DOCTRINE

“When academic scholars attempt to reconstruct how and why important decisions were made, they tend to assume an orderly and more rational policymaking process than is justified.”

(George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*)

The unrivalled strategic value of the Middle East to the US is at present indisputable. Over the last two decades the US has been involved in multiple wars and military operations in the region¹ and the 2010 *National Security Strategy* (The White House, 2010: 45) reiterates that “We have an array of enduring interests, longstanding commitments and new opportunities for broadening and deepening relationships in the greater Middle East”. Moreover, the commitment to a continued US involvement in the Middle East has recently been reaffirmed in the document on strategic guidance for defence *Department of Defense: Sustaining Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense* (Department of Defense, 2012). According to this document, violent extremism continues to pose the greatest threat to American national security and the US will continue to actively counter these threats, particularly in their primary loci – i.e., South Asia and the Middle East.

In reality, the US has always had an interest and been involved in the Middle East. Since the founding of the Republic in the late 18th century, the Middle East has attracted the attention of American decision-makers for a number of different reasons. Financial, ideological, political, religious, and strategic issues have all been involved in varying degrees in the relationship between the US and the Middle East (c.f., Jacobs, 2011; Oren,

¹ e.g., Operation Desert Storm (1991), Operation Provide Comfort (1991-1996), Operation Southern Watch (1991-2003), Operation Desert Strike (1996), Operation Northern Watch (1997-2003), Operation Desert Fox (1998), Afghanistan War (2001-present), Iraq War (2003-2011)

2007; Palmer, 1999). According to Oren (2007) three central themes have always guided America's involvement in the Middle East: power, faith, and fantasy. Power has manifested itself through military, diplomatic, and financial means. Faith concerns the impact religion has played in the relationship between the US and the Middle East. Lastly, fantasy is the romantic and idealised imagined representations Americans have held of the region. These themes have evolved over the last two centuries and will certainly continue in the future. In each historical period, one of these three particular themes has overshadowed the others in America's quest to safeguard its national interests in the region. In the post-war era, power seems to be the main motif driving America's involvement in the region.

In the first half of the Twentieth Century, President Franklin Roosevelt promptly recognised the strategic importance of the Middle East. An enthusiast of modern air power, Roosevelt quickly sought to discuss and acquire access to air routes in the region in his meeting with Ethiopia's Emperor, Haile Selassie, in February 1945 (Gardner, 2009). More importantly, the President also met with the Saudi Arabian monarch Ibn Saud to secure basing rights for US aircraft and to secure vital oil concessions for America (Khalidi, 2009; Leffler 1992). The importance of the Middle East was equally emphasised by President Truman in his 12 March, 1947, speech before a joint session of Congress. In proclaiming what became known as the Truman Doctrine, the President requested that Congress support US economic aid and military assistance to Greece and Turkey. He argued that a Communist victory in the Greek Civil War would endanger the political stability of Turkey, which would ultimately undermine the political stability of the entire Middle East (Khalidi, 2009; Leffler 1992). Accordingly, the US took it upon itself to guard the Middle East from Soviet intrusion from the North, leaving Great Britain with the responsibility of guaranteeing the region's internal stability (Little, 2008). The Eisenhower Administration also attributed considerable importance to the Middle East. With the anticipated decline of British influence in the Middle East after the Suez crisis, Eisenhower was able to gain Congressional approval for economic aid and authorisation to use military force if necessary, to avoid a "power vacuum" in the region (Barrett, 2007; Little, 2008). The Eisenhower Doctrine formally acknowledged the strategic importance of the

Middle East. Nevertheless, the Middle East continued to rank behind Europe and Northeast Asia in terms of American strategic priorities, particularly regarding resources, military readiness, and wartime commitments (Njølstad, 2004). The Nixon Administration also placed considerable attention on the Middle East region. After the debacle of Vietnam, the Administration sought to rebuild international respect for the US, re-establishing it as a constructive and competent superpower. It was precisely in the Middle East that the Nixon Administration sought to “prove the capacity and will to *use* American power effectively during crises in the service of peace and order” (Brown, 1994: 258).

However, it was the Carter Administration that ultimately gave the Middle East² its pivotal role in US foreign policy. Until the late-1970s, Europe and Northeast Asia were the cardinal regions in US strategic thinking. It was the general conviction that a major East-West military confrontation would have its origins in one of these two regions given that they had been the loci of tension between the two superpowers since the beginning of the Cold War. As a result, American military and political support was essentially committed to their allies in Europe and East Asia. While the Middle East was acknowledged as a region of importance, US commitments to protect friendly regimes in the region were more equivocal. Accordingly, Bacevich (2010) claims that prior to 1980, the US considered the Middle East “as a backwater” which, in terms of strategic priorities, “lagged well behind Europe and East Asia and probably behind Latin America, as well”. For the US, potential tensions and conflicts in the Middle East were preferentially dealt with by regional actors. This rationale was codified in the Nixon Doctrine which stated that the US would provide material assistance to its regional allies without however involving itself directly (Alvandi, 2012; Little, 2008).

² The Carter Administration used numerous names to refer to the region without clarifying its precise geographic delimitation – e.g., Middle East, Near East, Southwest Asia, and Persian Gulf. The most detailed description of the strategic region was put forward by Secretary of Defence Harold Brown (1983a: 141): Southwest Asia “includes Turkey and Egypt in the west (though part of Turkey’s territory in Europe and Egypt lies almost entirely in Africa). It extends to Pakistan and Afghanistan in the northeast. In geostrategic terms, it can be considered to encompass the Horn of Africa on the South and the Maghreb far to the west”.

It was the Carter Doctrine³, enunciated in President Carter's 1980 *State of the Union Address*, which effectively coupled the security of the Persian Gulf region with American global security (Yetiv, 1990). At the outset, the Carter Administration did not noticeably revise its predecessor's policies towards the Middle East, particularly regarding its security. As Little (2008: 147) has attested, Carter "embraced the Nixon Doctrine and continued to rely on the Shah to promote political stability and prevent Kremlin inroads". This was entirely in-line with the Carter Administration's emphasis on reducing US global military commitments and promoting more regionally-based solutions to international problems.

However, according to most scholarly accounts, events arising during the Carter Presidency's tenure induced a radical transformation in the Administration's foreign policy. The increasing Soviet assertiveness in the region increased American security concerns and catalysed a wholesale revision of US-Soviet relations, particularly regarding the Middle East. According to conventional accounts, Carter came to Washington with the first "post-Cold War" vision for US foreign policy (Rosati, 1994). Above all, the Carter Administration rejected containment as the basis for American foreign policy. Rather, the Administration pursued a policy of *détente* which stressed adjustment to international change and emphasised the moral and cooperative dimensions of US foreign policy. Nevertheless, international events forced the Administration to abandon *détente* and return to the traditional Cold War policy of containment and confrontation.

The assertion of the Carter Doctrine allegedly embodied the transformation of the Carter Administration's foreign policy. The new policy's general objectives were concisely presented by Secretary of Defence Brown (1983b: 593-594) in March 1980:

- To insure access to adequate oil supplies;
- To resist Soviet expansion;

³ The Carter Doctrine, like many other American security doctrines, was an *ex post facto* foreign policy rationalisation since its labelling occurred after the pronouncement of the State of the Union Address. In fact, during the Carter Presidency the Administration never publicly used the label, nor did it have a place in the official language of the US government. According to Meiertöns, (2010: 154) although the term "Carter Doctrine" was later applied in official statements, "it was used in these cases in order to refer to a subsequent rationalisation of the foreign policy of the Carter administration with regard to the Gulf region".

- To promote stability in the region;
- To advance the Middle East peace process, while ensuring – and, indeed, in order to help insure – the continued security of the State of Israel.

Accordingly, the traditional outlook views the Carter Doctrine as a watershed in the Carter Administration's foreign policy. It purportedly signalled a turn towards a more assertive military posture towards the Soviets and a more decisive US commitment to Middle Eastern security. It overturned many of the Administration's prior foreign policy initiatives, such as nuclear non-proliferation, demilitarisation of strategic regions, curtailment of conventional arms transfers to Third World countries, and the promotion of human rights. In their place emerged a policy which emphasised a massive military build-up, increased military supply to Third World nations, and increased US global military presence (Brown, 1994; Garthoff, 1985).

Moreover, the Carter Doctrine diverged from other doctrines, namely its predecessor the Nixon Doctrine, due to its focused geographic scope (Brands, 2006; Meiertöns, 2010). In other words, the US transformed the Middle East, particularly the Persian Gulf, into a new "critical defence zone" by communicating to the Soviets "clearly and in advance, exactly which parts of the planet they deem indispensable to their own security and, hence, which expansive political or military changes initiated by or enuring to the benefit of an adversary will be unacceptable and likely to lead to war" (Reisman, 1982: 589). In addition, by attempting to articulate the purpose of American foreign policy, the Carter Doctrine represented a momentous shift in US geopolitical and geostrategic considerations (Blidall, 2011; Kupchan, 1987; Michaels, 2011; Moore, 1984; Njølstad, 2004; Odom, 2006; Rosati, 1991). The magnitude of this shift has been fittingly recapitulated by Olav Njølstad:

The accumulated effect of all this was that the Carter administration ended its term by codifying a thoroughly considered modification in US national strategy that gave more priority to the defence of US interests in the Persian Gulf-Southwest Asia region. From its previous third rank position behind Europe and East Asia, the Persian Gulf came out on top

in terms of priority for resources in the Five-Year Defense Plan and in second place, after Europe, in terms of wartime operations. (Njølstad, 2004: 48)

While the Middle East had been considered a region of strategic interest for the US by prior Administrations, Carter, for the first time, committed the US to assuming the responsibility of upholding on its own, and militarily if necessary, American interests and the security of the region against further Soviet encroachment. However, the Carter Doctrine did not limit US intervention to countering Soviet initiatives. The doctrine encompassed endogenous threats as well (Palmer, 1999). For instance, when the Iran-Iraq war endangered Western access to the oil of the Persian Gulf region, the Administration admonished that the US would take all the necessary actions required to protect free shipping in the Gulf (Muskie, 1983). In addition, US military forces continued to be strengthened in the region as additional ships and carrier battle groups were positioned in the Persian Gulf⁴ (Palmer, 1999).

Moreover, the proclamation of the Carter Doctrine has been considered a turning point moment not only in the Carter Presidency, but also in contemporary US foreign policy. It is worth stating that many of the studies on the Carter Administration, especially the earlier studies, have devoted very little attention to the overall significance of the Carter Doctrine. However, in recent years the importance of the doctrine has been increasingly emphasised. The continued military involvement of the US in the Middle East region since the end of the Cold War has certainly contributed to this fact. For instance, in a recent appraisal of the doctrine, Bacevich has alerted to its unwieldy consequences for the US:

To an extent that few have fully appreciated, the Carter Doctrine has had a transformative impact on US national security policy. Both massive and lasting, its impact has also been almost entirely pernicious. Put simply, the sequence of events that has landed the United States in the middle of an open-ended war to determine the fate of the Greater Middle East begins here. (Bacevich, 2010)

⁴ By the end of 1979 the US and its Western allies had about sixty warships in the immediacies of the Persian Gulf.

Numerous other commentators and researchers have arrived at similar conclusions. For instance, Klare (2004; 2007; c.f., Bacevich, 2010) argues that the Carter Doctrine has justified multiple US interventions in the Middle East and continues to dictate America's strategy for the Persian Gulf region. In particular, the doctrine has come to embody America's energy security strategy which relies on military force to ensure access to the region's strategic oil supplies. Bacevich (2010) lists an assortment of episodes involving US military force that have been directly or indirectly rationalised or justified as a result of the Carter Doctrine: Afghanistan War I (1979-1989), Beirut Bombing (1983), war against Khaddafi (1981-1988), Tanker War (1984-1988), Iraq War I (1990-1991), Somalia Intervention (1992-1993), Afghanistan War II (2001-2003), Iraq War II (2003), Iraq War III (2004-2011), and Afghanistan War III (2009 - present).

What's more, Klare claims that the globalisation of the Carter Doctrine has been used to rationalise the increase in US military involvement throughout the world, namely in Asia, Latin America, and Africa, to protect new oil-producing regions:

Today, the Carter Doctrine stretches far beyond the Persian Gulf. It is the blueprint for the extension of US military power to the world's other oil-producing regions. Just as existing US policy calls for the use of military force to protect the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf, an extended Carter Doctrine now justifies similar action in the Caspian Sea region, Latin America, and the west coast of Africa. (Klare, 2004: 18)

1.1) The General Argument

The Carter Doctrine has received widespread scholarly attention over the last three decades. Nevertheless, research has focused almost exclusively on explaining *why* the Carter Administration radically altered its foreign policy, particularly regarding the Middle East. Numerous accounts have emphasised the systemic and domestic forces underlying such change. Most conventional accounts tend to point out a series of events arising midway throughout the Carter Presidency – i.e., fall of the Shah, Iranian hostage crisis, and Soviet invasion of Afghanistan – as responsible for the change in foreign policy.

While there are many different theses regarding *why* the Carter Administration's foreign policy changed, few endeavours have been made to explain *how* it changed. In fact, when foreign policy analysis (FPA) has considered foreign policy change, it has fundamentally concentrated on explaining the causal factors contributing to that change (c.f., Gustavsson, 1999; Hermann, 1990; Rosati, 1994; Rosati et al., 1994; Welch, 2005). In addition, the majority of the studies in FPA evade theoretical considerations regarding foreign policy change (Rosati et al., 1994). Therefore, most accounts of the emergence of the Carter Doctrine do not provide a precise theoretical framework for understanding its origins and development. The lack of an adequate conceptual and theoretical framework ultimately limits our understanding of the complex dynamics involved in foreign policy decision-making.

Accordingly, the argument developed in the current study can be summarised in three broad and provocative propositions:

- 1. While not explicitly acknowledging it as such, the majority of the accounts explaining the change in the Carter Administration's foreign policy and the development of the Carter Doctrine use theoretical assumptions intrinsic to punctuated equilibrium and planned change models.*

The core rationale of punctuated equilibrium is that political institutions, once established, tend to endure undisturbed over long periods of time (Krasner, 1984). According to punctuated equilibrium, foreign policy is characterised by long periods of stability which are abruptly disrupted by some sort of external shock. In order to deal with the discrepancy, foreign policy is altered to meet the new challenges and, subsequently, the new policy is consolidated, creating a renewed period of stability (Diehl and Goertz, 2001; Goertz et al., 2005; Rosati, 1994). As a matter of fact, Schraeder contends that continuity and change in US foreign policy can generally be conceived by such a process:

One can, therefore, conceive of US intervention as a kind of continuum in which periods of bureaucratic influence are briefly interrupted by episodes of presidential and domestic

involvement during crisis and extended crisis situations. Yet even if change and restructuring occur in a given relationship due to presidential or domestic politics, once the crisis situation subsides, policy again usually falls under the realm of the national security bureaucracies and the process of routine and incrementalism again prevails, albeit in an altered form. (Schraeder, 1994: 135)

From this perspective, it is generally argued that the Carter Administration came to office with an initial foreign policy agenda which was abruptly and radically transformed by a series of crisis situations. As a response to these events, the Administration responded by engineering and implementing a new foreign policy that was more adequate to facing the increasing Soviet activities in the Third World. Accordingly, the Administration's initial focus on military retrenchment, international cooperation, preventive diplomacy, and multilateralism abruptly gave way to an assertive and military-oriented foreign policy towards the Soviet Union, particularly in the Middle East region. In addition, the Middle East was placed at the forefront of the renewed US-Soviet conflict. Détente would therefore give way to a renewed policy of containment and confrontation which would allegedly consolidate as the cornerstone of US foreign policy in the region for the years to come. However, the evidence available in the plethora of declassified documents, memoirs, oral histories, and official statements and records challenge the punctuated equilibrium and planned change thesis.

2. The development of the Carter Administration's Middle East policy and the emergence of the Carter Doctrine is best understood using an emergent (continuous) change approach which highlights the continuous and cumulative policy adaptations and adjustments that decision-makers enacted to try to deal with their perceived international environment since the beginning of the Carter Presidency.

Although episodic and planned approaches have dominated scholarly thinking on foreign policy change, they tend to conceal many complex dynamics involved in the policy process. Recent research in organisational theory has emphasised the continuous and

open-ended process of organisational adaptation to changing circumstances and environments. In contrast to approaches centred on episodic and planned change, emergent change⁵ is the outcome of the improvisation, adaptation, adjustment, and learning that results from the recurrent interactions between individuals. Above all, emergent change repudiates accounts of change which focus exclusively on sporadic, stage-centred processes by arguing that individuals, groups, and organisations do not achieve change only through planned and structured stages of intervention. On the contrary, change can also be understood as an ongoing, improvising enterprise which produces observable and prominent transformations in groups and organisations' actions and behaviours through adjustments, adaptations, and revisions of their existing problem representations and policy practices. While not always discernible, emergent change can lead to the wholesale policy changes, but without the dramatic flair of revolutionary episodic change models such as punctuated equilibrium.

Accordingly, I argue that the Carter Doctrine and the importance it attributed to the Middle East was not an abrupt and radical break with the Administration's policies prior to crises arising in 1979. On the contrary, the Carter Doctrine was the result of the continuous and cumulative policy adaptations and adjustments that the Administration's key decision-makers enacted to try to deal with their perceived international environment since the beginning of the Carter Presidency. Therefore, the change in the Administration's foreign policy resulted from the incessant dynamics involved in foreign policy decision-making. It was the product of intentionally planned endeavours, as well as of the unexpected opportunities and consequences ensuing from the continued interactions between decision-makers.

In fact, as the study shall demonstrate, the Middle East was a region of central concern to the Carter Administration from the outset of the Presidency. Because it recognised the potential threats to US national interests in the region, the Carter Administration dedicated considerable time and attention to the trying to defuse various sources of conflict in the region. However, the understanding of the region's relationship

⁵ Emergent change is also referred to as "continuous change" in the thematic literature. Accordingly, throughout the remainder of the present study I will use the terms "continuous change" and "emergent change" interchangeably.

with the US and with other international actors, particularly the USSR, was in constant reconstruction throughout the Carter Presidency. Accordingly, the Administration tried to develop and implement the policies that they believed best suited the political challenges facing the US at each particular instance. The cumulative effect of these policy adjustments and adaptations ultimately led to the rise of the Carter Doctrine.

3. Considering the well defined spatial nature of the Carter Doctrine, geographic mental maps provide the most appropriate conceptual framework for identifying and assessing the emergent dynamics of the Carter Administration's foreign policy decision-making process.

Albeit avowing that geographic mental maps are well suited to the increasingly fluid context of international politics (Henrikson, 1980a), seldom have they been empirically applied to grasp the shifting character of the environments within which foreign policy is conducted. Rather, geography's intransience has a long tradition in political thought. All the classic geopolitical theoreticians would completely subscribe to Spykman's (2008: 41) assertion that "Geography is the most fundamental factor in the foreign policy of states because it is the most permanent". In fact, Susan Schulten (2001: 240) has suggested that "geographical knowledge – in its resistance to change and its effort to make sense of the world – has operated conservatively".

While I agree that many geographic features have a lasting effect on our cognitive representations, several studies have revealed the variability of particular spaces and places in foreign policy-making. O'Loughlin and Grant's (1990) analysis of the political geography of the State of the Union addresses of post-war US presidents reveals the diversity of the geographic distribution of speech-content in each different Cold War American Administration. Assuming that the amount of attention that the State of the Union Addresses have attributed to particular places represents a valid indication of the geopolitical outlook and political agenda of an Administration at that particular point in time, we can conclude that the decision-makers geographic mental maps are all but fixed. However, geographic mental maps do not just change following the succession of

Administrations. Even within a particular Administration existing mental maps are susceptible to change, as the research carried out by Flint et al. (2009a) attests.

There are several reasons for the shift verified in the preceding studies. Evolving challenges and opportunities certainly contribute to refocusing decision-maker's mental maps. Saarinen's (2005) extensive work on mental maps has demonstrated that current events are usually important in including or omitting certain places in an individual's mental maps. These events provide mental maps with a temporal dynamic since "in different time periods one might expect different places to be highlighted" (Saarinen, 2005: 158). Different places can attract decision-makers attention due to some particular geographic features which are more "salient" in the environment (Henrikson, 1980a). Above all, the political context in each particular moment can be re-constructed, leading to a new understanding of the problems facing decision-makers as well as the policy options available.

In light of this, I posit that the Carter Doctrine resulted from the continuous reconstruction of the Administration's geographic mental maps. As international and domestic events compelled decision-makers to evaluate the political environment, the Administration's problem-defining representation of the Middle East was in constant flux. Accordingly, while the Middle East was initially viewed optimistically as a place of cooperation and reconciliation, the continuously changing nature of the Administration's mental maps ultimately charted a region fraught with danger and conflict.

1.2) Developing the Argument

The following chapters argue that the Carter Administration's Middle East policy and the development of the Carter Doctrine was the result of the continuous re-construction of foreign policy decision-makers geographic mental maps throughout the Presidency. I argue that the Administration's mental maps changed due the communicative interaction between the key foreign policy decision-makers. The continuous interaction process allowed the decision-makers shared problem representations to be constantly re-

evaluated and re-constructed. Accordingly, as the problem representations changed, so did the policy recommendations perceived to best deal with the situation at hand.

Accordingly, in order to assess the dynamic and emergent nature of the Carter Administration's geographic mental maps of the Middle East, the current case study uses a process tracing method, framed within a constructivist perspective. Due to the inherent research question's *explanatory* nature – i.e., *how* did the Carter Doctrine emerge? –, the use of a case study is judged the most adequate approach. As Yin (1994: 6) has attested, questions dealing with *why* and *how* “deal with operational links needing to be traced over time, rather than mere frequencies or incidence”. Case studies allow us to concentrate on the longitudinal analysis which can help reveal the evolution and transformation of organisational activities and policies over time (Pettigrew, 1990). In addition, given the focus of the current study on the different actors involved in influencing the decision-making process (i.e., the units of analysis), namely at the individual, group, and organisational level, the use of a case study is once again the most appropriate approach. In fact, George and McKeown (1985: 21) have argued that “case studies of organizational decision making have long been one of the most important methods by which researchers have investigated organizational behavior and improved their theoretical understanding of that behaviour”.

The use of a case study also allows the researcher to employ a historical analysis method of causal assertion that differs significantly from the method of causal inference used in statistical-correlational research (George and Bennett, 2004). Since the current study focuses exclusively on the Carter Administration's Middle East policy, a within-case approach is essential since I seek to identify the causal path in a single case. Accordingly, I have opted to employ process-tracing because it does not rely on the comparison of variations in variables in order to make claims about the causal processes involved (George and McKeown, 1985). Process-tracing techniques are used to identify the causal mechanisms implicit in the relationship between the independent and dependent variable(s). More precisely, process-tracing seeks

to investigate and explain the decision process by which various initial conditions are translated into outcomes. A process-tracing approach entails abandonment of the strategy

of "black-boxing" the decision process; instead, this decision-making processes is the center of investigation. The process-tracing approach attempts to uncover what stimuli the actors attend to; the decision process that makes use of these stimuli to arrive at decisions; the actual behavior that then occurs; the effect of various institutional arrangements on attention, processing, and behavior; and the effect of other variables of interest on attention, processing, and behavior. (George and McKeown, 1985: 35)

Causal mechanisms offer more detailed explanations than general covering laws because while laws offer static correlations (i.e., "if X, then Y"), mechanisms provide insight into processes (i.e., "X leads to Y through steps A, B, C") (George and Bennett, 2004: 141). The use of this method is particularly important to the current study because tracing processes allows us to deal with equifinality, i.e., consider alternative paths which could lead to a similar outcome (George and Bennett, 2004). As I have claimed above, the change in the Carter Administration's Middle East policy and the development of the Carter Doctrine can be explained by processes other than those envisioned by punctuated equilibrium and planned change models.

Process-tracing, therefore, relies heavily on a careful description of the trajectories of change and causation (Collier, 2011). This feature gives process-tracing many similarities to historical explanations (Gaddis, 1997; George and Bennett, 2004). In fact, as Bennett (2008: 704) suggests, the process-tracing method "seeks a historical explanation of an individual case". Accordingly, this implies favouring a qualitative interpretation of the Carter Administration's historical record in the service of theory development and testing. In particular, I make use of numerous primary and secondary materials which have been acquired and collected from a wide array of sources.

Evidently it is impossible to analyse all the primary sources available. To begin with, the amount of documental sources is too vast to be completely assessed in a functional manner. Additionally, many of the relevant documents are not yet available to the public and many of the interaction processes were not recorded for posterior analysis and research. It should also be noted that many of the declassified documents are subject to redaction and sanitisation in which much of the sensitive and classified information has been deleted. Moreover, even when many of the documents pertaining to a specific

policy are available, the possibility and the need to consider all of them should be considered in order to determine the convenience for effective scholarly research⁶. Accordingly, I have used the available sources which I believe best represent and embody the general interactions taking place within the Carter Administration. Therefore, the primary historical sources used in the current study refer predominantly to memoirs and biographies, Presidential Directives, Policy Review Memoranda, official minutes or records, memoranda, official public statements, official transcripts, oral history transcripts, letters, official publications (e.g., *Department of State Bulletin*), research reports produced by individual officials or official departments or agencies (e.g., NSC and CIA), and newspapers and magazines⁷. These documents were collected from various different institutions and entities. In particular, many of the official documents were acquired at the Jimmy Carter Library and Museum⁸. Other official and declassified primary documents were acquired from the following printed and electronic sources:

- *American Foreign Policy Basic Documents, 1977-1981*;
- Central Intelligence Agency website⁹;
- Commission on Presidential Debates website¹⁰;
- *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977–1980* (Volumes II, VI, and VIII);
- Jimmy Carter Library and Museum website¹¹;

⁶ For instance, during the Iranian Hostage Crisis, the Carter Administration's crisis management group convened on over 100 occasions (Sick, 1985). Naturally, it would be impracticable and futile to assess all the communicative interactions to verify how the Administration's evaluations and policies changed over that period.

⁷ By primary sources I imply sources of data that are that are original to the problem under study and can consist of two different categories relating to their origin: the first are the direct remains or vestiges of that particular historical period; the second are the items that have had a direct relationship with the events being reconstructed. In this second category we can include not only the written and oral testimony provided by actual participants involved, or witnesses of, an event, but also the participants themselves. It is considered that these elements "are, intentionally or unintentionally, capable of transmitting a firsthand account of an event and are therefore considered as sources of primary data" (Cohen et al., 2007: 194).

⁸ The Jimmy Carter Library and Museum is located in Atlanta, Georgia and is part of the Presidential Library system administered by the National Archives and Records Administration. The documents from the Carter Library were examined and retrieved in the period between November 2012 and February 2013.

⁹ <http://www.foia.cia.gov/collection/carter-camp-david-accords>

¹⁰ <http://www.debates.org/>

- Miller Center of Public Affairs website¹²;
- Office of the Historian of the US Department of State¹³;
- The American Presidency Project¹⁴;
- The National Security Archive at the George Washington University¹⁵;
- The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States¹⁶;
- The White House website¹⁷.

Employing these documental sources, along with other corresponding secondary material, I use process-tracing to identify the casual mechanisms driving the Carter Administration's foreign policy. More precisely, I demonstrate how the Administration's Middle East policy was in a state of emergent change throughout the Carter Presidency due to the incessant construction and re-construction of the decision-makers geographic mental maps. Obviously, a document has little explanatory value on its own. If we want to assess change, we must understand the relation to *other* documents and texts. Therefore, it is important to "recognize that, like any system of signs and messages, documents make sense because they have relationships with other documents" (Atkinson and Coffey, 2004: 67). This relationship is established by recounting how the various documents and texts regarding a particular historical episode created a forum for decision-makers to interact and influence the policy process. By analysing the assortment of documental records associated with these historical episodes, the communicative interaction process within the Administration can be revealed. The collection of documents and other informational materials allows me to identify the ongoing interaction between the foreign policy decision-makers, creating a narrative of how they

¹¹ <http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/>

¹² <http://millercenter.org/president/carter>

¹³ <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/carter>

¹⁴ <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/>

¹⁵ <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nukevault/ebb390/>

¹⁶ <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/p/ppotpus?key=title;page=browse;value=j>

¹⁷ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/>

created and re-created the definition of the situation and the adequate policy response at each particular moment.

For analytical purposes, this narrative is separated into several discrete policy debates which occurred within the Carter Presidency regarding the Middle East. By breaking down the communicative interactions into distinct foreign policy episodes we can better appreciate how the Administration's mental maps were reconstructed as well as their relationship to other interaction processes.

However, as Ng and De Cock (2002: 27) contend, "Most narratives do not just lie around in organizational situations, nor do documents wait to be related". From this perspective, historical accounts – i.e., historical narratives – are naturally subjective interpretations:

They have to be "authentically crafted and configured" [...] from a variety of sources. In our research story we weave together direct field observation, interviews and systematic collection of textual data to unravel the contextual import of organizational stories, and the voices of these stories. As such we offer a collage – a mixture of production and reproduction that every reading and writing necessarily entails [...] – with the authorship of different pieces distinctly attributed. This does not mean that we try to efface our role or claim innocence from the representational force that we bring to this text. A good deal of selectivity stands behind any author's decisions about what details to include, what organizing concepts to use, what events to highlight, and so forth [...] Understandings that researchers present must ultimately be construed as factive fictions crafted from numerous sources and methods, influenced by the availability and quality of different materials, and designed to please both the researchers and the researchers' audiences. (Ng and De Cock, 2002: 27)

This interpretation and use of historical records is still viewed with mistrust in many domains of IR. In fact, the relationship between History and IR is long and complex (Gaddis; 1997; Thies, 2002). Over the years, many IR scholars have accused historians of studying international affairs merely for gaining an understanding of a particular historical period or event. In other words, historians, contrary to political scientists, do not seek to

advance any particular research programme, improve an existing theoretical body, or generate new and competing theoretical knowledge (Elman and Elman, 2001). Jack Levy (2001: 41) has attributed this distinction to the traditional ideographic and nomothetic orientations of the two disciplines: “the primary goal of historians is to describe, understand, and interpret individual events or a temporally and spatially bound series of events, whereas the primary goal of political scientists is to generalize about the relationships between variables and, to the extent possible, construct law-like propositions about social behaviour”. As a result, while IR has used historical records compulsively, History has generally been used as static background for IR theorists’ numerous experiments. As a matter of fact, as Lawson (2010: 207) has pointed out, most mainstream IR research does use historical research, but “Although ‘history’ as a point of data collection may be present, *Historicism* – an understanding of the contingent, disruptive, constitutive impact of local events, particularities and discontinuities – is absent”.

From this perspective, IR scholars tend to employ history and historical analysis as a means of collecting mere “facts” which can be used in their theoretical descriptions and explanations (Reus-Smit, 2008; Thies, 2002). In their study of diplomatic history and IR, Haber et al. (1997) confirm the validity that this outlook still maintains in IR research. More precisely, while acknowledging the interpretative dimension of history, the authors censure researchers studying “formerly neglected person and groups” for departing from the “more traditional forms of history [which] sought to address questions whose answers could be determined by recourse to bodies of documentary evidence that diminished uncertainty – ideally to the vanishing point” (Haber et al., 1997: 38-39). Therefore, historical records, such as primary and secondary sources, are thus deemed bonafide testaments of past “realities”.

Albeit IR’s recent “historical turn”, important epistemological issues remain largely unattended:

It leaves the “problem of history”, in other words the impossibility of getting historical interpretation one hundred percent right, glossed over if not ignored entirely. Instead of projecting the radical uncertainty of historical meaning into its object of study the

preference in IR is to impose a form of interpretive closure on the historical record: “a [form of] representation that arrests ambiguity and controls the proliferation of meaning by imposing a standard and a standpoint of interpretation that is taken to be fixed and independent of the time it represents”. (Vaughan-Williams, 2005: 117)

This observation is extraordinary considering that historians have long acknowledged the interpretive dimension involved in historical analysis. In fact, since the 1960s there has been a widespread recognition within the discipline of History “that history is not so much discovered as invented” (Trachtenberg, 2006: 7). The idea that direct observation leads to facts which, once discovered, can no longer be disputed, is no longer sacrosanct. The traditional confidence in historical objectivity has, therefore, given way to a more interpretive approach to historical events. The aim of historical analysis is thus to reach an understanding of the past – i.e., see how things fit together –, rather than uncovering the “Truth”:

...the goal is to show how particular events are part of an “intelligible pattern of events.” When dealing with events that are at first glance hard to explain [...] a successful explanation will make those events intelligible by tracing them to causes that are not quite so hard to understand – that is, by constructing a story (Trachtenberg, 2006: 27).

The key to understanding past events is, according to Trachtenberg (2006), by applying a conceptual – i.e., theoretical – framework in historical interpretation. The use of a theoretical framework by itself does not provide answers, but rather serves “as the basis for interpretation” (Trachtenberg, 2006: 30). Therefore, using theory provides researchers with a conceptual lens and a host of assumptions with which they can observe and interpret historical problems. This is operationalised in Trachtenberg’s (2006: 45) view by taking “some major theoretical claim, bring it down to earth by thinking about what it would mean in specific historical contexts, and then study those historical episodes with those basic conceptual issues in mind”.

In light of this rationale, I have adopted numerous theoretical concepts and assumptions from the fields of Human Geography, Organisational Development, and

Social Psychology to guide my research. In particular, the precepts of emergent (continuous) change and social cognition theories are central to my argument. They have been applied and adopted when necessary to help explain the process of foreign policy change during the Carter Presidency.

In addition, I have espoused a constructivist perspective in this study¹⁸. To begin with, constructivism is concerned with the normative and ideational structures in creating meaning (Guzzini, 2000; Reus-Smit, 2005). This does not imply that constructivist research does not take into consideration the physical world, external to thought. It does, however, contest acknowledging it as existing independent of language. In this sense, we can only understand the world meaningfully as a socially interpreted construct. As Guzzini (2000) has pointed out, constructivism's hermeneutical tradition makes the construction of social reality the central focus of analysis, particularly the construction of shared systems of meaning through social practices.

Moreover, a constructivist perspective is particularly well suited to study change. While constructivists are interested in ideas, their specific emphasis is on understanding ideas *in* history, i.e., constructivist research is "interested in ideas as constitutive forces in history, forces that give meaning to historical processes, forces that warrant, justify, and license certain forms of action" (Reus-Smit, 2008: 408). In this regard, interpretative historical analysis assumes an important role in constructivism (Guzzini, 2000; Reus-Smit, 2008). This is because, as Lawson (2010: 209) suggests, "constructivism is propelled towards accounts of time and place specificity, context and change which render the approach *necessarily* historical in orientation".

However, adopting an interpretive approach does not signify we cannot understand past events. Rather, as Reus-Smit (2008: 405) has pointed out, "the test of historical knowledge must be plausibility not infallibility". In this case, the use of the primary sources allows me to present evidence that sustain my claim that the Carter Doctrine was the result of an emergent change process. As Beach and Pedersen (2013: 121) analogise, "The overall process of evaluating evidence is in many respects analogous

¹⁸ I do not use constructivism as a Theory proper, since it has long been argued that it "does not offer general explanations for what people do, why societies differ, how the world changes" (Onuf, 1998: 58).

to how evidence is admitted and evaluated within the US legal system”. In this respect, researchers produce different observations to make inferences about how historical events played out. It is up to the academic judges and/or the juries to evaluate the evidence and to decide on the final result. The critical test is, as in the legal system, on assessing reasonable doubt, i.e., “a doubt based upon reason and common sense – the kind of doubt that would make a reasonable person hesitate to act” (Weinstein and Dewsbury, 2007: 171). Accordingly, I am confident the evidence put forward in the following pages creates enough reasonable doubt to question the conventional explanations and accounts of the advent of the Carter Doctrine based on punctuated equilibrium and planned change models.

1.3) Mapping of the Argument

In order to illustrate the argument presented above, the current study is divided into three distinct parts. The first part assesses the traditional accounts of the development of the Carter Doctrine.

Resorting to the literature on the Carter Administration’s foreign policy, Chapter 2 puts forward the divergent accounts explaining the reasons for the policy transformation and the development of the Carter Doctrine – i.e., *why* foreign policy changed. Due to the enormous volume of research on the Carter Administration and its foreign policy, the overview of the works does not pretend to be comprehensive in scope, but is, inevitably, merely representative.

Chapter 3 looks to demonstrate that while there is considerable disagreement regarding *why* foreign policy changed, there is substantial concurrence as to *how* it changed. In particular, emphasis will be placed on the dynamics involved in punctuated equilibrium and planned change approaches to foreign policy, highlighting their influence in traditional explanations of the Carter Administration’s foreign policy change. The limits of these explanatory models will also be discussed, particularly regarding their application to the explanation of the development of the Carter Doctrine.

Chapter 4 puts forward an alternative approach to understanding foreign policy change based on the concept of emergent (i.e., continuous) change. It highlights the main contrasts between traditional accounts of episodic, planned change and continuous change, emphasising the latter's value in understanding the dynamics involved in contemporary foreign policy decision-making. The chapter ends by enumerating some of the inconsistencies underlying the traditional approaches explaining the advent of the Carter Doctrine.

The second part of the study is essentially theoretical in nature. It looks to identify and develop the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings surrounding the application of geographic mental maps in the study of foreign policy. Accordingly, Chapter 5 begins by defining the concept of geographic mental maps, differentiating it from other similar analytical concepts, namely by emphasising its geographic character and its importance to the study of international politics. Finally, Chapter 5 argues in favour of applying a social psychological approach to mental maps in order to better understand the complex dynamics involved in foreign policy decision-making, particularly its social dimension.

The social dynamics of geographic mental maps are presented in Chapter 6. Contrary to traditional accounts of aggregation of individual representations, this chapter focuses on the shared nature of collective representations. More precisely, I present a more detailed re-conceptualisation and re-theorisation of how collective geographic mental maps are constructed and shared amongst group members. Specifically, it highlights the process by which shared mental maps are created and re-created.

The theoretical development culminates in Chapter 7 which identifies the mechanisms of change in a group's mental maps. I argue that it is the process of communicative interaction which allows for the creation of new realities and, ultimately, new policies. While the process is continuous, for the sake of theoretical clarity the mechanism of communicative interaction is parsed into several distinct stages in order to illustrate the change process.

Having provided a set of conceptual tools and a theoretical framework for the analysis of change, the third part of the study returns to the Carter Administration's foreign policy and the development of the Carter Doctrine. Drawing on the theoretical

hindsight presented in part 2, the remaining chapters of this section examine in considerable detail the actual processes through which the Carter Administration's geographic mental maps of the Middle East changed throughout the Presidency. Each individual chapter (Chapters 8 through 14) demonstrates how the Administration's internal and external communicative interactions enabled the continuous reconstruction of its mental maps of the region.

While the events are generally approached in a chronological order, the overlap of events throughout the years compelled me to also take into consideration the separate policy issues in delineating the change process.

In Chapter 15 I conclude my argument by briefly detailing the overall process of emergent change leading up to the Carter Doctrine. I also identify some of the implications of adopting an emergent change approach framed in a mental map conceptual outlook for FPA. Finally, I raise questions which continue unanswered and may guide future research in both foreign policy change and geographic mental maps.

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PART 1

**MAPPING THE CARTER DOCTRINE: TRADITIONAL
APPROACHES**

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EXPLAINING *WHY* FOREIGN POLICY CHANGED DURING THE CARTER PRESIDENCY

“Jimmy Carter, in short, pursued a foreign policy that was in the ‘city on the hill’ tradition, sharing some of its virtues as well as its flaws. A mortal fervor gave him the impetus to take on difficult tasks, such as the promotion of peace in the Middle East. But as his dealings with the Soviet Union suggest, a moralistic bent, accompanied by an ambitious foreign policy, can lead to overcommitment and compound difficulties when dealing with adversaries. Values stated in categorical terms can get in the way of more limited and concrete national security interests. And conflicts of interest can be too simply turned into battles between right and wrong. At the end, Carter fell subject to temptations from those in his administration who fed his frustrations with calls to be tough, to threaten, to demonstrate and prepare to use force as a means of regaining mastery over his circumstances.”

(Betty Glad, *An Outsider in the White House*)

The fact that the Carter Administration changed its Middle East policy throughout its presidential term is today undeniable. Numerous studies have registered this transformation (c.f., Aronoff, 2006; Auten, 2008; Bliddal, 2011; Garthoff, 1985; Glad, 2009; Kupchan, 1987; Jackson, 2007; Lebow and Stein, 1993; Little, 2008; Nichols, 2002; Njølstad, 2004; Njølstad, 1995; Odom, 2006; Palmer, 1999; Rosati, 1991; 1994; Skidmore, 1996; Smith, 1986; Westad, 1997) hence, I will not devote any additional effort to reinforcing this observation. However, the explanations for such a change have diverged considerably among researchers. Different researchers have tackled the issue using different approaches and, consequently, reached different conclusions.

In general, the change in the Carter Administration’s foreign policy and the subsequent advent of the Carter Doctrine has traditionally been explained using a realist

frame of analysis. Structural realism (i.e., neorealism), in particular, focuses on the role of the international system in constraining the behaviour of states (Keohane, 1986; Waltz, 1979). While the two main strands of neorealism – i.e., offensive realism and defensive realism – differ in their assumptions about the reaction of states to international events, both emphasise the determinant influence of external forces on states' behaviour¹⁹. At the core of structural realism is the idea that “decision-makers will behave in a similar fashion and will be affected not by personal or other idiosyncratic factors but only by the nature of the situation and the structure of the global environment” (Vasquez, 1999: 156). Nevertheless, despite Waltz's (1996) admonition about using realist theories of international politics to explain foreign-policy²⁰, many researchers persist in explaining foreign policy by means of external forces.

This has certainly been the case regarding the majority of the assessments of the Carter Administration's foreign policy. Most generic accounts of US foreign policy during the Cold War assume that the Carter Administration changed its foreign policy as a reaction to external events, particularly Soviet behaviour in the Third World and events in the Middle East (c.f., Brown, 1994; Dobson and Marsh, 2001; Freedman, 2009; Gaddis, 2005; Palmer, 1999; Wittkopf et al., 2008; Yetiv, 2008). As Yetiv (2004) argues, the rational actor principle underlying realist thought assumes that states respond to perceived threats to their national interest. These threats are usually accentuated during periods of international crises, which bring issues into the political agenda and catalyse the need for action (Rosati and Scott, 2011). Therefore, according to most realist accounts, Soviet interventionism (and that of its proxy Cuba) in the Third World and domestic turmoil in the Middle East forced the Carter Administration to abandon its initial idealistic foreign policy agenda and assume a more realistic and assertive foreign policy.

¹⁹ Offensive realism explains state behaviour as the result of “states jockeying for position within the framework of a given systemic power configuration” (Rose, 1998: 149). Defensive realism, in contrast, assumes that states “can often afford to be relaxed, bestirring themselves only to respond to external threats, which are rare” (Rose, 1998: 149).

²⁰ According to Waltz (1996: 54), neorealism provides a theory of international politics which “explains why states similarly placed behave similarly despite their internal differences. Opposed to this, the explanation of “why states similarly placed in a system behave in different ways” is the task of foreign policy theories.

It should be noted that there is considerable divergence in the literature as to the nature of Carter's initial foreign policy agenda. Several schools of thought have emerged over the last three decades presenting different accounts of the Carter Administration's initial foreign policy orientations and beliefs. One leading school of thought argues that in the early years of the Carter Presidency the Administration lacked a consistent and coherent foreign policy orientation – i.e., the chaos thesis (Njølstad, 1995). According to this perspective, the Carter Administration was unable to provide a discernable and comprehensive vision for US foreign policy (Aronoff, 2006; Brown, 1994; Colucci, 2012; Gaddis, 2005; Kaufman, 1993; Nichols, 2002). The Administration failed to provide a conceptual framework for defining objectives, priorities, means, and threats in order to safeguard American national interests. Adherents of the chaos thesis argue that Carter trifled incongruously with a range of disparate issues such as human rights, non-proliferation, multilateralism, and self-determination.

The chaos thesis is generally attributed to the lack of a shared worldview between the Administration's senior foreign policy decision-makers. However, President Carter has also been deemed personally responsible for the failure to develop a coherent foreign policy. According to presidential historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr. (2004), Carter failed to achieve the two indispensable requirements to become an effective President: 1) the capacity to steer the country towards an identifiable destination and 2) explain to the public why that destination was right for the nation. As a result, "After four years of the Carter Presidency, no one knew where Carter wished to steer the country" (Schlesinger Jr., 2004: 438).

Former speechwriter for the Carter Administration, James Fallows, has confirmed this view. While acknowledging Carter's elevated moral virtues and his intellectual skills, Fallows castigates the President for not being able to inspire the nation nor those around him:

One explanation is that Carter has not given us an idea to follow. The central idea of the Carter Administration is Jimmy Carter himself, his own mixture of traits, since the only thing that finally gives coherence to the items of his creed is that he happens to believe them all. (...) But no one could carry out the Carter program, because Carter has resisted providing

the overall guidelines that might explain what his program is. I came to think that Carter believes fifty things, but no one thing. He holds explicit, thorough positions on every issue under the sun, but he has no large view of the relations between them, no line indicating which goals (reducing unemployment? human rights?) will take precedence over which (inflation control? a SALT treaty?) when the goals conflict. Spelling out these choices makes the difference between a position and a philosophy, but it is an act foreign to Carter's mind. (Fallows, 1978)

A second major school of thought posits that the Administration did come to office with a consistent and coherent worldview and foreign policy agenda (Auten, 2008; McCrisken, 2003; Njølstad, 1995; Rosati, 1991; Skidmore, 1996; Tucker, 1979; Westad, 1997). In contrast to the previous orientation, Rosati (1988: 496) claims that empirical research has accurately proven that the Carter Administration did in fact have “a cohesive worldview that changed from optimism to pessimism over time”. Adherents to this school of thought do however provide varied accounts of the Administration’s foreign policy orientations and objectives. Nevertheless, most researchers tend to accentuate a few key-traits of Carter’s initial foreign policy. Tucker (1979: 462) has neatly summarised the Carter Administration’s initial worldview as being “characterized by truly global interests, by growing mutual dependencies, by far less hierarchy, by less concern with equilibrium, and by the recognition that much less reliance could be placed on the forcible methods of the past”.

Notwithstanding the variety of different outlooks in Carter’s initial foreign policy beliefs and agenda, for the most part, realists agree that during the Carter Presidency foreign policy underwent a profound reorientation, namely in favour of a more assertive and confrontational US policy. For instance, in his monumental study on détente, Garthoff (1985) argues that while at the outset the Carter Administration did not place US-USSR relations at the forefront of its foreign policy agenda, it did seek to achieve a cooperative relationship with the Soviets based on reciprocity and mutual respect and benefit. According to the same author, the Carter Administration sought, above all, to enhance relations outside the East-West rivalry, namely with Latin America, Africa, and

Asia. In particular, Carter wanted a comprehensive settlement to the Middle East conflict which would involve Soviet participation and cooperation.

The Administration's initial defence policy also seemed to signal a tendency to favour non-military options. From the outset, Carter sought to keep his campaign promise of reducing US defence spending. In this vein, the Administration cancelled and curtailed several significant defence projects such as the B1 bomber, the MX missile system, the Enhanced Radiation Weapon (a.k.a., the neutron bomb), the Navy ship construction programme, and the defence budget for 1979 (Williams, 1984). Following the same reasoning, Carter initially presented the Soviets with a "deep cuts" proposal in strategic forces for the SALT II negotiations. This proposal greatly aggravated the reductions originally negotiated between the US and the USSR in the 1974 Vladivostok Agreements²¹.

In due course, however, Soviet behaviour in the Third World altered the Administration's perception of Soviet intentions and led to the implementation of a more aggressive US foreign policy focusing on containing the USSR:

In retrospect, while the first three years of the Carter administration represented basically a continuation of the Nixon-Ford policy of détente (albeit not the ascendant détente of 1972-75), the fourth and last year was a precursor to the Reagan turn toward confrontation, although not recognized as such. (...) The Carter administration had two principle purposes in its new policy toward the Soviet Union. The first and most spontaneous was punitive – to demonstrate American outrage and opposition to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and to seek Soviet withdrawal or, at the least, to make the Soviets pay for their dastardly deed. (...) The second line in American policy was more substantial and more directed at preventing future Soviet aggrandizement elsewhere... (Garthoff, 1985: 972)

The Administration's more assertive foreign policy was embodied in the newly proclaimed Carter Doctrine. By repudiating the Nixon Doctrine's reliance on local forces to guarantee their own security, the Carter Doctrine presented itself as a major revision

²¹ The Vladivostok Agreement was achieved by the USSR and the Ford Administration and established the guidelines for the following SALT II agreement.

of US policy. From that moment on, the US committed itself to a renewed policy of containment involving:

(1) a pledge of American resolve and commitment to stop any further Soviet advance in the Southwest Asia-Persian Gulf Area, buttressed by a series of political and military steps; (2) a more general diplomatic effort to confront Soviet power, including further play of the China card; and (3) a renewed stress on building American military power across the board – strategic forces and general purpose land, air, and seapower, as well as the Rapid Deployment Force. (Garthoff, 1985: 973)

Ultimately, all realists concur that external forces and events led the Carter Administration to relinquish a policy of détente in favour of a policy of increased international assertiveness and reliance on military means and solutions. In particular, events in the Middle East pressed the US to commit itself to assuming the responsibility for guaranteeing regional stability and preventing further Soviet penetration (Kupchan, 1987; Palmer, 1999).

In addition, there is also some scholarly dispute as to which events most affected the Administration's foreign policy. Realists have acknowledged several different critical events for setting in motion a comprehensive change of the Administration's foreign policy – e.g., fall of the Shah Reza Pahlavi of Iran, the Iranian hostage crisis, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Numerous authors tend, however, to favour a combination of these events. Some authors even charge the build-up of Soviet military power as the main catalyst of Carter's foreign policy change (Auten, 2008). I will develop this issue in greater depth in the following section. For the moment it suffices to accept that most studies analysing the Carter Administration hold external actors and events accountable for its wholesale foreign policy change.

On the opposite end of the field, *innenpolitik* approaches justify the change in the Carter Administration's foreign policy using domestic considerations. The *innenpolitik* school of thought argues that foreign policy is driven by internal, rather than external forces – i.e., domestic political and economic ideology, electoral cycles, national character, partisan politics, and/or social and economic structures (Legro and Moravcsik,

1999; Quandt, 1986a; Rose, 1998; Zakaria, 1992). The basic postulate underlying this perspective is that the main catalyst of change during the Carter Presidency was located within the domestic arena.

David Skidmore (1994a; 1996) is at the forefront of this line of reasoning in explaining the change in the Carter Administration's foreign policy. The author's main argument focuses on the Administration's inability to overcome domestic political constraints and carry out its initial political agenda. According to Skidmore (1996), the Carter Administration came to office seeking to adjust US foreign policy to the intricacies of the international environment, particularly by addressing the "Lippmann Gap"²² – i.e., the growing imbalance between the nation's commitments and power. In Skidmore's (1996: 31) account, the Carter Administration sought to implement a strategy of adjustment in which the US could rebalance its foreign policy objectives and commitments, namely by "reducing US commitments in peripheral areas, sharing burdens more evenly with friends and allies and seeking accommodation with adversaries or rivals where this proved consistent with US interests" (Table 1). In order for this strategy to succeed, the Administration would have to introduce selective cutbacks in US overseas commitments, while simultaneously enhancing its diplomatic activities²³.

Acknowledging the relative decline of US power, Carter came to the White House seeking to maintain a policy of *détente* whilst devaluing the traditional East-West focus on international relations. In particular, Skidmore (1996) argues that, for the Carter Administration, to diffuse potential confrontations with the Soviets, preventive diplomacy was essential in dealing with the Third World - i.e., resolving emerging conflicts in their initial stages. The Administration believed that the US still maintained several competitive advantages – e.g., economic, cultural, and political advantages – over the Soviet Union on which it could capitalise.

²² According to Huntington (1987), the "Lippman Gap" ensued from the fact that since the late 1960s the US had assumed commitments which exceeded its power. Four developments were particularly relevant to this change: 1) the increase in the relative power of other countries in relation to the US; 2) the pronounced expansion of US interests and commitments in Southwest Asia; 3) the proliferation of new threats – e.g., Marxist-Leninist and radical Islam – to the US, particularly in the Third World; and 4) the increase of domestic constraints on the increase and use of US power, particularly military power.

²³ Skidmore (1996) also refers to the policy initially followed by the Carter Administration as liberal internationalism.

TABLE 1– SKIDMORE’S COMPONENTS OF CARTER’S INITIAL ADJUSTMENT STRATEGY

| REDUCING COMMITMENTS |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restrain overall defence spending and shift priorities from strategic and Third World intervention forces to NATO forces; • Withdraw US troops from South Korea; • Reduce US arms sales and military aid abroad; • Restrict CIA covert actions; • Avoid military entanglements in peripheral regions. |
| SHIFTING BURDENS |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urge NATO allies to spend more on defence; • Improve relations with Communist China; • Court regional influential in the Third World. |
| ACCOMMODATING RIVALS |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue détente and arms control with the Soviet Union; • Normalise relations with radical states (China, Vietnam, Angola, Cuba, etc.); • Apply preventive diplomacy to solve regional conflicts (Camp David Accords, transition to Black rule in Zimbabwe, Panama Canal treaties). |

(Source: Skidmore, 1996: 32)

However, according to Skidmore (1994a; 1996), the Administration was unable to maintain its strategy of adjustment throughout the Carter Presidency. In fact, the relationship with the USSR soon deteriorated and, by the end of 1979, little remained of the Administration’s policy of détente (Skidmore, 1996). Consequently, the SALT II Treaty was deferred as new strategic systems were approved in order to match the Soviet threat. Moreover, in contrast with Carter’s early cuts in defence spending²⁴, the last two years of the Presidency witnessed a significant budgetary increase for national defence²⁵, with particular emphasis on Third World intervention forces, e.g., Rapid Deployment Force. In addition, the plans to remove US troops from South Korea were revoked and diplomatic recognition of Angola, Cuba, and Vietnam was postponed.

²⁴ In the first half of the Presidency, Carter kept the increase of defence budget to a mere 3% per year, eliminated the B1 Bomber programme, cut funding for the MX missile and Trident II nuclear submarine programmes, deferred production and deployment of the neutron bomb, and vetoed an authorisation bill of an increase in funding for a new aircraft carrier.

²⁵ The last two defence budgets were augmented by 5% and 6%, respectively.

While some initial policies survived throughout the term, Skidmore (1996: 51) unequivocally asserts that during the Carter Presidency, “American foreign policy underwent a broad paradigm shift” in which an “initially coherent strategy of adjustment gradually gave way to an almost equally coherent strategy of resistance”. Therefore, the Carter Administration abandoned its commitment to liberal internationalism and returned the US to a policy of containment of Soviet expansion. However, contrary to most orthodox accounts of the Carter Administration, Skidmore suggests that it was domestic politics which most contributed to the Administration’s foreign policy change:

Carter’s wholesale retreat from his initial approach and the confusion into which his foreign policies eventually descended stemmed principally from his inability to gain domestic legitimacy for the administration’s early world view or the policies associated with it. The evolution of Carter’s foreign policies was therefore driven by contradictory sets of international and domestic pressures. International incentives, arising from the dynamics of US decline, initially pulled the administration toward a strategy of adjustment to external change. Domestic constraints favoring policy rigidity, however, eventually forced Carter to abandon much of his early reformist approach in an effort to salvage his dwindling domestic popularity. (Skidmore, 1994a: 700)

Above all, Skidmore argues, Carter was unable to fend off against the attacks of the conservative opposition which assailed the Administration’s foreign policy for being frail and unintelligible. At the forefront of this opposition were groups such as the Committee on the Present Danger (CPD) and the American Security Council (ASC). With an extensive list of former government officials, the CPD wielded vast influence in the Cold War establishment and maintained a wide array of influence and contacts. The CPD was able to mobilise considerable resources to counter Carter’s foreign policy initiatives. For instance, in order to derail the SALT II initiative, the CPD expended over \$750,000 campaigning and lobbying against the treaty. Moreover, key-members of the CPD testified before several Senate committees deliberating on the treaty and “participated in 479 television and radio programs, press conferences, public debates, briefings of influential citizens, and major speeches on arms control and defense” (Skidmore, 1996:

137-138). Similarly, the ASC also mobilised popular opposition to Administration's foreign policy. In the summer of 1978 the ASC launched the Coalition for Peace through Strength which sought to organise opposition to SALT II and support increased defence budgets. The coalition aggregated over 200 congressman and 2500 retired generals and admirals who, with the help of over \$2,5 million, were able to increase widespread challenge to SALT II (Skidmore, 1996). Furthermore, the coalition widened its activities openly supporting and lobbying in favour of the Republicans and the Reagan campaign against Carter and his policies (Bellant, 1991). These opposition groups were able to place considerable leverage on public opinion by harnessing their multiple resources to discredit the Carter Administration's foreign policy. Furthermore, conservative groups increasingly managed to define public perceptions and the meanings of international events. In contrast, Skidmore (1994a; 1996) argues that the sponsors of liberal internationalism were unable to compete with their more conservative political opponents. One of the main reasons for the liberal internationalists' shortfall was the complexity involved in Carter's strategy of adjustment. Rather than fall back on the traditional and simple containment discourse of the Cold War, the adjustment strategy required a pragmatic and flexible approach to foreign policy that implied customised responses to the specific requirements of each individual situation. The Carter Administration's characterisation of the USSR was a particularly difficult sell to the American public. In contrast to the traditional Cold War image of a hostile Soviet Union, Carter presented the Soviets as a limited adversary, i.e., neither friend nor foe. This proved too complex and messy a concept to muster public endorsement and support. Moreover, since the end of Vietnam War, public opinion in America was once again leaning toward conservative internationalism with its emphasis on anti-communism, containment of the USSR, and military preparedness (Skidmore, 1996). Therefore, in order to regain political support and legitimacy for his policies at home, Carter opted to replace his initial multifaceted foreign policy with a more simple and clear-cut approach to international challenges:

Without an effective means of selling his overall strategy to the American people, Carter's pursuit of reform led to substantial domestic political costs. When these costs eventually

became intolerable, Carter fell back upon both the legitimative techniques and the associated policies of the cold war era in an effort to shore up his political position at home. Once domestic priorities became paramount to the administration, it had little choice but to abandon much of its early foreign policy agenda. (Skidmore, 1994a: 710)

Attentive to public sentiments and cherished beliefs, the Carter Administration aligned its foreign policy to match the American public's more conservative outlook. This new policy implied adopting a doctrinal approach to foreign policy, based on simple and pragmatic concepts and arguments. As a result, the Carter Administration began representing the USSR as an aggressive and treacherous enemy, overselling Soviet activities as an imminent threat to US and Western interests (Skidmore, 1994a).

An analogous interpretation is put forward by William Quandt in analysing the American electoral cycle. According to the Quandt (1986a: 14), "A skilful president will learn how to make use of the political cycle to enhance the chances of success in his foreign policy; a careless one will probably pay a high price for ignoring domestic realities". Nevertheless, there are patterns of behaviour associated with the political cycle which can be identified. For instance, Quandt (1986a) argues that in the first year, Presidents and their advisors usually lack a deep understanding of foreign policy issues, particularly regarding the Middle East. Normally the positions put forward during the Presidential campaign set the initial political agenda and policies; this is a period involving considerable activism in creating an ambitious policy. A newly elected President will tend to reveal a high level of optimism about his ability to achieve significant results in foreign policy. The second year presents the best opportunities for achieving foreign policy results. Experience has transformed the initial ambition into more modest and workable policy options.

Policies in the second year are often more in tune with reality. There is less of an ideological overlay in policy deliberations. At the same time goals are usually less ambitious. Plans for comprehensive solutions may be replayed by attempts at more modest partial agreements. (Quandt, 1986a: 19)

The third year reveals greater political prudence. As the electoral process starts to emerge on the horizon, Presidents will try to avoid commitments which might not materialise in the immediate future. Prospects which do not guarantee success will be abandoned and the President will disengage from potentially costly political initiatives. This period is also susceptible to committing foreign policy errors:

The rush for success, along with the tendency to abandon controversial and costly policies, means that mistakes are often made in the third year. Opportunities may be lost through carelessness. The price of agreement may become very high as the parties to the conflict realize how badly Washington wants success. Political considerations tend to override the requirements of steady, purposeful diplomacy. (Quandt, 1986a: 22)

In the fourth year, domestic political considerations triumph over foreign policy. The demands on a Presidential candidate do not provide much time for engaging in complex political reflections or demanding foreign policy initiatives. In addition, the concern of not affronting certain interest groups, moderates political behaviour. Therefore, in the final year of his tenure, a President will seek to avoid unnecessary controversy, consequently shying away from any bold initiatives.

Quandt (1986a) argues that Carter revealed these traits during his Presidency. Carter arrived in Washington looking to promote a comprehensive peace settlement for the Middle East. By the second year of his Presidency, an attempt to reach an agreement between Egypt and Israel dictated most of Carter's political initiatives in the region. While in the third year Carter did undertake considerable political risks in order to secure the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty, he quickly disengaged with the peace process as domestic protests mounted and other international events diverted his attention. Specifically, the Palestinian issue was scaled back and a comprehensive settlement was deferred. In his last year in Office, beleaguered by other problems in the region, Carter completely detached himself from the Middle East in order to try to limit his losses. Ultimately, his initial ambitious agenda for the Middle East was retracted as he "was also weakened by the normal workings of the American political system, which forces a first-term president to devote enormous time and energy to his reelection campaign" (Quandt, 1986a: 29).

Another strand of research based on an *innenpolitik* approach emphasises the internal struggle to determine the Administration's foreign policy. This line of reasoning posits that the transformation in foreign policy during the Carter Presidency resulted chiefly from the competition between the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and the Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance. Ultimately, according to these accounts, Brzezinski was able to impose on Carter his more assertive policy recommendations and transform the President's worldview. Gaddis Smith has synthesised this line of argumentation in no uncertain terms:

With each passing year of the Administration, the public became more demanding of a reassertion of American strength. By the time of the hostage crisis and the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan in late 1979, the new tide was flowing at full strength. Carter abandoned the philosophy of repentance and reform, in the face of adversity at home and abroad. Under Brzezinski's tutelage and without substantial knowledge and experience of his own, Carter underwent a rapid mutation from an internalist to a militant externalist, blaming the Soviet Union for almost everything that was going wrong, saying very little about human rights as an absolute principle of foreign policy, advocating higher defense budgets and the development of nuclear weapons and the creation of new military units capable of being rapidly deployed for action anywhere in the world. (Smith, 1986: 48-49)

This interpretation of the Carter Administration's foreign policy change has received considerable backing from numerous academic investigations. Many researchers have testified to the visceral struggle to define foreign policy within the Administration. (c.f., Aronoff, 2006; Brown, 1994; Garrison, 2002; Hoyt and Garrison, 1997; Moens, 1991; Rothkopf, 2005). In particular, internal divisions were aggravated during international crises, further eroding the Administration's political cohesion.

According to Brown (1994), several different visions for guiding US foreign policy coexisted early on in the Carter Administration. A highly idealistic foreign policy, based on human rights and universal democratic values, was initially espoused by Carter and championed by officials such as his Ambassador to the United Nations, Andrew Young. A more geopolitically-oriented approach was supported by Brzezinski, who advocated a

more assertive policy towards the Soviet Union. A more pragmatic and institutional vision was sponsored by Vance. For Vance, case-by-case analyses and negotiated solutions were the principal building-blocks for US-Soviet relations and international stability and peace. In the face of these frequently contrasting visions, Brown (1994: 314) argues that Carter “could be swayed by the worldviews and preferred style of each of these approaches; and at times during his campaign for the presidency and during his tenure in the White House he would appear to have adopted one or the other, and at times some confusing hybrid of all of them”. Eventually, Brzezinski’s view prevailed as Vance and Young left the Administration in the final years of the Presidency. In the words of the author, “Vance’s resignation marked the ascendancy of the Brzezinski approach – the renewed preoccupation with the Soviet threat and the tendency to resort to confrontationist postures in dealing with adversaries” (Brown, 1994: 320).

Brown’s general argument aligns with those of most scholars of the Carter Administration (c.f., Bill, 1988; Cottam, 1992; Garrison, 2002; Garthoff, 1985; Glad, 2009; Hoyt and Garrison, 1997; Little, 2008; Njølstad, 1995; Rothkopf, 2005). In fact, the majority of the research on Carter’s foreign policy demonstrates that as international crises mounted throughout the tenure of the Carter Presidency, positions were increasingly radicalised within the Administration and, ultimately, the more assertive policies sponsored by Brzezinski finally came to dominate the foreign policy agenda, leading to a wholesale transformation of Carter’s initial objectives.

Alexander Moens’ (1991) account of the Administration’s handling of the Iranian crisis in 1978-1979 illustratively reveals the intense internal struggle to define policy options and manage the policy process²⁶. Moens claims to depart from the conventional arguments focused on the internal conflict between the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and the Secretary of State by exposing the flawed nature of the policy process. All the same, the author’s research clearly highlights the conflictual dynamics involved between the key-officials involved in the foreign policy decision-making process.

²⁶ It should be noted that in another study, Moens (1990) downplays the conflict within the Administration. In particular, the author (Moens, 1990: 923) claims that in the initial years of the Carter Presidency there was a “critical absence of policy diversity among the advocates”.

According to Moens (1991) Brzezinski sidelined policy recommendations with which he did not agree, concealing them from other foreign policy officials. For instance, Brzezinski shelved the first policy recommendation memorandum produced by the State Department on October 24th 1978 on how to deal with the Iranian crisis. Among the many observations, the memorandum recommended that the US should increase contacts with the opposition to the Pahlavi regime, namely with the mullahs and the Ayatollah Khomeini – a position divergent from Brzezinski who did not believe that the Shah should grant additional concessions to the opposition. Later that year, Brzezinski once again obscured policy proposals from the State Department calling for a compromise with the Khomeini forces. In this episode, Brzezinski refused to present the recommendations put forward by the Department of State’s desk officer for Iran, Henry Precht, for removing the Shah from power and conceding the government to the Khomeini-led opposition. More precisely, Newsome (quoted in Moens, 1991: 226-227) asserts that “Henry Precht, who was trying to bring home the reality of the events in Iran, was subsequently excluded from SCC meetings by Brzezinski”.

Another incident bearing witness to the struggle for power in determining the Administration’s foreign policy involves the Secretary of State. Moens (1991) reports that, on December 28th 1978, Brown, Brzezinski, Schlesinger, Turner, and Vance discussed possible solutions to Iranian crisis. The group essentially discussed the possibility of the regime using an “Iron Fist” option to put down the opposition and restore order in the country. Not reaching a consensual recommendation, the officials decided to write a compromise message for Ambassador Sullivan to transmit to the Shah. Due to its conciliatory nature, the message employed very subtle language, leaving ample margin of interpretation to the Shah. Discontented with the content of the message, Vance pressured the President to alter the text to better suit his outlook:

Vance took the message to Camp David for Carter’s approval. This time it was his turn for an end-run on the President. Carter, at Vance’s urging, changed the language so that the shah would not apply his Iron Fist option. Instead of recommending a “firm military government”, the message now advised “a government which would end disorder, violence

and bloodshed". Vance was satisfied that this message was less ambiguous... (Moens, 1991: 227)

The dispute within the Administration to control the foreign policy decision-making process during the Iranian crisis has led some researchers to declare that "a type of guerrilla warfare ensued" between the contending parties – i.e., the State Department and the NSC (Kaufman, 1993: 128). Moreover, it is only one example of the numerous incidents in which researchers have identified internecine competition between key-foreign policy officials to define US policy – e.g., in relation to China (Garrison, 2002), Horn of Africa (Garthoff, 1985; Jackson, 2007; 2010), Iranian hostage crisis (Waugh Jr., 1990), Nicaragua (Cottam, 1992), and Vietnam (Hurst, 1997). Ultimately, according to this school of thought, internal rivalries would cripple the Administrations' capability to develop and implement a coherent course of action regarding international affairs (Smith, 1986).

This rationale has been sanctioned and strengthened by many of the Administrations' officials own accounts of the Carter Presidency, particularly that of Cyrus Vance (1983). According to the former Secretary of State, the different views on how to deal with the Soviets ultimately and irreparably fragmented the Administrations' foreign policy consensus. While conceding that there had naturally always been multiple perspectives on US-Soviet relations within the Administration, Vance (1983: 394) admits that in the final years of the Presidency "it became increasingly difficult to hold the coalition together".

Cognitive analyses of the Carter Administration also accentuate this competitive dynamic. Jerel Rosati (1991) has carried out one of the most exhaustive studies on the Administration's cognitive images and has confirmed the change in its general worldview. Rosati assessed the worldviews of the Administration's top foreign policy decision-makers – i.e., Carter, Brzezinski, and Vance – by applying content analysis to their major public statements and using an events data set to determine their behaviour throughout the term of the Carter Presidency.

Rosati's research reveals findings consistent with the research carried out by Skidmore (1994a; 1996) which was mentioned above. Rosati claims that the Carter

Administration came to office with a consensual and coherent worldview. In particular, the top officials shared an image of a complex international system, characterised by “the emergence of a variety of important issues and actors, all of which had to be addressed if the United States was to respond positively to the changes taking place throughout the globe” (Rosati, 1991: 39). For the Administration interdependence was a key feature of the contemporary international system and, therefore, cooperation between the major powers was essential for resolving emerging disputes – i.e., creating a global community. According to Rosati (1991: 42), “in order to pursue a community among nations, the Carter Administration rejected the policy of containment as the basis of American foreign policy”. In its place, Carter sought to further promote *détente* by cooperating with the Soviet Union, which the Administration’s top officials did not consider an imminent threat. In fact, the Soviets were viewed as partners in solving many international issues, particularly the Arab-Israeli conflict (Rosati, 1991).

However, beginning in 1978, Soviet and Cuban intervention in the Third World started to challenge the Administration’s optimistic worldview. Brzezinski’s image of the international system was particularly transformed by Soviet interventionism. By the end of the year, Rosati (1991) claims that Brzezinski had abandoned the hope for a cooperative relationship with the Soviet Union, preferring instead a more robust policy for containing Soviet initiatives in the Third World. In contrast, despite some disenchantment with Soviet behaviour, Carter and Vance continued to maintain an optimistic image of the international system, particularly regarding US-Soviet relations, and were committed to a cooperative posture for dealing with the most pressing global issues. Therefore, while differences emerged among the principal foreign policy decision-makers, a common worldview persisted:

It needs to be recognized that although Carter, Vance, and Brzezinski no longer shared a similar image of the international system, they did not differ over all the major issues. For those issues involving or affecting the Soviet Union, such as arms control and the conflicts in Africa involving the Horn and Zaire, the differences in image were severe. However, for other issues in which the Soviet Union was perceived to be peripheral, such as human

rights, the global economy, and the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Carter officials thought much alike. (Rosati, 1991: 66-67)

As Soviet activity in the Third World continued, Brzezinski's image of the international system kept getting grimmer. Carter's Assistant for National Security Affairs increasingly accused the Soviet Union of creating international instability and called for a reinforcement of US military power to counter Soviet global ascension. As a result, Rosati asserts that, by 1979, Carter wavered between his two main foreign policy advisors divergent worldviews. Consequently, US foreign policy reflected Carter's endeavour to balance these conflicting perspectives. As Carter increasingly moved towards Brzezinski's pessimistic image, the events of late-1979 ultimately led to a wholesale conversion of the Carter's worldview. According to Rosati's research, events in the Middle East pushed the Administration to embrace a hostile image of the USSR and abandon a cooperative and optimistic approach to international affairs, particularly regarding US-Soviet relations.

The containment of Soviet expansion became, once again, the *raison d'être* of US foreign policy. In particular, the Administration's attention was focused on Brzezinski's "arc of crisis" and concerns with issues such as human rights, preventive diplomacy, and national independence took a back seat to responding to growing Soviet assertiveness. More importantly, in order to face the Soviet challenge, the Carter Administration came to emphasise the role of military power in achieving its foreign policy objectives. The Carter Doctrine was the corollary of the Administration's new worldview as military force was judged the most effective means for restraining Soviet expansion.

Thus, in unison with other approaches in FPA, Rosati's cognitive analysis of the Carter Administration's foreign policy revealed a dramatic change during its term in office:

The Administration's image of global complexity and the quest for global community did not stay in its pure form for long. During 1978 and 1979, the early image was modified: Brzezinski rejected it, and President Carter grew more sceptical. By 1980, the idealistic image of a complex global community was lost: the world was perceived to have become increasingly fragmented and unstable. A pessimistic image had completely replaced the

earlier optimism in accordance with *realpolitik*. No longer did the Administration look to the future – global change was likely to be detrimental to US interests. Instead, Carter’s foreign policy became status-quo oriented in order to prevent Soviet expansionism and to promote global stability. Consequently, in 1980 the Carter Administration reinstated the policy of containment against the Soviet Union. (Rosati, 1991: 157)

Other accounts of the Carter Administration’s cognitive images support Rosati’s findings. In her study on the political conversion of Jimmy Carter, Yael Aronoff (2006) also contends that Jimmy Carter experienced a radical change of his worldview, particularly concerning the relationship with the USSR. According to Aronoff (2006: 447), Soviet initiatives in Southwest Asia catalysed the radical transformation of Carter’s cognitive image of the Soviets, leading him, in turn, “to alter his administration’s policies towards the Soviet Union drastically, virtually breaking off relations between the United States and the Soviet Union”. Similar conclusions have also been reached by Lebow and Stein (1993) in their study on Carter’s response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The authors reiterate that the Administration’s reaction to the events in Afghanistan “represents a case of dramatic change in beliefs, attributions and attitudes” towards the Soviet Union (Lebow and Stein, 1993: 97).

However, regardless of the approach espoused by the different researchers, we can identify a common strand in all the accounts of the Carter Administration’s foreign policy change. In fact, while normally unstated, most research presents very similar accounts of *how* the change occurred. Most present the Administration’s foreign policy change as an abrupt and radical break with the policies previously pursued. While not openly, and many times consciously, acknowledging it as such, the descriptions of the Administration’s foreign policy change are in perfect harmony with the assumptions of punctuated equilibrium theory. The failure in the scholarly literature to acknowledge this is certainly due to the fact that most accounts of the change in the Carter Administration’s foreign policy lack a comprehensive framework for understanding the change process. For the most part, scholars are more interested in explaining *why* foreign

policy changed, disregarding *how* it comes about²⁷. Therefore, the existing accounts tend to limit themselves to narrating events, providing a particular reason (or combination of reasons) for explaining change. However, this fact limits a deeper understanding of the dynamics involved in foreign policy change. It obscures the complex processes at work in foreign policy-making.

²⁷ Skidmore (1996) does take into account the factors contributing to policy change, particularly regarding the Carter Administration. However, Skidmore adopts a realist perspective more focused on establishing a typology in which the independent variables – i.e., 1) degree of external compulsion and 2) degree of domestic constraint – determine the type of change. While I will challenge realist claims regarding external and domestic “realities” throughout the study, I will return to this issue in the concluding chapter.

EXPLAINING *HOW* FOREIGN POLICY CHANGED DURING THE CARTER PRESIDENCY

“Once a policy has been put in place, it needs to be maintained. (...) Most activity in bilateral relations or in organizations falls into the component of maintenance. It is the stuff of routine diplomacy, with the hope of keeping a policy comfortably settled in the ‘maintenance’ mode. Policies that are not effectively maintained might turn into problems that stir national policymakers into developing a new policy. Naturally, top officials hope to avoid such exertions. This is the concept former Secretary of State George Schultz refers to as ‘gardening’. It is, he explains, ‘one of the most underrated aspects of diplomacy’ because ‘the way to keep weeds from overwhelming you is to deal with them constantly and in their early stages’.”

(Philip Zelikow, *Foreign Policy Engineering*)

My objective is not to assess which of the accounts presented in the previous chapter best explain the changes in the Carter Administration’s foreign policy. I believe all of them have their merits and shortcomings. Indeed, there is a growing consensus that policy change is best explained using multicausal explanations in which “foreign policy reflects the complex interplay of governmental, domestic, and international factors” (Hagan and Rosati, 1994: 270). Nevertheless, as stated above, while the multiple approaches to explaining the changes in the Carter Administration’s foreign policy differ in their causal focus, there is a common theme uniting them. All the previous accounts explain the policy transformation as a sudden radical break with previous policies and favour a planned approach to the change process. This is not surprising considering the influence that punctuated equilibrium and planned change have in International Relation, particularly in FPA.

In the following sections I will present the central tenets of punctuated equilibrium to demonstrate how the conventional accounts of the Administration's foreign policy change and the rise of the Carter Doctrine have implicitly applied its main theoretical assumptions. The importance of this outlook should not be understated. While not usually acknowledged as such, punctuated equilibrium-centred models are well consolidated and are regularly applied to explain a wide range of international phenomena in IR. In fact, the main proponents of this school of thought claim that punctuated equilibrium is *the dominant characteristic of the American political system* (True et al., 1999; emphases added). Subsequently, I will breakdown the punctuated equilibrium process by employing the planned change approach to policy transformation. By doing so, I seek to demonstrate how foreign policy change is usually explained using a rational framework in which change results from a deliberately planned endeavour to correct policy outcomes.

3.1) Punctuated Equilibrium

Punctuated equilibrium epitomises discontinuous episodic change. While punctuated equilibrium²⁸ has some definitional variations consistent with the different fields of research applying it, the fundamental argument holds that “systems evolve through the alternation of periods of equilibrium, in which persistent underlying structures permit only incremental change, and periods of revolution, in which these underlying structures are fundamentally altered” (Gersick, 1991: 13).

Punctuated equilibrium was initially developed by evolutionary biology theorists in the 1970s as a counter-explanation to the traditional gradualist version of natural selection. According to Eldredge and Gould (1972), conventional paleontological adherence to “phyletic gradualism”, which assumed that new species could only develop from slow and continuous transformations of entire populations, was unfounded. In their

²⁸ Punctuated equilibrium is often regarded as episodic change (Pettigrew et al., 2001; Weick and Quinn, 1999). Throughout this study I will use the term episodic change to denote to the dynamics underlying the punctuated equilibrium model.

view, fossil records demonstrated that, rather than gradual transformation, morphological breaks in the stratigraphic records revealed that changes in species actually occurred through “a break with essentially sudden replacement of ancestors by descendents” (Eldredge and Gould, 1977: 117). A scant two decades later, punctuated equilibrium had assumed the dominant position for explaining evolutionary biology and evolutionary theory in general (Eldredge and Gould, 1993).

Quite naturally, punctuated equilibrium quickly found its way into other fields of research, namely political science. For instance, Kenneth Boulding (1992) espoused “punctuationism” in political science by highlighting the many similarities between biological and social systems. However, Boulding’s argument was particularly vague and lacked an empirical basis to support his claims. Other empirically-oriented studies also began to emphasise the episodic nature of policy change, contrasting it to the traditionally dominant incrementalist paradigm.

In his work on the policy agendas of the health and transportation sectors in the US federal government, Kingdon (1995) highlighted how policy agendas changed as the result of the sudden opening of windows of opportunities. These “policy windows” are an opportunity for advocates of proposals to try to get their points of view or solutions into the centre of decision-makers attention. Since policy tends to be stable, “advocates lie in wait and around government with their solutions at hand, waiting for a development in the political stream they can use to their advantage” (Kingdon, 1995: 165). While some policy windows are predictable, they can also be random and unexpected, meaning that policy entrepreneurs must always be ready to seize these opportunities. Moreover, policy windows do not open often and when they do they do not stay open long (Kingdon, 1995).

Analogous studies, firmly anchored in policy process theories, emerged emphasising similar ideas and punctuated equilibrium promptly began occupying a central place in political science (c.f., Diehl and Goertz, 2001). In analysing the policy on US nuclear power industry, Baumgartner and Jones (1991) used punctuated equilibrium to explain how stability and change in public policy could be understood as a single process. Baumgartner and colleagues (Baumgartner et al., 2009; Baumgartner and Jones,

1991; Baumgartner and Jones, 1993; Jones et al., 1998; True et al., 1999) broadened their research to encompass other policy areas and came to similar conclusions about the policy process. Their broad theoretical reasoning is that the political system favours the status quo and thus policy process tends to be stable due to policy monopolies generated by institutional policy subsystems²⁹. Due to the near static nature of the policy process, there is a tendency for long periods of policy equilibrium which are only interrupted when issues are brought into the macropolitical realm³⁰. The competing views can then lead to an abrupt, radical change in policy. In other words:

...subsystem politics is the politics of equilibrium – the politics of the policy monopoly, incrementalism, a widely accepted supportive image, and negative feedback. Subsystem decisionmaking is decentralized to the iron triangle and issue networks of specialists in the bureaucracy, congressional subgroups, and interested parties. Established interests tend to dampen departures from inertia... until a political mobilization, advancement on the government agenda, and positive feedback occur. At that point, issues spill over into the macropolitical system of Congress and the public presidency.

Macropolitics is the politics of punctuation – the politics of large scale change, competing policy images, political manipulation, and positive feedback. Positive feedback exacerbates impulses for change: It overcomes inertia and produces explosions or implosions from former states. (True et al., 1999: 102)

Once changes are put in motion, institutions tend to lock the new policies into place. As the issue fades from the macropolitical sphere, institutional reforms tend towards establishing a renewed policy equilibrium. Inertia settles into organisational activities once again.

Punctuated equilibrium found has an entry into International Relations. Initially the application of punctuated equilibrium was limited to policy subsystems. However,

²⁹ A policy subsystem is understood as an issue-oriented community which operates outside the political spotlight and contributes to the development and consolidation of specific policies. It results from the need for a specialized division of labour within the policy-making community (Baumgartner and Jones, 1991; 1993).

³⁰ Macropolitics implies the more pluralistic political arena in which several competing policy agents try to impose their views or agenda on a specific high profile issue (True et al., 1999).

over the years it has been applied to governments as a whole in several studies (Jones et al., 1998). Several studies have been carried out applying the punctuated equilibrium model to international politics. For instance, Gary Goertz and Paul Diehl have conducted studies in which they apply punctuated equilibrium to do exactly this (c.f., Diehl and Goertz, 2001; Goertz, 2003; Goertz and Diehl, 1993; Goertz and Diehl, 1995; Goertz et al., 2005). The authors have used the premises of punctuated-equilibrium to explain the maintenance of international rivalries throughout extended periods of time, suggesting the importance of lock-in stages of rivalry that result from the failure of coercive and conflict management strategies between opposing states. According to the authors, interstate rivalries are stable and enduring situations (Goertz and Diehl, 1993). This stable situation can only overcome by episodic political shocks which can contribute to the creation or termination of international conflicts and rivalries (Goertz and Diehl, 1995). Once rivalries are locked-in again, a new “stasis” stage begins in which “hostile interactions persist between the rivals with some regularity or consistency”³¹ (Goertz et al., 2005: 748).

Over the years, further research has applied punctuated equilibrium to other issues in IR. Goertz (2003) has proposed a model of organisational decision-making centred on a punctuated-equilibrium model of international institutions wherein he argues that the norms governing these institutions result from periods of rapid change at the organisational and individual level which are followed by periods of incrementalism and inertia. In a more provocative tone, Leventoglu and Slantchev (2007: 768) have carried out research claiming that it is possible to “view war as a mutually coercive process that involves continuous fighting punctured by occasional opportunities for peace”. More recently, in their analysis on energy regimes, Colgan et al. (2012) also argue that changes in regime complexes are sporadic events which are usually dependent on some kind of internal dissatisfaction.

Not surprisingly, FPA has also applied assumptions from punctuated equilibrium in order to explain foreign policy change. Jerel Rosati (1994) has put forward one of the

³¹ Other studies have questioned these basic assumptions, particularly refuting the enduring and stable nature of interstate rivalries (c.f., Cioffi-Revilla, 1998).

clearest conceptual accounts of the application of punctuated equilibrium in the field of foreign policy. According to Rosati, foreign policy is subject to cyclical dynamics in which

...the interaction of the state, the society, and the global environment produces a dialectical process where governmental foreign policy evolves through different cycles of phases over time: from a period of stability (or equilibrium) in which continuity in policy tends to prevail to a period of transition (or disequilibrium) in which change in policy is most likely. Governmental foreign policy tends to resist change but is interrupted occasionally by political crises which stimulate change. Should change in foreign policy occur, a new pattern of foreign policy eventually will become established and entrenched in the government, bringing a new period of stability (and equilibrium) in which continuity in policy again prevails. Therefore, an ongoing cyclical process tends to occur where continuity in governmental foreign policy is periodically interrupted by change. (Rosati, 1994: 223)

This perspective of foreign policy assumes that organisations, such as governments, establish protracted, stable, routine behaviours which are episodically disrupted by episodes of change which help correct deviancies and return organisational activities to a period of renewed stability (Becker, 2004; Marshak, 2002; Purser and Petranker, 2004; Schaefer, 1994; Weick and Quinn, 1999). Resistance to change is a fundamental dynamic underlying punctuated equilibrium since it is a critical factor in explaining revolutionary transformation as the primary means by which political organisations can achieve change (Romanelli and Tushman, 1994). Therefore, the concept of organisational inertia is central to understanding this rationale (Halperin, et al., 2006; Rosati, 1994; Weick, 2000).

Kjell Goldmann (1983) has identified an assortment of different stabilisers that hinder policy change: administrative (i.e., bureaucratic) stabilisers; political stabilisers; cognitive stabilisers; and international stabilisers. According to Goldmann (1983: 216), these stabilisers act to reduce the stress affecting existing policy by blocking, delaying or lessening “the scope of deviations from previous policy”. Research has attributed particular importance to bureaucratic and cognitive factors for which reason I will develop their role in constraining change in greater depth.

Accordingly, bureaucratic organisations, such as governments, tend to develop habitual routines which give them an appearance of stability and permanence. These routines develop a set of unconscious, self-sustaining, and recurring practices which establish the actions of a particular organisation. Thus, habitual routines operate automatically and perpetuate behaviour. In this sense, habitual routines are akin to the concept of organising, which consists of a process that lessens the differences among individuals by establishing recurring behaviour through “institutionalized cognitive representations” (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002: 573). Gersick and Hackman (1990) identify two key consequences resulting from habitual routines: 1) functional consequences and 2) dysfunctional consequences. The most obvious functional consequences for an organisation are the economy of time and energy achieved due to the fact that the routines do not have to be actively managed. Routines allow the individuals in an organisation to dispense with much of the ado involved in achieving a minimum common definition of the situation, work out some kind of shared plan to deal with a situation, and coordinate its execution.

Because similar stimuli are automatically treated the same way when a habitual routine is in effect, a group can move quickly beyond stimulus coding activities. Because habitual behavior follows automatically from recognition of the invoking stimuli, a group need not spend time creating and choosing the behavioral strategy that will guide the work. And because habitual routines are well practiced, the time and energy needed to coordinate among members in executing behaviors is kept low. (Gersick and Hackman, 1990: 71)

Closely associated with the previous aspects, routines also help to create a high degree of security among individuals. In other words, the certainty and consistency created by the routines reduce anxieties and other psychological insecurities that may result from collective action.

However, habitual routines also yield several dysfunctional consequences. Two consequences are particularly relevant to the current study. The first creates the potential for miscoding situations and events. Due to the repetitive nature of the tasks involved in habitual routines, new situations or events might not be recognised and acknowledged as

such. Being conditioned to reacting to certain standard and expected situations, novel stimuli might be dismissed outright or codified in the usual and predictable manner. Individual resistance might refuse to acknowledge a change in the “business-as-usual” environment.

Another dysfunction caused by routines is a decline in innovative capability. Due to the repetitive nature of the routines, individuals are not stimulated to ponder or pursue alternative courses of action. The absence of confrontation within the organisation tends to guarantee a level of social conformity which is contrary to innovative thinking. Moreover, as time goes by and individuals become comfortable within their social context, the motivation and impulse for change in the organisation weakens. This is the characteristic feature of bureaucratic politics with its emphasis on standard operating procedures (SOP). SOPs are routines that allow individuals to deal automatically with the multiple policy challenges that states face every day (Allison and Zelikow, 1999). In this sense, SOPs function as “stabilisers” which reduce the vulnerability implicit in change (Goldmann, 1983).

As research has demonstrated, groups are essential to organisations. It is very common for groups to carry out organisational work and in fact many organisational routines are performed by interacting teams. Accordingly, for Gersick and Hackman (1990: 69) “A *habitual routine exists when a group repeatedly exhibits a functionally similar pattern of behavior in a given stimulus situation without explicitly selecting it over alternative ways of behaving*”. Thus, routines should be understood as a recurrent, collective process involving numerous actors³². The existence of various actors implies that routines can be distributed across several different parts of an organisation. However, the very existence of routines allow for these different agents to carry out activities in a coordinated manner. The coordination results from a high level of simultaneity, unified and systematised practices, integration of the multiple activities, knowledge and information sharing, and establishment of a truce between the different actors (Becker, 2004).

³² Becker (2004) has cautioned us to be aware of the distinction between the behavioural and cognitive patterns of routines.

Gersick and Hackman (1990) identify three ways in which groups generate habitual patterns of behaviour. The first is through the importation of those patterns from outside the group. Therefore, while not creating those routines themselves, group members can adopt and adapt certain behaviours from other organisational contexts. In some instances routine importation is accomplished through the implementation of behaviour acquired by personal past experiences. It is quite normal in foreign policy decision-making groups for individuals to have broad common experience in policy-making and to share a certain set of organisational traditions and norms, thus facilitating the implementation of routines.

The second way in which groups contribute to routines is by creating these standardised procedures in their initial encounters. This is especially the case when groups are newly formed. The role of the group's leader, or other prominent individual in the group, is important in establishing the precedent for subsequent interactions between members. In parallel with the importation of routines, the endogenous creation of routines is established very quickly and early in the group's life. One of the main reasons for this rapid formation and consolidation process is due "in part, from the anxieties people have about dealing with process matters, uncertainty, and planning" (Gersick and Hackman, 1990: 78).

The third way in which groups develop routines is through their development over time. The accumulation and repetition of certain actions and activities eventually solidify certain behaviours. The recurrence of specific patterns of behaviour tends to become an unconscious process which is easily incorporated throughout the group as the natural way of doing things.

Gersick and Hackman (1990) have also identified several reasons why groups maintain habitual routines. Social impact, or simple inertia, is one of the most common rationales for upholding routines. In this case, individual group members avoid questioning the routine even when they have doubts because they are waiting for another member to take the initiative. Another reason for perpetuating routines is the phenomenon of social entrainment which tends to institutionalise certain dynamics. In other words, a "system's internal rhythm is 'captured' by a temporal process such that

the rhythm of the system shifts toward the periodicity and phase of the capturing process” (Gersick and Hackman, 1990: 81). This means that specific patterns of interaction applied to a specific situation are crystallised and continually applied to other situations, even in different circumstances.

The costs inherent to change are also responsible for the maintenance of routines. The safety and comfort achieved by accommodating to certain actions and behaviours restrains attempts to alter the “business as usual” outlook. Since change is generally associated with costly trade-offs (especially cognitively and socially), individuals are not inclined to initiate transformative interactions. In addition, group norms have a propensity for reinforcing habitual routines. Norms, either formally or informally articulated, rarely sanction individuals in a group to question the established patterns of interaction. In reality, “the more powerfully group norms control member behavior (and the stronger the meta-norms that make such control undiscussable), the less likely individual members will be to take initiatives that question existing habitual routines – *even if* individual group members privately feel the need to change” (Gersick and Hackman, 1990: 83).

In the Carter Administration several bureaucratic impediments to change have been also identified. However, the bureaucratic response to Presidential Directive 18 (PD-18) is particularly revealing as to the resistance to policy change. In early-1977, President Carter ordered the National Security Council (NSC) to proceed with a major reassessment of US-Soviet competition across the Globe. The result of this re-evaluation was Policy Review Memorandum 10 (PRM-10), which analysed the balance between the US and the USSR in a wide range of functional issues, namely in the military, economic, political, and intelligence fields. The review also identified the major regions subject to US-Soviet competition. The recommendations of this review gave rise to PD-18 in August 1977. According to PD-18, the US military should develop the capabilities to rapidly project force in crisis situations, particularly into the Persian Gulf, specifically by creating a Rapid Deployment Force (RDF).

However, at first the provisions of PD-18 were largely ignored by the multiple governmental bureaucracies. The State Department, the Department of Defence, and the

intelligence community resisted the idea of augmenting the force projection capabilities foreseen in the directive. According to former NSC staffer William Odom (2006), each agency had its particular reasons for resisting the stipulations of PD-18. For the State Department, an increased US military presence was considered counterproductive since it might provoke a reaction from radical Arab groups. In addition, a more assertive military posture might also impair relations with the Soviets, particularly in the area of arms control agreements (Kupchan, 1987). For the Defence Department, budget restrictions hindered any additional consideration of reallocating available resources. With a budgetary reduction of 38% since 1968 (Odom, 2006), the Department of Defence was unwilling to divert resources from what it considered its top priority – i.e., Europe. Moreover, the Pentagon was not particularly inclined to take on missions involving unconventional warfare as would be the case in the Middle East (Kupchan, 1987). The intelligence community, for its part, was more concerned with other issues, such as preserving strategic facilities in Iran, and paid little attention to the Administration's new strategy. On the whole, the different agencies were immersed in their routines and "once PD-18 was signed, the Pentagon essentially ignored the directive to set up an RDF, and the State Department showed no interest in making it acceptable to US friends in the region" (Odom, 2006: 59).

The military bureaucracy also created roadblocks to the operationalisation of the RDF's Gulf contingency planning. Turf wars between the military services hindered the planning process (Kupchan, 1987). The Navy and the Marine Corps supported a strategy based on US naval superiority. Wary of the need to assume mere sealift services for ground forces, the Navy proposed the introduction of several carrier task forces in the Gulf region or the implementation of a strategy of horizontal escalation in which the US Navy would engage the Soviet navy in peripheral areas³³. The Marines also deemphasised the need for large-scale ground forces. Being a force dedicated to amphibious assault, the Marines sided with the Navy by recommending a limited ground strategy in the littoral areas of the Gulf. The Army, for its part, favoured a strategy that relied on heavily

³³ For a more detailed account of the strategy proposals of the different services see Kupchan (1987), particularly chapter 5.

armoured combat units placed deep within the region. In addition, the Army also stressed the need to employ light airborne units. Consequently, the Air Force sided with the Army since it would be responsible for transporting the forces into the region. However, the Air Force also proposed a strategy which would make use of deep air strikes and air support of ground forces, reinforcing a strategy focused on the region's interior.

In addition, the bureaucratic discussion over the military command structure responsible for the RDF also hampered its prompt and efficient operationalisation. The existing regional command structures – i.e., European Command (EUCOM) and Pacific Command (PACOM) – divided the map of the Middle East. While EUCOM was responsible for military operations in the Eastern Mediterranean states, including Iran and the Persian Gulf, PACOM was in charge of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the Indian Ocean. Furthermore, the coordination of overseas deployment in areas outside the existing commands was assigned to Readiness Command³⁴ (REDCOM). Since each command's principal interests were in regions other than the Middle East, command of the RDF was complicated. The individual commands competed for control over the force:

PACOM suggested that its territorial responsibility be expanded westward to include the Gulf littoral states and the Gulf itself. EUCOM countered that its area of responsibility should be expanded eastward to include Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the access routes to the Gulf in the Indian Ocean. REDCOM claimed that, as the command designed to handle rapid deployment operations, the mission in Southwest Asia should fall under its auspices. (Kupchan, 1987: 90)

The competition for control over the RDF hindered progress in its implementation and subsequent policy decisions towards the Middle East. As Kupchan (1987: 90) has observed, assigning control to “an existing command would not have created sufficient bureaucratic momentum to implement the administration's new policy”. Therefore, in

³⁴ REDCOM was established in 1971, assuming the functions previously attributed to Strike Command (STRICOM).

order to overcome this impasse and jumpstart the new strategy, the Administration created the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force³⁵ (RDJTF).

However, organisational bureaucracies are not the only impediments to change. Groups outside a governmental organisation can also constrain foreign policy change and reinforce the status quo. Established societal elites tend to have vested interests in the existing political system. Snyder (1991) has suggested that the power of domestic elites should be understood through the establishment of coalitions of several groups. These different groups can influence and sway policy by logrolling coalitions – i.e., trading favours in order for each group to get what it wants – and by harnessing the propaganda resources of the state once it is controlled. In sum, Snyder (1991: 20) claims that, in great power politics, “domestic pressures often outweigh international ones in the calculations of national leaders”. Moreover, the control of domestic groups over the state may vary according to the nature of the existing regime. For example, Skidmore (1994b) argues that weak states – i.e., states where authority is dispersed and societal influence over the governing bodies is considerable – are particularly prone to resist change. According to this reasoning, strong domestic interests are able to impede decision-makers ability to freely manage foreign policy, except in periods of crises. In opposition to strong states, which are fairly autonomous from societal influences, weak states are much more dependent on achieving an extensive level of public legitimacy for their policy choices.

Accordingly, policy tends to become rigid since the “dependence upon public approval makes it difficult for officials in a weak state to pursue a rational, calculating, flexible, interest-based approach to dealing with the international environment” (Skidmore, 1994b: 53). In order to manage foreign policy, decision-makers will tend to rely increasingly on cultural and ideological values which can muster wide popular consent. This, in turn, will predispose society to favour simplistic and ideologically-charged policies which are extremely difficult to alter once set in motion. Therefore, Skidmore (1994b: 54) argues “public identification with the legitimated routines upon which the weak state becomes dependent produces a continuing ideological constraint

³⁵ The RDJTF was subordinated to REDCOM, but could liaison directly with the Joint Chiefs of Staff through a Washington Liaison Office established in the Pentagon. While the RDJTF was not the optimal solution, Kupchan (1987) has acknowledged that it was essential to setting the process in motion.

on policy adjustment and change". Moreover, society in general tends to passively support established institutions and beliefs, thus providing legitimacy for decision-makers to carry on existing policies (Rosati, 1994).

As previously noted, Skidmore (1994a; 1996) has illustrated the occurrence of this phenomenon during the Carter Administration. Skidmore's central thesis rests precisely on the capacity of certain established elite groups to hinder the Carter Administration's desire to implement a new foreign policy³⁶. More precisely, the author (Skidmore, 1996: 68) claims that Carter's conservative opponents were able to draw upon "the continued ideological appeal of Cold War themes and a proven set of techniques for influencing public opinion to reinforce public fears about the Soviet threat and to wrest control of the foreign policy agenda from the Carter administration".

Cognitive theories also subscribe to similar assumptions regarding the resistance to change (Renshon, 2008; Rosati, 2000; 2005). Robert Jervis (1976) has long alerted of the tendency for individuals to maintain a high level of cognitive consistency, i.e., a strong inclination for maintaining and reinforcing existing belief structures. In general terms, cognitive consistency posits that individuals tend to interpret new information in accordance with their pre-existing beliefs, ignoring and distorting contradictory incoming information. Individuals' expectations, or perceptual sets, have a propensity for making people predisposed to receive and interpret confirming incoming information and signals from their environment. Routines are, once again, an essential factor in contributing to such stability. As Jervis (1976: 147) has pointed out, personal experience creates familiarity with certain situations and, thus, "the more familiar a phenomenon is, the more quickly it will be recognized". The influence of cognitive consistency on foreign policy stability is therefore significant because "This means not only that when a statesman has developed a certain image of another country he will maintain that view in the face of large amounts of discrepant information, but also that the general expectations and rules entertained by the statesman about the links between other

³⁶ Skidmore acknowledges that these groups were not the only, nor the most important domestic constraint on Carter's policy reform, since Presidents can ultimately overcome national elites. However, Carter failed to win popular support and legitimacy for his policies in order to counter his adversaries' claims. Therefore, it was "Carter's manifest failure to win this sort of popular support proved his real undoing" (1994a: 708).

states' situations and characteristics on the one hand and their foreign policy intentions on the other hand influence the images of others that he will come to hold" (Jervis, 1976: 146).

This resistance to cognitive change is allegedly exacerbated in an extended social setting. While research has demonstrated that individuals tend to resist changing their beliefs, collective beliefs are even more challenging. In accordance with recent research on group beliefs, "collective worldviews potentially possess even greater staying power because in-group members endorse and consensually validate shared interpretations of events and experiences" (Eidelson and Eidelson, 2003: 188). This phenomenon is intensified in situations involving conflict. Studies carried out on several intractable international conflicts have revealed that protracted conflictual behaviour reinforces violent sociopsychological dynamics. In periods of conflict the sociopsychological infrastructure of the groups tend to reinforce several coping functions, such as rationalising the conflict, justifying behaviour, and consolidating collective identity. From this perspective, Bar-Tal argues that

...the sociopsychological infrastructure that emerges in times of conflict, with its particular characteristics, serves as a major factor for the continuation of the conflict and a barrier for resolving it; (...) As the conflict evolves, each of the opponents develops a sociopsychological infrastructure, which initially fulfils important functional roles, on both the individual and collective levels. With time, however, this infrastructure comes to serve as the major motivating, justifying, and rationalizing factor of the conflict. Any negative actions taken by one side in the conflict then serve as information validating the existing sociopsychological infrastructure for the other side and in turn magnify its motivation and readiness to engage in conflict. The behaviors of each side confirm the held negative sociopsychological infrastructure and justify harming the opponent. (Bar-Tal, 2007: 1447)

Some studies have analysed the Carter Administration's cognitive traits and underlined many of the principles of cognitive consistency. In his study on the worldviews of the key-foreign policy decision-makers in the Carter Administration, Rosati (1991) found that their cognitive images of the international system and of the Soviet Union

proved resistant to change, despite the occurrence of disconfirming events. In the authors view, the Carter Administration came to office sharing an optimistic, albeit complex, image of the international system. Cooperation between States on important issues was considered not only desirable, but achievable. In particular, the USSR was regarded as a potential cohort in resolving many pressing international issues. In other words, in the early years of the Presidency, “the Soviet Union was not seen in a threatening light”, rather the USSR was optimistically viewed as “having a limited capability to affect the environment, constrained by the complexity of the international system, and, although occasionally opportunistic, generally cooperative in its intentions” (Rosati, 1991: 52).

This image of the Soviets proved resilient. As referred in the previous section, despite the events involving Soviet and Cuban involvement in the Horn of Africa in 1978, the Administration’s worldview maintained considerable consistency. While acknowledging that Brzezinski’s worldview was beginning to transform, Rosati (1991) argues that Carter and Vance continued to uphold an optimistic image of the relationship with the Soviet Union during this period. Eventually, events in the Middle East and Southwest Asia led to a wholesale transformation of the Administration’s cognitive images, particularly of the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, some members of the Administration held steadfast to their convictions. Above all, Secretary of State Vance maintained the greatest consistency throughout his term in office. In effect, while Vance did acknowledge the need to react to Soviet involvement in the Third World, particularly after the invasion of Afghanistan, he nevertheless “retained many of the beliefs that were central to the Carter Administration's initial worldview” (Rosati, 1991: 90).

Other studies have provided similar findings. In an analysis of Jimmy Carter’s operational code, Walker et al. (1998) confirmed the President’s initial optimistic outlook towards the international system. Their examination of the evolution of the *philosophical* and *instrumental* components of the President’s belief system confirms that Carter maintained significant cognitive consistency in the initial years of the Presidency. In regards to the US-Soviet relationship, the study also revealed that, during the entire Presidency, “neither the dissensus among the president’s advisors (...) nor the erosion of

public support (...) altered his views (P-1³⁷) or his approach (I-1³⁸) toward the USSR prior to the catalyst provided by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan” (Walker et al., 1998: 187). Consequently, while there were changes verified in Carter's cognitive structure, he maintained a high degree of stability and coherence on several issues for a considerable period, corroborating the arguments forwarded by cognitive theory.

In effect, change, when it occurs, is usually viewed as episodic and abrupt. It takes place during periods of disagreement between planned objectives and actual outcomes (Weick and Quinn, 1999). As Rosati (1994: 226) has pointed out, “since resistance to change is the norm, foreign policy change tends to be, not continuous or evolutionary, but abrupt, discontinuous, and step-level”. From this, we can assume that policy change tends to be viewed as being infrequent, discontinuous, and intentional.

In addition, episodic change is also disruptive because policies are replaced rather than altered (Weick and Quinn, 1999). In this sense, there is a wholesale transformation of the existing state of affairs. Niall Ferguson (2010) has illustrated this abrupt nature of change in a recent essay on the life-cycles of great powers. Contrasting the time-honoured gradualist explanation of imperial decline, Ferguson argues that the collapse of empires is a rapid, unexpected event. This line of reasoning refutes the orthodox belief that empires slowly fade away due to an amalgam of military, economic, cultural, or ecological ailments. By espousing a complex systems-based view, the author posits that empires operate on the “edge of chaos”, which is characterised by a complex and fragile balance established between multiple interacting agents³⁹. From this perspective, the entire system could be disrupted even by the introduction of a minor shock which can disrupt the system’s delicate equilibrium. Therefore, according to Ferguson (2010: 22), a

³⁷ In the operational code analysis, P-1 refers to the philosophical belief of the fundamental nature of politics, political conflict, and the image of the opponent.

³⁸ In the operational code analysis, I-1 refers to the instrumental belief about the best approach for selecting goals for political action.

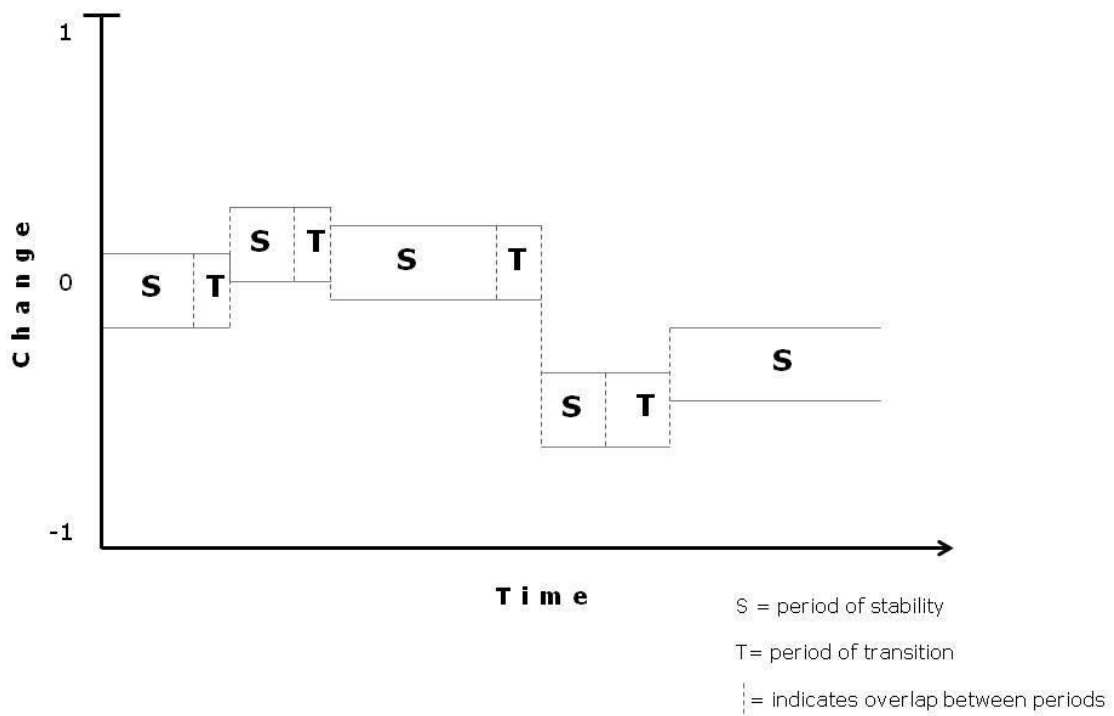
³⁹ While I have used Ferguson’s research as an illustrative example of episodic change, the concept of “edge of chaos” does not espouse a view of stability. Rather, systems exist in an intermediate state between order and disorder. Therefore, systems “never quite settle into a stable equilibrium but never quite fall apart” (Brown and Eisenhardt, 1997: 29). Despite this fact, Ferguson’s argument is consistent with revolutionary episodic change models.

system can “go critical” without prior warning since a “very small trigger can set off a ‘phase transition’ from a benign equilibrium to a crisis”.

Cognitive theories subscribe to an analogous rationale. Notwithstanding the faith in the principle of cognitive consistency, researchers have acknowledged that when cognitive change does occur it leads to a comprehensive overhauling of existing beliefs and representations. Jervis (1976: 170) has long conceded that, although beliefs are highly unyielding, change “once it occurs, it will come in large batches”.

The exact rate of change has eluded a definitive account. Rosati (1994) suggests that periods of transition are not always straightforward and overlaps may occur (Figure 1). Contradictions in the state, society, and the environment very rarely occur simultaneously. Therefore transitions can begin in one distinct area and it may take considerable time for all related parts to change. While “a period of transition tends to occur abruptly and for a short period of time, it may nonetheless last for months and years” (Rosati, 1994: 228).

FIGURE 1 – PERIODS OF STABILITY AND TRANSITION IN FOREIGN POLICY



(Source: Rosati, 1994: 228)

Even when punctuated-equilibrium is not explicitly summoned, its basic assumptions infuse most accounts of the Carter Administration's foreign policy change. As shown above, regardless of which approach the authors employ, the general claim is that halfway during the Carter Presidency US foreign policy experienced an abrupt and radical transformation. The original optimistic policy espoused by the Carter Administration emphasising negotiation and diplomacy quickly evaporated. Former convictions for a morally oriented foreign policy and non-proliferation were side-lined. In a very short period of time the Administration relinquished its commitment to a shaping a global community in which cooperation with the Soviet Union was not only desirable, but possible. In its place, the Carter Administration adopted a new policy of aggressively countering Soviet expansion and in which enhancing US military strength assumed top priority (Aronoff, 2006; Auten, 2008; Bliddal, 2011; Brown, 1994; Digby, 1981; Garthoff, 1985; Glad, 2009; Grinter, 1983; Hurewitz, 1980; Kaufman, 1993; Kupchan, 1987; Lebow and Stein, 1993; Little, 2008; Michaels 2011; Mitchell, 2010; Miyakawa, 1980; Moore, 1984; Nichols, 2002; Palmer, 1999; Rosati, 1991; Tillman, 1982; Tyler, 2009; Westad , 1997; Williams, 1984; Yetiv, 2008; 1995). In the words of Freedman (2009: 94), "the cold war, which earlier in the 1970s had appeared to be effectively over, to be replaced by an era of negotiation and détente, returned with a vengeance".

In the case of the Carter Presidency there is some dispute as to the exact event that triggered the change in the Administration's foreign policy. However, there is very little disagreement on the fact that the Carter Administration drastically overhauled its foreign policy during its term in office due to the change in its perception of the international environment, particularly its relationship with the Soviets. As outlined above, the bulk of the research has signalled out several critical events responsible for catalysing the change: the fall of the Shah in Iran, the Iranian hostage crisis, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. While some authors underline the responsibility of one event in particular, most conventional accounts tend to emphasise the combination of crises arising in 1979⁴⁰ as being accountable for the change⁴¹.

⁴⁰ Other researchers have provided other events which contributed to the change of the Carter Administration's foreign policy. For instance, Jackson (2010; 2007) highlights the role of the Ogaden War initiated in 1977. While acknowledging the importance of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Skidmore

According to Hunt (2007: 248), “the sudden loss of a seemingly secure US position in Iran began the process”. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan merely served to overcome the previous differences within the Administration and release the tension that had been accumulating in US-Soviet relations over the Presidency (Garthoff, 1985). In sum, these events created the drive needed to overcome the bureaucratic, societal, and cognitive inertia that had sustained the Administration’s initial foreign policy.

The Administration’s new foreign policy was epitomised by the proclamation of the Carter Doctrine. In his 1980 *State of the Union Address*, Carter set the tone for the future of US foreign policy:

Let our position be absolutely clear: An 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. (...) We've increased annually our real commitment for defense, and we will sustain this increase of effort throughout the Five Year Defense Program. (...) We are also improving our capability to deploy US military forces rapidly to distant areas. We've helped to strengthen NATO and our other alliances, and recently we and other NATO members have decided to develop and to deploy modernized, intermediate-range nuclear forces to meet an unwarranted and increased threat from the nuclear weapons of the Soviet Union. (Carter, 1983b: 55)

The Carter Doctrine fixed the Middle East at the forefront of US foreign policy (Little, 2008; Rosati, 1991). In fact, the events during this period drastically altered the Middle East. In particular, the year 1979 was a watershed in the history of the region and has led Lesch (2001: 2) to affirm that “the year 1979 constituted a major watershed, if not *the* major watershed, in modern Middle East history”. More importantly, the Administration’s new outlook radically altered US geopolitical considerations. Suddenly,

(1994a) also emphasises the Soviet brigade incident in Cuba as a legitimising factor for the Administration’s foreign policy change. Nichols (2002) for his part, claims that it was the modernisation of Soviet nuclear military capability, particularly the deployment of the SS-18 and SS-20 systems, that most contributed to the Administration’s change of perspective.

⁴¹ This line of reasoning is consistent with Deutsch and Merritt’s (1965) claim that many times foreign policy change only occurs through the repetition or accumulation of external events.

the Middle East, particularly the Persian Gulf, ascended from a once subaltern position behind Europe and East Asia, to become the apex of US global strategic considerations (Bacevich, 2010; Brown, 1983a; Colucci, 2012; Kupchan, 1987; Lenczowski, 1979; Michaels, 2011; Moore, 1984; Njølstad, 2004; Odom, 2006; Rosati, 1991). The new line of US-Soviet confrontation was drawn in the sands of the Persian Gulf. The US would henceforth commit itself to increasing its defence forces and military capabilities to be able to counter further Soviet drives into the region or subdue endogenous tumults which could potentially destabilise the region.

Researchers stress that official statements and strategic documents produced by the Administration attested to this new reality. For example, in October 1980, while commenting on the war between Iraq and Iran, Secretary of State Muskie (1983: 607) declared that the US had “pledged to do what is necessary to protect free shipping in the Strait of Hormuz from any interference”.

Likewise, Presidential Directive-62 (PD), signed on January 15, 1981, underscored the newly acquired importance of the region:

Given the danger that Soviet success in asserting influence over the oil producing status of the Persian Gulf region could undermine the viability of NATO and Japan, cause enormous economic disruptions in Europe, Japan and the United States, higher priority must be given to developing adequate strategic lift, general purpose forces and facilities access for Persian Gulf contingencies.

While NATO will retain first call on force deployments in peacetime for wartime operations, the Persian Gulf shall have highest priority for improvement of strategic lift and general purpose forces in the Five Year Defense Program. (PD-62)

Undoubtedly, the Middle East had become a region of vital strategic importance for the US. The Carter Doctrine signified more than a fleeting response to regional events; it embodied a comprehensive transformation of American global strategic considerations. Ultimately, it reorganised American relations with the Middle Eastern states, USSR, European allies, and East Asia. Perhaps no official testified to the strategic significance of the Carter Administration’s foreign policy better than Brzezinski:

The cumulative effect of the events and decisions of 1979-80 was a strategic revolution in America's global position. Until the 1970s, US foreign policy was anchored on the principle of interdependence with Western Europe, and then later with the Far East. The Middle East was viewed as a semi-neutral zone sealed off from Soviet power by a protective belt composed of Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan, with a neutral Afghanistan providing a buffer. (...) However, the collapse of Iran and the Soviet move into Afghanistan, preceded by the unimpeded Soviet military intrusion into Ethiopia and South Yemen, created an urgent security problem for the region as a whole, prompting by 1980 formal US recognition of the security interdependence of three, instead of two, zones of central strategic importance to the United States: Western Europe, the Far East, and the Middle East. (Brzezinski, 1983: 454)

However, the many challenges involving the new US commitment to Middle East required not only the strengthening of America's military capabilities. Above all, researchers argue that the Administration needed to completely reconceptualise US foreign policy (Auten, 2008; Bliddal, 2011; Digby, 1981; Hurewitz, 1980). Intrinsic to this point of view is the conviction that foreign policy change is the result of a process of self-correcting change which relies on a planned stage-based approach emphasising processes of unfreezing, changing, and refreezing policies.

3.2) Planned Change

The basic postulates of punctuated equilibrium fit perfectly with the planned change approach to foreign policy change. In fact, planned change is the traditional approach to organisational development and change and has dominated research agendas for over half a century (Burnes, 2004a). The basic assumption underlying planned change is that organisations are "in a stable state of equilibrium and that there must be balance in the relationship between organisation and environment" (Boonstra and de Caluwé, 2007: 8). Therefore, it is assumed that if the environment changes, the organisation must also undergo a transformation in order to reach a renewed state of equilibrium in which the organisation can perform accordingly. This change process is assumed to be orderly since

developments are required to be predicted, steered, and controlled (Boonstra and de Caluwé, 2007).

Planned change is deeply associated with the concept of organisational inertia. Since, as I have argued above, it is commonly assumed that organisations institute inertial structures which reinforce policy rigidity, the only means for altering policy is through transformational planned change. From this perspective, according to Weick (2000), organisations “1) move from one state to another in a forward direction through time, 2) move from a less developed state to a better-developed state, 3) move toward specific end state often articulated in a vision, 4) move only when there is disruption and disequilibrium, and 5) move only in response to forces planned and managed by people apart from the system”. Naturally, planned change lays emphasis on the centralised management of the change process. Change is always viewed as a top-down process. Accordingly, it is up to the top echelons of the decision-making structure to initiate and manage the change process.

Planned change is accomplished by breaking down the change process into several different stages. Kurt Lewin’s three stages of planned change⁴² – unfreeze, move (i.e., change), refreeze – continue to be the standard for most of the research looking to understand change in individual and collective behaviour⁴³ (Barr et al., 1992; Burnes, 2004a; 2004c; Orlikowski, 1996; Purser and Petranker, 2004; Schein, 2002; Weick, 2000; Weick and Quinn, 1999). Very succinctly, the different stages of this process can be outlined as following:

- 1) Unfreeze – this stage involves creating the motivation needed to proceed with a change in the current state of affairs. There is a series of compulsory requirements involved in the unfreezing process. The first is a disconfirmation of the current state. In other words, initial expectations are contested or disconfirmed. Secondly,

⁴² The tree-step model of change is Lewin’s most well known contribution to organisational change research. However, it is only one of the four elements which composed his planned approach to change – i.e., field theory, group dynamics, and action research (Burnes 2004a; 2004c).

⁴³ Lewin’s three-step model has been expanded over the years and over thirty different models of planned change have been identified in the thematic literature (Burnes, 2004a).

the members of the group or organisation must develop survival anxiety or guilt due to the fact that the attainment of the idealised objectives and goals is put in jeopardy. Lastly, the group must generate an adequate level of psychological safety in order avoid the formation of defence mechanisms. Therefore, the basic postulate of the unfreezing stage involves the “balancing of enough disconfirmation to arouse an optimal level of anxiety or guilt, without arousing so much learning anxiety as to cause denial, repression, projection, or some other defense mechanism” (Schein, 2002: 36);

2) Move / Change – once the situation is unfrozen the group or organisation can begin to analyse the situation and contemplate new solutions and actions. In this stage the group can begin to attend to and analyse new information, concepts, and alternative actions. It is in this stage that the group or organisation can restructure its shared cognitive representations⁴⁴ and develop new policy options;

3) Refreeze – When the individual or group has constructed a new cognitive representation the new meanings and behaviours must be integrated and institutionalised. The refreezing stage is important for avoiding that the change process is only a temporary adjustment to a deviance rather than a comprehensive change in the regular activities of the group or organisation. In other words, refreezing “seeks to stabilize the group at a new quasi-stationary equilibrium in order to ensure that the new behaviours are relatively safe from regression” (Burnes, 2004c: 986).

The stage-centred approach of planned change is intrinsic to the theory of punctuated equilibrium as applied to foreign policy research. The unfreezing stage is the first stage of the process and involves overcoming the resistance to change. Just as in conventional punctuated equilibrium theory, traditional approaches to FPA claim that resistance to change is only surmounted through the occasioning of crises or critical

⁴⁴ The change mechanisms will be analysed in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

events⁴⁵ (Deutsch and Merritt, 1965; Goldmann, 1983; Krasner, 1976; Romanelli and Tushman, 1994; Rosati and Scott, 2011). While other sources of foreign policy change have been identified and demonstrated – e.g., leader driven change, bureaucratic advocacy, role change, domestic restructuring, and learning in office (Gustavsson, 1999; Hermann, 1990; Renshon, 2008) – significant external events are the most cited and accentuated causes of change. Crises tend to be associated with images of threats and adversity which requires some type of corrective action (Dutton, 1986). As Rosati (1994: 233) argues, “changes in the larger environment are the prime determinant as to why policies of the past are likely to be anachronistic and lead to challenges to the status quo”.

Not all critical events, however, are likely to catalyse change equally. The research carried out by Deutsch and Merritt (1965: 167) over four decades ago revealed that while many events are expected to alter certain individual and collective images, some events “might change so many images that their cumulative effect can lead to a recognizable change in the personalities of individuals or the culture of the groups”. This phenomenon is due to the fact that beliefs and cognitive representations are internally consistent, interdependent, and hierarchical (Renshon, 2008). Moreover, research on organisational responses to crises has demonstrated that “when an organizations decision makers label a strategic issue as a threat, they are likely to construct an organizational response that includes taking actions of large magnitude” (Dutton and Jackson, 1987: 84).

However, critical events do not lead to revolutionary change *per se*. According to Gersick, external shocks only create the need for change:

...events do not indicate to system members what they ought to be doing differently. It may be useful to think of certain kinds of failures – those engendered by misalignments with a systems deep structure or between its deep structure and its environment – not as sufficient causes, but as major sources for revolutionary change. (Gersick, 1991: 22)

⁴⁵ Also referred to many times as “catalytic events” (Krasner, 1976), “external shocks” (Hermann, 1990), “political shocks” (Goertz and Diehl, 1995), “spectacular events” (Deutsch and Merritt, 1965), or “traumatic events” (Renshon, 2008).

Therefore, critical events can reveal that the existing policies are dysfunctional and in need of revision (Brockner and James, 2008). More specifically, change is usually assumed and contextualised merely in the occurrence of some sort of failure. As Weick and Quinn (1999) point out, organisational change is only predictable when something has not resulted in accordance with expectations and internal contradictions mount. In other words:

As adaptation lags behind environmental change, effectiveness decreases, pressures for change increases, and the firm begins to enter a period of crisis. As pressures continue to increase, they may trigger an episode of planned change during which activity patterns, roles, responsibilities, and personnel are altered. These alterations then become the basis for a new period of equilibrium. (Weick, 2000: 229)

In FPA the same outlook holds true. In his seminal work on foreign policy change, Charles Hermann (1990: 13) has corroborated the idea that “change is driven by failure”. Perception of the failure of foreign policy can reveal new threats and risks, allowing decision-makers to reassess existing policy challenges. Information disconfirming existing policy serves as a catalyst for change and provides ammunition for dealing with organisational, cognitive, and societal inertia. Once recognised, failures and shortfalls will lead individuals to try to restructure existing mental models to meet the perceived foreign policy challenges (Hermann, 1990). These challenges typically result from the tensions created by the dissatisfaction with the results of existing policies. As tensions and contradictions mount, the equilibrium can be destabilised and the potential for change grows. Furthermore, the legitimacy of the status quo is increasingly weakened by these challenges, creating additional impetus for policy change (Rosati, 1994).

In fact, most accounts of foreign policy change embrace this basic assumption. As a result, the change in Carter’s foreign policy has traditionally been presented as an acknowledgement of the failure of the Administration’s policies (Hurewitz, 1980). As stated above, the crises arising in 1979 apparently exposed the failures and shortcomings of the Carter Administration’s original foreign policy, allowing for the unfreezing of the Administration’s existing foreign policy. In particular, Lebow and Stein (1993) state that

after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan the Administration officials recognised two complementary and reinforcing policy errors. The first was the failure of the US to adequately communicate its commitment to protect Afghanistan from Soviet intervention. The second was the failure of the Administration to demonstrate that America had the necessary resolve to convincingly enforce its commitments. Vance (1983: 393) has confessed that “one of the lessons to be learned from Afghanistan is the importance of giving a clear forewarning of what we viewed as unacceptable behaviour”. Brzezinski (1983: 432) has seconded this idea: “Had we been tougher sooner, had we drawn the line more clearly, had we engaged in the kind of consultation that I had so many times advocated, maybe the Soviets would not have engaged in this act of miscalculation”.

In addition, the radical policy transformation revealed the failure of the Administrations’ understanding of the US-Soviet relationship. The majority of the Administration’s key-foreign policy decision-makers had always believed it was possible to maintain a working relationship with USRR in issues of mutual interest to both parts. The Middle East was a region in which the Administration was particularly confident it could cooperate with the Soviets. For instance, according to Rosati (1991: 54), “both Vance and Carter believed that the Soviet Union would play a constructive role and, therefore, should be involved in the effort to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict”. However, the invasion of Afghanistan convinced American decision-makers that Moscow would exploit all the possibilities to gain ascendancy in the US-Soviet rivalry, even through military means if required. As officials repeatedly stressed, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan represented the first time since World War II that the Soviet Union had employed its own forces to expand their sphere of influence outside Eastern Europe (c.f., Brzezinski, 1983; Carter, 1982; Christopher, 1983a; Vance, 1983). Carter echoed previous Administration’s concern about a possible domino effect:

We must recognize the strategic importance of Afghanistan to stability and peace. A Soviet-occupied Afghanistan threatens both Iran and Pakistan and is a stepping stone to possible control over much of the world’s oil supplies. (...) If the Soviets are encouraged in this invasion by eventual success, and if they maintain their dominance over Afghanistan and

then extend their control to adjacent countries – the stable, strategic and peaceful balance of the entire world would be changed. This would threaten the security of all nations including, of course, the United States, our allies and our friends. (Carter, 1983a: 813)

As a result, events also disavowed the generally held belief within the Administration that the major threat to the security of the Middle East was internal instability (Yetiv, 1995; c.f., Vance, 1983).

Moreover, the espousal of the Carter Doctrine was also the recognition of the failure of the Nixon Doctrine. Carter initially embraced his predecessor's policy of encouraging states to assume the bulk of the responsibility for handling the problems in their regions (Little, 2008). Since the outset, the Carter Administration favoured local solutions to regional conflicts and, for instance, in the Middle East continued the Nixon Administration's reliance on Iran and Saudi Arabia for maintaining order in the region. However, the events of 1979 revealed that the US could no longer rely on local actors to uphold regional stability and protect US interests, particularly in the Middle East. The US would subsequently have to step-up and assure the defence of the region from Soviet encroachment and endogenous instability.

Once the structures, beliefs, and politics of society, the state, and individuals are called into question, the change (i.e., move) stage can begin. New policy options must be assessed since it is considered that the "function of policy is problem-solving" (Goertz, 2003: 10). As the forefathers of contemporary FPA have long acknowledged, political "action is planful" (Snyder et al., 1969: 199). Accordingly, foreign policy is usually considered the result of a deliberate act, i.e., planned action. Conventional definitions of foreign policy reinforce this conviction. For example, Rosati (1994: 225) defines foreign policy as "the scope and collections of goals, strategies, and instruments that are selected by governmental policymakers to respond abroad to the present and future environment. In a similar vein, Hermann (1990: 5) defines foreign policy as "a program (plan) designed to address some problem or pursue some goal that entails action towards foreign entities".

The underlying assumption from this perspective is that foreign policy change is triggered by the identification of a problem. Therefore, it is inherent that the majority of

the accounts of foreign policy change assume that foreign policy change is the result of a planned political enterprise. In accordance with this perspective, the traditional model of change favours approaches which emphasise rationally planned and managed policy change processes. Accordingly, change is regarded as something which is intentional and susceptible to a rational analysis and design, i.e., where requirements and objectives are decipherable, strategies are identifiable, and the process is controllable. In essence, “the dominant assumption in these models is that managers have the capability and control to achieve rational adaptation to environmental demands for change” (Barrett et al., 1995: 353).

Consequently, the decision-making process is intentionally activated in order to deal with the respective foreign policy problem. Conceding that governmental organisations are inherently inert, they move “only when pushed hard and persistently” (Halerpin et al., 2006: 99). Therefore, deliberate and conscious actions are carried out by individuals or groups in order to change the existing conditions and state of affairs. In particular, the topmost decision-makers are considered crucial in catalysing and directing the change process. Since critical events reveal potential threats and dangers that are only overcome by deep-seated-change in policy, executive leadership must be involved in the development of the change strategy, namely identifying the objectives and the means, as well as in the implementation of the new policy. On the whole, broad policy change is a top-down process in which the top decision-makers “must direct the content of frame-breaking change *and* provide the energy, vision, and resources to support, and be role models for, the new order” (Tushman et al., 1997: 592).

While conceding the subjective nature of “problems”, Margaret Hermann (2001) put forward a decision unit framework that concisely illustrates the traditional decision-making approach to foreign policy change. Triggered by an initial problem, the change process is divided into several continuous, but distinct stages. Each stage deals with specific questions that decision-makers must answer in order to move forward in the process: 1) is action needed in relation to the problem? 2) what are the possible solutions to the problem? 3) which of the options should be adopted? Each question presents itself

as an occasion for decision that makes-up the various stages of the decision-making process.

This outlook is entirely consistent with the general principles of the Rational Actor Model (RAM) in FPA, in which Governments reveal value-maximising behaviour in dealing with foreign policy situations (Allison and Zelikow, 1999; Stein and Tanter, 1980; Yetiv, 2004; Zelikow, 1994). RAM is undoubtedly the most well known model of foreign policy decision-making (Steinbruner, 2002; Walt, 1999) and still prevails in most accounts of foreign policy change. Underlying the RAM is rational choice theory with its three fundamental assumptions⁴⁶: purposive action, consistent preferences, and utility (value) maximisation (MacDonald, 2003). As a result, RAM assumes that political actors are capable of identifying various problem solving options, weighing their respective costs and benefits in accordance with the national interest (while considering the adversaries possible responses), and choosing the option that best maximises those objectives (Yetiv, 2004). Accordingly, in order to proceed with the change phase, decision-makers must: 1) identify the goals and objectives, ranking them in terms of their “utility”, 2) order the multiple alternative courses of actions for dealing with the issue before him, 3) assess the consequences or outcomes of each alternative, and 4) choose the alternative that ranks highest in terms of payoff (Allison and Zelikow, 1999).

Even when enthusiasts of rational choice acknowledge that sometimes individuals prefer “satisficing” rather than optimisation and are frequently subject to cognitive errors, these phenomena are dismissed as exceptional situations (Jones, 2003). According to MacDonald (2003: 556) enthusiasts of rational choice assume that “in general, human beings in most social situations behave in a manner that approaches rational action”.

Cybernetic explanations of foreign policy share a similar rationale. From this perspective, decision-makers follow programmed procedures which are only altered if a failure is detected (Stein and Tanter, 1980; Steinbruner, 2002). In the absence of any incoming stimuli revealing an anomaly in the state of affairs, routine policy-making will continue unhampered.

⁴⁶ There is some disagreement over the substance of the theoretical assumptions of RAM (MacDonald, 2003; Steinbruner, 2002). I will present those assumptions which reveal the greatest amount of agreement in their application in FPA.

Even cognitive approaches focus on planned change. Despite staunch support for the principles of cognitive consistency, it is customary in cognitive psychology to accept that individuals' beliefs do change once they are disconfirmed (Jervis, 1976; Renshon, 2008; Rosati, 2000). Cognitive theories deviate only regarding the assumption of rational choice involved in the change process. In other words, according to cognitive theories:

Psychologists suggest that policymakers are most free from cognitive constraints at the beginning of a decisional process. When they identify a problem, they search actively until they establish an initial diagnosis. As soon as one of several possible concepts provides an adequate interpretation of incoming information, however, decisionmakers are likely to discontinue their search both for additional alternatives and for further information. (Stein and Tanter, 1980: 40)

Once the Carter Administration recognised its policy failures, it proceeded to develop a new foreign policy which could overcome previous shortcomings. Above all, Secretary of Defence Brown (1983a: 17) acknowledged that the US “must keep the Soviets from gaining dominion in the areas that are critical to US security – specifically, Western Europe, Southwest Asia, including the Middle East, and the Far East”. Therefore, in addition to an assortment of punitive measures towards the Soviet Union – e.g., deferral of Senate consideration of the SALT II treaty, suspension of licensing of sales of high-technology items to the USSR⁴⁷, embargo on 17 million tons of grain already sold to the USSR, boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympic games, restrictions on Soviet ships fishing in US waters, cancelling of planned openings of American and Soviet consulate facilities, and postponement of bilateral cultural and economic exchanges – the Administration also decided to provide China with nonlethal military equipment and technology, offer \$400 million of military aid to Pakistan, augment the supply of arms and equipment to mujahedeen rebels in Afghanistan, reinstate mandatory registration of young men for selective service, and intensify negotiations with several countries in the region in order

⁴⁷ The suspension was imposed primarily on computers and other electronic devices.

to establish service facilities for supporting US military operations⁴⁸ (Brown, 1994; Garthoff, 1985; Glad, 2009; Little, 2008; Palmer, 1999; Smith, 1986; Vance, 1983).

More significantly, many researchers claim that the issuing of the Carter Doctrine signalled a more profound strategic transformation which revamped US foreign policy. For instance, in his study on National Security Doctrines, Colucci (2012: 375) argues that after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan Carter assumed a more hard-line stance in which “he ordered the creation of the Rapid Deployment Force to be an initial force to deploy to the Gulf to stop an invasion and protect the oil, and he ordered an increase in defense spending with items such as the B-1 bomber (which he previously curtailed in 1977), the MX missile, and the neutron bomb (which he previously stalled)”. In addition, US military forces were also augmented in the Middle East. By the end of 1980, US Navy forces stationed in the Indian Ocean were reinforced by more than 30 vessels equipped with complementary fighter, attack, antisubmarine, and reconnaissance aircraft and a Marines assault team (Hurewitz, 1980).

However, the redefinition of US foreign policy was not limited to the implementation of the RDF, the augmentation of conventional military forces, and the initiation of new military programmes. By issuing PD-59 on 25 July, 1980, the Carter Administration abandoned traditional US military war fighting doctrines (Garthoff, 1985; Glad, 2009; Smith, 1986). Since the early-1960s, the concept of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) had guided US policy of deterrence. The rationale underlying MAD was that neither side (i.e., the US and USSR) could successfully engage in a nuclear exchange since each side had the capability of delivering a retaliatory strike against the adversary’s cities and industries which would devastate its society. National security was only possible due to the reliance on mutual insecurity. PD-59 reassessed this logic since, according to Odom (2004: 175), it “effectively transformed US strategy for the use of nuclear weapons”. In effect, PD-59 was considered a “countervailing” strategy which granted greater tactical flexibility in deterring the Soviets, predominantly by establishing pre-planned nuclear strike options and capabilities for rapid development of target plans against key military targets:

⁴⁸ The countries involved in the negotiations were Egypt, Kenya, Oman, and Somalia.

To continue to deter in an era of strategic nuclear equivalence, it is necessary to have nuclear (as well as conventional) forces such that in considering aggression against our interests any adversary would recognize that no plausible outcome would represent a victory on any plausible definition of victory. To this end and so as to preserve the possibility of bargaining effectively to terminate the war on acceptable terms that are as favorable as practical, if deterrence fails initially, we must be capable of fighting successfully so that the adversary would not achieve his war aims and would suffer costs that are unacceptable, or in any event greater than his gains, from having initiated an attack. (PD-59)

What's more, in the final days of his Presidency, Carter also issued PD-62 and PD-63 which codified the Administration's new emphasis on the Persian Gulf. As referred above, PD-62 established the Modifications in US National Strategy⁴⁹ attributing priority to the Middle East region. PD-63 for its part defined the Persian Gulf Security Framework. In alluding to the Carter's *State of the Union Address* (i.e., the Carter Doctrine), PD-63 lists the measures the Administration implemented to strengthen its position in the region. In terms of defence policy, the document requires the Department of Defence assign greater effort to augmenting US force capabilities, improve local defence capabilities, and persuade allies in Europe and Northeast Asia to assume a larger part of the burden for defence/deterrence of their regions so as to "offset greater allocation of US resources to the security of the Persian Gulf (PD-63). Furthermore, PD-63 defines the main foreign policy initiatives for the region:

1. Complete as rapidly as possible the Middle East Peace Process;
2. Improve security relations with Turkey and Pakistan;
3. Assist the countries in the Arabian Peninsula in enhancing their internal stability and countering Soviet influence;
4. Improve ties with countries in the Horn of Africa, namely Somalia, Djibouti, and Ethiopia;

⁴⁹ It modified PD-18 issued in 1977.

5. Assure assistance – diplomatic, military, economic, and political – from allies in Europe and Asia in meeting the mutual security objectives in the Persian Gulf region

The issuing of the above-mentioned PDs is in accordance with the planned change approach that posits that once the transition process is concluded and foreign policy change is achieved, stability must be reinstated. Regardless of the policy outcome, Krasner (1976: 341) acknowledges that “Once policies have been adopted, they are pursued until a new crisis demonstrates that they are no longer feasible”. Therefore, the last stage of the planned change process seeks to refreeze the situation, creating a renewed period of policy equilibrium. The systematisation of the Administration’s strategy in official documents such as PDs consolidated the underlying foreign policy outlook. Furthermore, it committed the government apparatus to the options and decisions of the Administration.

Although good judgment recommends that policies should be periodically reviewed, in actual practice decision-makers rarely assess existing policies unless there has been a critical situation which calls their attention (Zelikow, 1994). Policies tend to become fixed once more and stable. This is an essential characteristic of the change process since it is incumbent that policy becomes safeguarded from backsliding. Naturally, the refreezing stage implies not only that a change has occurred in foreign policy, but, above all, that a transformation has occurred in group and organisational norms and routines (Burnes, 2004a).

It is widely accepted that the new policy brought about by the Carter Administration’s wholesale transformation was continued by the Reagan Administration. Nichols (2002: 39) states that Carter’s new strategy “baited the Soviets into creating the prerequisites for the success of Reagan’s even harder line approach after 1981”. In particular, the Carter Administration’s policy options that were codified into several Presidential Directives laid the foundations for his successor’s aggressive military policy

towards the Soviets⁵⁰ (Campbell, 1981; Glad, 2009; Grinter, 1983; Odom, 2004; Palmer, 1999; Williams, 1984; Van Hollen, 1981). Brzezinski (1983: 469) has admitted that this was in fact the Administration's intention: "These documents [PD-62 and PD-63] were meant to provide our successors with a useful point of reference".

However, many researchers suggest that the principles of the Carter Doctrine were carried on by all the Administrations beginning with Reagan and have been the basis for US foreign policy in the Middle East ever since. It has become a widely accepted fact that the Carter Doctrine set the foundations for all the ensuing US military interventions in the Middle East (Bacevich, 2010; Klare, 2004; Little, 2008). In fact, Klare (2007: 139) unequivocally claims that the Carter Doctrine "has been endorsed by every President since Carter and now forms the foundation for US grand strategy in the Persian Gulf region". By refreezing the policy process, equilibrium was apparently re-established *prima facie* American foreign policy.

Nevertheless, as I stated in the Introduction, research relying on punctuated equilibrium and planned change explanations reveal several discrepancies. The access to public statements, declassified documents, and other official sources calls into question many of the accounts put forward thus far explaining how the Carter Administration's foreign policy changed. In particular, the allegedly abrupt new emphasis placed on the Middle East after the events arising in 1979 do not hold up to empirical scrutiny. Without being all inclusive, I underline several key inconsistencies which dispute traditional accounts of the Administration's foreign policy change and the ensuing emergence of the Carter Doctrine.

The first and most pressing discrepancy is temporal⁵¹. Traditional accounts emphasise the events of 1979 as the catalysts of change. Allegedly, on coming to office, the Middle East was of secondary concern to the Carter Administration. Only the cataclysmic events in the Middle East – i.e., fall of the Shah, Iranian hostage crisis, and Soviet invasion of Afghanistan – shocked the Administration into repositioning the region

⁵⁰ For instance, Odom (2004) argues that PD-59 was rewritten by the Reagan Administration as National Security Decision Directive (NSDD)-13.

⁵¹ Auten (2008) has also detected the inconsistency regarding the temporal dimension inherent in realist accounts of the change in the foreign policy of the Carter Administration.

at the top of America's geostrategic interests. However, several studies have demonstrated that the Administration had placed considerable value in the Middle East region since the beginning of the Carter Presidency. Rosati's (1991) research attests that in 1977 the Middle East conflict was only supplanted by issues regarding human rights, normalisation of East-West and North-South relations, and arms control. In fact, the region was at the forefront of the Administration's diplomatic concerns: "Actors in the Middle East (especially Israel, Egypt, the Arabs in general, and the Palestinians) received the most attention by the Carter administration and were perceived to be the key to resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict" (Rosati, 1991: 50). President Carter (1977b) reinforced this conviction in his address to the UN General Assembly on 04 October, 1977, by stating that "Of all the regional conflicts in the world, none holds more menace than the Middle East". The research on the geography of the presidential State of the Union addresses carried out by O'Loughlin and Grant (1990) also bears witness to the importance attributed by the Administration to the region.

More significantly, a careful assessment of the Administration's decision-making process and policy initiatives refutes the accounts favouring punctuated equilibrium centred explanations. For instance, during the early months of the Presidency several important documents defining US foreign policy were issued which placed considerable emphasis on the strategic importance of Middle East – e.g., PD-18 (24 August, 1977), PRM-3 (21 January, 1977), and PRM-10 (18 February, 1977). These documents unsurprisingly resulted from the active interagency debate within the Administration which had begun following the inauguration of the Carter Presidency. Other policy documents consolidating the importance of the region in America's national security considerations followed – e.g., PRM-42 and PRM-43 (both signed on 24 August, 1978).

Moreover, the Administration's initiative for a comprehensive peace settlement for the Arab-Israeli conflict certainly bears witness to the importance attributed to the Middle East since the outset. In particular, the President's deep personal involvement in the negotiations can only underscore this fact. It is, however, surprising that many researchers tend to overlook the importance to the Carter Doctrine of the Carter Administration's peace initiative. For the most part, researchers tend to treat the Middle

East peace initiative, particularly the Camp David Accords signed in September 1978, as a separate chapter of Carter's foreign policy. This is puzzling since many of the Carter Doctrine's ensuing measures would have been unfeasible without the peace treaty. This detail has nevertheless been recognised by former Carter Administration official William Odom (2006; c.f., Quandt, 1986a; 1986b), who argues that the construction of the Persian Gulf Security Framework and other contingency plans would have been extremely difficult to achieve without the perseverance of Carter in securing the Camp David Accords.

Many accounts also focus on the shock-effect caused by the fall of the Shah and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Apparently, according to most researchers, these two events radically changed the Administration's understanding of the threats to US national security, leading to a complete reevaluation of American relations with the new Iranian regime and the USSR. While I do not question that these events surely intensified and legitimised feelings of anxiety within the Administration and American society, I do contend that they catalysed a rapid and unexpected policy change as usually portrayed.

With regard to Iran, several issues challenge the idea that the fall of the Shah shocked the Administration into assuming a more aggressive policy toward the region. Academics have contested the idea that the revolution took the Administration by surprise. Lenczowski (1979: 811) has long acknowledged that "Members of the US embassy and the US Information Service (not to mention other multifarious contacts in the business world, academia, etc.) were generally well aware of the sources of discontent and could identify various opposition groups". Certainly, the fall of the Pahlavi regime called into question the US's Twin Pillar⁵² regional strategy⁵³. However, in the early months of the Islamic revolution, many Administration officials believed it was possible to cooperate with the new regime. Throughout much of 1979, until the hostage crisis in November, official contacts were resumed between American and Iranian officials

⁵² The Twin Pillar (or Two Pillar) policy was initially adopted in the mid-1960s and called for the US to rely on Saudi Arabia and Iran for upholding stability in the Persian Gulf region in the place of Great Britain.

⁵³ Alvandi (2012), contrary to most traditional accounts, argues that by the end of the Nixon Presidency the US had begun to abandon the policy of balancing between Saudi Arabia and Iran and started gradually favouring Iran as the most reliable regional partner for containing Soviet influence in the Gulf region.

and the Administration believed that the Iranians would collaborate in stymieing the increasing Soviet influence in the region (Kaufman, 1993; Smith, 1986). In fact, the US provided moderates within the new regime with sensitive information and intelligence in order to create a working relationship. Bill provides an illustrative example of the US courtship of the new regime:

Anxious to establish relationships with the new regime in Iran, American officials agreed to provide briefings to a very selective group in Bazargan's government. (...) The first such session took place on August 21, 1979, when CIA officer Robert Clayton Ames flew into Tehran and briefed Prime Minister Bazargan, Foreign Minister Yazdi, and Deputy Prime Minister Amir Entezam on the political situation of Iraq, the Palestinians, Afghanistan, and the Soviet Union. (Bill, 1988: 291)

Even during the hostage situation, US officials sought a negotiated settlement to the crisis. The failed military rescue mission in April 1980 – i.e., “Operation Eagle Claw” – represented a brief interlude to this approach. Subsequently, the Administration once again embraced a negotiated solution to their predicament.

As for Afghanistan, many researchers tend to cite Carter's public reaction to the Soviet invasion as a testimony to the surprise the events had on him and his Administration: “the action of the Soviets has made a more dramatic change in my own opinion of what the Soviets' ultimate goals are than anything they've done in the previous time that I've been in office” (Carter, 1983c: 811-812). This is surprising given the fact that numerous authors and officials have already confirmed that President Carter was informed of the imminent Soviet invasion in advance (Brzezinski, 1983). In fact, the US had been supporting the mujahedeen resistance since, at least, mid-1979 (Braithwaite, 2011; Craig and Logevall, 2009). What's more, throughout the Cold War, Afghanistan had essentially been of a marginal strategic interest to the US (Gibbs, 2006). Even during the internal turmoil occurring in the year preceding the invasion, the Carter Administration did not attribute great significance to the events, acknowledging Soviet influence in the country (Smith, 1986).

Another notable inconsistency concerns the response to these events. According to much of the research cited above, the events initiated in 1979 led the Carter Administration to adopt a more militarily assertive foreign policy. The development of the RDF, increased military support to regional allies, and the attainment of regional bases for supporting military operations have been cited as some of the immediate results of these political shocks (c.f., Beinart, 2010; Colucci, 2012; Craig and Logevall, 2009; Grinter, 1983; Maugeri, 2006; McCormick, 2010; Palmer, 1999). Nevertheless, despite the recent fervour, many of these initiatives had been planned and set in motion before the events of 1979. In particular, the RDF was established in PD-18 and additional military support to Middle Eastern allies had been a constant fact since the beginning of the Carter Presidency.

The further major discrepancy concerns the planned nature of the Carter Administration's foreign policy change. To begin with, as Yetiv (2004) has explained, rational accounts can explain some outcomes, but they tell us nothing about the decision process *per se*. More precisely, rationally-focused explanations of the Administration's foreign policy change fail to shed knowledge into how and in what manner various decision-makers assessed the situation during the crises, identified the multiple options available, and engaged in the search and evaluation of relevant information. Therefore, most accounts of the Carter Administration's foreign policy tend to evade dealing with the obvious contradictions presented above.

Moreover, planned change (including its multiple variants) is too rigid a model to grasp the complexity involved in foreign policy decision-making. The dynamics involved in international politics are not suited to rational formulas for policy development. In other words, international politics is too dynamic a subject to allow for the implementation of a fixed and stable policy process. In their accounts of the Carter Presidency, the Administration's key-decision-makers have all acknowledged this simple fact. For instance, for Vance the international political environment was too complex for grand policy designs: "The world has become pluralistic, exposing the inadequacy of the single strategy, the grand design, where facts are forced to fit theory" (Vance 1980: 5). We cannot refreeze policy anymore than we can unfreeze it when we encounter some sort of

failure. In a similar manner, Brzezinski (1983) has underlined that, at times, events outpace decisions and deliberations.

Equally important, planned change approaches take for granted the decision-maker's personal political machinations. In particular, they tend to disregard domestic considerations which political actors must manage. In order to survive politically, political actors must be attuned and constantly adapting to their political milieu. Former NSC staff member, William Quandt, has alerted to the need to consider the effect of the electoral cycle in influencing foreign policy, particularly concerning the Middle East:

Above all else, a president must try to develop, and then preserve, his base of power. He must constantly monitor both the international and the home-front reactions to his moves. Periodically, he may realize that he is on a track that is not working, or one that entails high costs, or one that is simple not geared to the realities either of the Middle East or of Washington. Midcourse corrections are then made, a new approach may be tried, and once again the reaction of others will be watched. (Quandt, 1986a: 10-11)

What's more, foreign policy change does not have to be a compulsory response to some perceived policy failure. As Carlsnaes (1993) has reminded us, while most foreign policy change is reactive, there are many instances of anticipatory action. This "feedforward" system is much more demanding of decision-makers since it obligates them to go beyond the mere response to environmental stimuli and to create multiple future scenarios.

Yet, despite this outlook, the planned change approach espoused above is firmly rooted in the traditional models of change which are still prevalent in IR theories, particularly in FPA. In fact, although the volume of research on change has grown exponentially over the last decades, theoretical innovations have been relatively limited. As Weick and Quinn (1999: 363) claim, while the mounting research "has become theoretically richer and more descriptive, there is a continuing debate about whether change research is developing as a cumulative and falsifiable body of knowledge". In fact, as Walt (1999: 22) claims, despite claims to the contrary, rational choice "has not produced a noteworthy number of important new theories or hypotheses".

In order to overcome some of the discrepancies identified, we must try to view foreign policy change from an alternative perspective. Episodic change, intrinsic to punctuated equilibrium, and planned, step-based rational change cannot explain the development of many policies. As a matter of fact, Romanelli and Tushman (1994: 1142) have acquiesced that, notwithstanding the “growing prominence and pervasiveness of punctuated equilibrium theory, little research has explored the validity of the model’s basic arguments”. This is particularly true regarding foreign policy. As I have claimed above, these models of change do not satisfactorily explain the changes in the Carter Administration’s foreign policy and the emergence of the Carter Doctrine. New avenues of research on change have opened-up in the last decades and have not been duly considered by FPA. It is time to reassess the dynamics involved in foreign policy change. We must move beyond the traditional accounts anchored on punctuated equilibrium and planned change explanations of foreign policy.

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RETHINKING THE CONCEPT OF FOREIGN POLICY CHANGE

“The breathless rhetoric of planned transformational change, complete with talk of revolution, discontinuity, and upheaval, presents a distorted view of how successful change works. The hyperbole of transformation has led people to overestimate the liabilities of inertia, the centrality of managerial planning, and the promise of fresh starts, and to underestimate the value of innovative sensemaking on the front line, the ability of small experiments to travel, and the extent to which change is continuous.”

(Karl E. Weick, *Emergent Change as a Universal in Organizations*)

Whereas numerous studies have focused on foreign policy change, it nonetheless remains a peripheral topic in FPA (Renshon, 2008). In fact, FPA has dedicated very little theoretical effort to explaining foreign policy change in comparison to other issues and phenomena. As I argue above, compared to most social theories, FPA tends to focus on stability. According to Marková (2003), Western philosophies of knowledge have historically searched for stability and certainty. Since the early writings of Plato and Aristotle, change has been equated with chaos, leading individuals to search for permanence and constancy (Marshak, 2002). Stability has been understood as the ideal and preferred state, while change has been considered a deviant departure from this condition. In fact, “the history of European science in general, and social science in particular shows that in order to study change, *the reference point is stability*” (Marková, 2003: 6).

When change has been considered, it has traditionally been done so through rational accounts. From this perspective, change is described and explained by identifying the underlying features and dynamics involved in some kind of process which leads to a variation in a particular state-of-affairs. This process-oriented perspective highlights the different states and stages at different moments in time. Stage-based approaches to

change, such as punctuated equilibrium and the planned change approach presented above, reinforce the notion of stability as the norm (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002).

However, in recent years, research carried out in several scientific disciplines, particularly in organisational theory, has focused considerably on change and questioned many of the conventional assumptions. In fact, academic enquiry has increasingly revealed the ambiguous nature of change:

The word “change” has a variety of dictionary definitions connoting varying processes including, *to substitute, replace, switch, alter, become different, convert and transform*. The word, and its range of meanings, is then applied generically to all aspects of the change experience, implying that “changing” an organization’s structure is the same as “changing” its culture in terms of reasons, methods, outcomes, time, cost, etc. Furthermore, the generic term “change” does not differentiate among different sources, types or magnitudes of change. (Marshak, 2002: 280)

In an attempt to clarify some of the different prevailing approaches to change, Van de Ven and Poole (1995) identified four ideal-type theories of change which are still valid today⁵⁴ (Table 2). The first are life-cycle theories that have an underlying organic metaphor in which organisations progress from birth to death following a predetermined set of stages. Impending change is a conviction of life-cycle theories which postulate that organisations develop in conformity with prefigured unitary processes moving towards a predetermined end point.

Teleological theories, for their part, focus on a particular objective or purpose that steers change. From this perspective, an overriding goal drives change in organisations by compelling individuals and groups to formulate actions, implement them, and monitor their progress towards the desired end state. Life-cycle and teleological theories are the most common explanations of change. However, unlike the former, teleological theories do not stipulate an obligatory order of events or detail the specific course which

⁵⁴ Despite the separate classification scheme’s division into distinct theories, the authors (Van de Ven and Poole, 1995) acknowledge that researchers frequently combine elements of the different theories in their research.

organisational development will follow. Thus, various means of change are assumed possible in the teleological perspective:

In this theory, there is no prefigured rule, logically necessary direction, or set sequence of stages in a teleological process. Instead, proponents of this theory focus on the prerequisites for attaining the goal or end state: the functions that must be fulfilled, the accomplishments that must be achieved, or the components that must be built or obtained for the end state to be realized. (Van de Ven and Poole, 1995: 516)

The third approach identified by the authors is that of dialectical theories. Stability and change are described through processes of opposition and conflict that result from the plethora of differing and contradictory values and goals inherent within an organisation and in its relationship with its environment. The balance of power established between the opposing bodies will determine the degree of stability or change in the organisation. In other words, “change occurs when these opposing values, forces, or events gain sufficient power to confront and engage the status quo” (Van de Ven and Poole, 1995: 517).

Finally, evolutionary theories, which subscribe to a biological outlook, envision change through an uninterrupted process of variation, selection, and retention. Variation implies that change in organisations result from unpredicted or random opportunities, i.e., they simply happen. Selection involves the competition for securing sparse resources in which the environment chooses the most adequate resources available. Finally, retention occurs due to the perpetuating forces that uphold certain actions and behaviours.

While Van de Ven and Poole’s (1995) classification is useful for identifying the units⁵⁵ and modes⁵⁶ of change, it also reveals the different dynamics that mediate between stability and change in organisations. Particularly interesting is the fact that the

⁵⁵ i.e., whether the change process centres on the development of a single organisational entity or the interaction between multiple entities.

⁵⁶ i.e., whether the change sequence is determined by predetermined laws and produces first-order change or emerges as the process unfolds generating second-order change.

majority of the traditional approaches to change tends to emphasise the core dynamics inherent in punctuated equilibrium and planned change models.

TABLE 2 – FAMILIES OF IDEAL-TYPE THEORIES OF SOCIAL CHANGE

| FAMILY | LIFE CYCLE | EVOLUTION | DIALECTIC | TELEOLOGY |
|--------------------------|--|---|--|---|
| Members | Developmentalism Ontogenesis Metamorphosis Stage and cyclical models | Darwinian evolution Mendelian genetics Saltationism Punctuated equilibrium | Conflict theory Dialectical materialism Pluralism Collective action | Goal setting, planning Functionalism Social construction Symbolic interaction |
| Pioneers | Comte (1798-1857) Spencer (1820-1903) Piaget (1896-1980) | Lamarck (1744-1829) Darwin (1809-1882) Mendel (1822-1884) Gould and Eldridge (1977) | Hegel (1770-1831) Marx (1818-1883) Freud (1856-1939) | Mead (1863-1931) Weber (1864-1920) Simon (1916-) |
| Key Metaphor | Organic growth | Competitive survival | Opposition, conflict | Purposeful cooperation |
| Logic | Imminent program Prefigured sequence Compliant adaptation | Natural selection among competitors in a population | Contradictory forces Thesis, antithesis, synthesis | Envisioned end-state Social construction Equifinality |
| Event Progression | Linear and irreversible sequence of prescribed stages in unfolding of immanent potentials present at the beginning | Recurrent, cumulative, and probabilistic sequence of variation, selection, and retention events | Recurrent, discontinuous sequence of confrontation, conflict, and synthesis between contradictory values or events | Recurrent, discontinuous sequence of goal setting, implementation, and adaptation of means to reach desired end state |
| Generating Force | Prefigured program / rule regulated by nature, logic, or institutions | Population scarcity Competition Commensalism | Conflict and confrontation between opposing forces, interests, or classes | Goal enactment consensus on means cooperation / symbiosis |

(Source: Van de Ven and Poole, 1995: 514)

However, the traditional perspectives of episodic and planned change have come under question in recent years. Several criticisms have been levelled against these

dominant approaches to change (Burnes, 2004a; By, 2005; Weick, 2000). First of all, many authors argue that the turbulent nature of today's world is not compatible with the hierarchal, inflexible, and rule-based models used in organisational development studies which emphasise consistent and stable environments. Secondly, the episodic and planned change approaches are criticised for their incapacity to deal with the complex dynamics of most organisational environments. Critics argue that planned change is not suitable for situations which require rapid and constant organisational transformations. This is particularly relevant given the emphasis placed on the rapid pace of change in the contemporary international political environment. According to Brown and Eisenhardt (1997: 29) contemporary environments resemble complex systems which, rather than achieving a stable equilibrium, are continuously changing by remaining at the "edge of chaos". In fact, many of the assumptions underlying continuous change approaches are derived from complexity theories (Burnes, 2005). The fundamental concern with all such theories is understanding systems which are constantly changing and in which the laws of cause and effect do not apply straightforwardly (Burnes, 2005).

From this perspective, the international environment was particularly dynamic during the Carter Presidency, especially in the Middle East. Despite its emphasis on preventive diplomacy, the Carter Administration had to deal with numerous concurrent international crises which kept it constantly engaged in policy development. Thirdly, planned change supports a view in which a common agreement for change is straightforward and that all the change agents involved are willing and interested in changing, ignoring the possibility of organisational conflicts and politics. Directly associated with this is the notion that problem representation and resolution is unproblematic and painless. This fact acquires additional relevance if we consider the alleged competition for defining foreign policy within the Carter Administration. Lastly, most sponsors of planned change tend to assume that one approach is suitable to every organisation regardless of time, place, and context. As I have already noted, the Carter Administration was particularly inclined to favour a case-by-case approach to foreign policy issues, refuting prototypical policies.

The critics of episodic and planned change constitute a heterogeneous group. They do, however, share two common assumptions (Burnes, 2004a). To begin with, they accept that change is an emergent and ongoing process rather than sporadic linear, pre-planned procedure with a well-defined beginning and endpoint. Additionally, they believe that organisations are open systems which affect and are affected by the environment and thus are not likely to be rationally managed. These assumptions have gained exceptional receptivity and have made the continuous change approach the dominant model for understanding change over the last two decades (Burnes 2004a). Much of the success of the continuous change approach is due to the fact that most researchers and decision-makers have acknowledged that “in a rapidly-changing world, the ability to align an organization’s internal arrangements with the demands of the external world is crucial for its survival” (Burnes, 2004c: 890). Organisations today are seen more as “works in progress” than unchanging and enduring institutions (Burnes, 2004a).

Rather than focusing on change as a sporadic process separated into several distinct stages, the emergent approach acknowledges change as the norm. This perspective does not deny that there are specific events which can contribute to broad changes in policy. The events of 11 September, 2001, certainly served as a catalyst for a revision of US foreign policy. Yet, as stated before, upon careful consideration US foreign policy had been in flux for a long time. In this sense, Weick and Quinn’s (1999) observation that the analysis of change depends on the perspective of the observer is thoroughly appreciated⁵⁷. Thus, continuous change should be acknowledged as a complementary approach to other perspectives on change, namely planned change. This is particularly important to the current study since it focuses on small group decision-making and, hence, we cannot avoid to take up a more focused and nuanced view of the change process, i.e., a micro-level analysis.

By approaching change as a continuous phenomenon in groups and organisations we can overcome many of the impediments inherent in punctuated equilibrium’s stage-

⁵⁷ The authors (Weick and Quinn, 1999: 362) describe the difference of perspectives as follows: “From a distance (the macro level of analysis), when observers examine the flow of events that constitute organizing, they see what looks like repetitive action, routine, and inertia dotted with occasional episodes of revolutionary change. But a view from closer in (the micro level of analysis) suggests ongoing adaptation and adjustment”.

based approach to change. Standard “unfreeze, change, refreeze” models simply do not appreciate the subtle complexities of change, such as its fluid, pervasive, unrestricted, and indivisible nature. By attempting to understand change through a sequence of distinct stages we run the risk of obfuscating complex dynamics involved in foreign policy decision-making. By using the concept of motion to exemplify this point, Tsoukas and Chia (2002) underscore the inherent vulnerabilities of traditional theories:

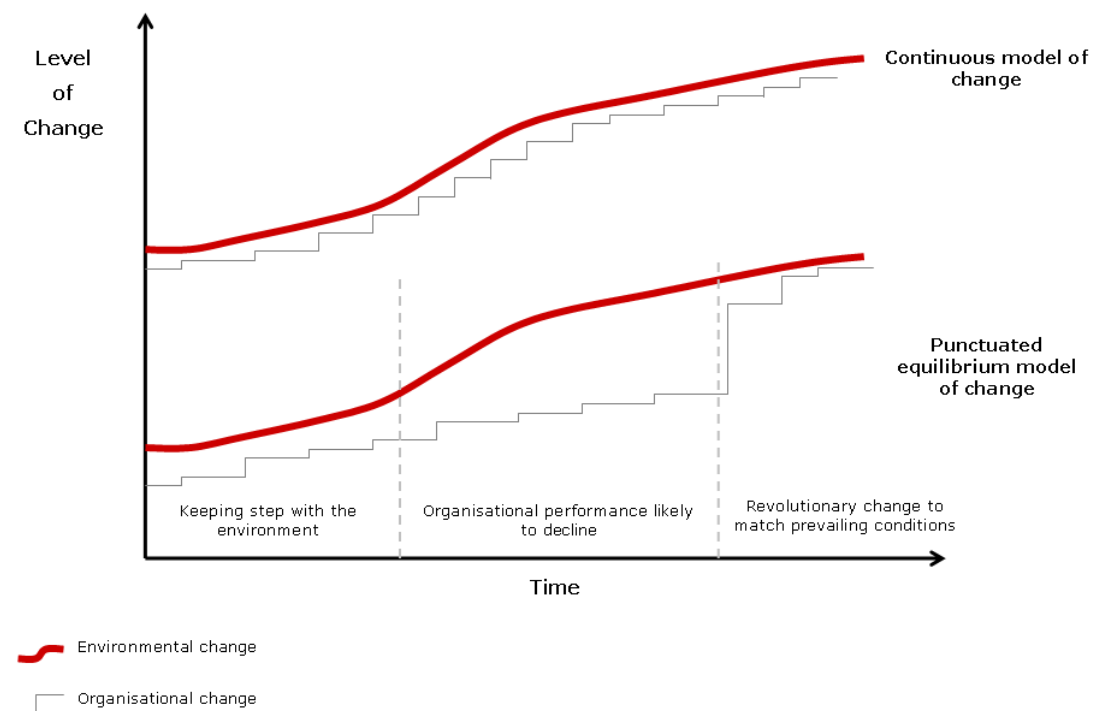
Motion is normally defined as "the occupancy of serially successive points of space at serially successive instants of time"(...) Oddly, on this definition, motion is made up of immobilities: An object occupies this position now, that position later, and so on indefinitely (...) But no matter how many such positions are created to represent the trajectory of an object, the fact remains that they contain no element of movement (...). As James aptly remarks, "the stages into which you analyze a change are *states*; the change itself goes on between them. It lies along their intervals, inhabits what your definition fails to gather up, and thus eludes conceptual explanation altogether". (...) By doing so, change is reduced to a series of static positions — its distinguishing features are lost from view. Change per se remains elusive and unaccounted — strangely, it is whatever goes on *between* the positions representing change (...). Notice the paradox: A conceptual framework for making sense of change (namely, the stage model of change) cannot deal with change per se, except by conceiving of it as a series of immobilities; it makes sense of change by denying change! (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002: 571)

Therefore, in the current study change can also be regarded as an emergent phenomenon – i.e., constant, evolving, and cumulative (Barrett et al., 1995; Tsoukas, 1996; Tsoukas and Chia, 2002; Weick, 2000; 2009; Weick and Quinn, 1999). The basic underlying assumption is that governmental organisations are systems which are in a constant state of change (Figure 2). As Tsoukas and Chia (2002: 580) clarify, organisations are not continually changing; rather “there are ongoing processes of change *in* organisations”.

This requires calling attention to an important caveat. Continuous should not be confused with incremental change. As several researchers have suggested, incremental change describes adjustments in particular departments, operations, or policies (Burnes,

2004a; By, 2005). Even punctuated equilibrium theory concedes that an organisation can register incremental change in policies during periods of stability. Incrementalism results from erratic adjustments to environmental or organisational constraints. Nevertheless, despite a random adjustment, the organisational policies remain largely unaltered. Continuous change for its part is concerned with wholesale organisational and political change (By, 2005). It is focused on changes that revamp existing policies as we know them. Therefore, continuous change rejects the arguments put forward by incrementalist and punctuated equilibrium models.

FIGURE 2 – DIFFERENT MODELS OF CHANGE



(Source: Adapted from Balogun and Hailey, 2004: 3; 5)

Marshak (2002) has associated continuous change with the notion of “morphing” in order to express the rapid, unbroken process of change which is involved in this perspective. In this sense, representations and meanings in an organisation are in

perpetual flux, resulting in changes in members' interpretations and behaviours. Weick and Quinn (1999) have contrasted the essential features of the two main approaches to change (Table 3), highlighting the core assumptions underlying both.

Yet, the concept of continuous change espoused in the current study differs from some of the prevailing perspectives which still persevere in framing continuous change within a stage-based theory. For instance, while Schein (2002) accepts that change is a perpetual process, he maintains that changes can be broken down into the discrete stages of unfreezing, changing, and refreezing. In his view, "we are constantly bombarded by various kinds of unfreezing forces, are scanning and imitating in areas where we are already unfrozen, and are experiencing the new confirmations or disconfirmations that will determine what gets refrozen" (Schein, 2002: 41). There is a homeostatic principle underlying this reasoning which defends that systems have a tendency to search for internal equilibrium, i.e., stability.

Conversely, the view of continuous change subscribed to here advocates the performative nature of change⁵⁸. In this case, change is distinguished by taking place in a continuous, open-ended process of organisational adaptation to changing circumstances and environments. In this sense, it involves the "realization of a new pattern of organizing in the absence of explicit, a priori intentions" (Orlikowski, 1996: 65). Rather than being planned and guided, continuous change results from improvisation, adaptation, and learning. These qualities are considered indispensable for coping with the complexity and uncertainty of the environment (By, 2005). Accordingly, it is founded on recurrent interactions between the members of an organisation who develop ongoing responses to the challenges encountered:

Each variation of a given form is not an abrupt or discrete event, neither is it, by itself, discontinuous. Rather, through a series of ongoing and situated accommodations, adaptations, and alterations (that draw on previous variations and mediate future ones), sufficient modifications may be enacted over time that fundamental changes are achieved.

⁵⁸ Burnes (2004a) points out the fact that many researchers using the continuous change approach do occasionally fall back on explanations that identify beginning, middle, and end points in order to demonstrate the transition processes of change.

There is no deliberate orchestration of change here, no technological inevitability, no dramatic discontinuity, just recurrent and reciprocal variations in practice over time. Each shift in practice creates the conditions for further breakdowns, unanticipated outcomes, and innovations, which in their turn are responded to with more variations. And such variations are ongoing; there is no beginning or end point in this change process. (Orlikowski, 1996: 66)

This conceptualisation of change repudiates accounts of change which focus exclusively on episodic, stage-centred processes. It argues that individuals, groups, and organisations do not achieve change only through planned and structured stages of intervention. Rather, change is also understood as an ongoing, improvising enterprise which produces observable and prominent transformations in groups and organisations actions and behaviours through adjustments, adaptations, and revisions of their existing representations and practices. Continuous change generally takes place without being noticed since “small alterations are lumped together as noise in otherwise uneventful inertia and because small changes are neither heroic nor plausible ways to make strategy” (Weick, 2009: 238-239). Nevertheless, proponents of continuous change approach argue that continuous change can lead to the same outcomes, but without the dramatic flair of revolutionary episodic change models such as punctuated equilibrium. According to this view, small continuous changes are amplified into something greater than initially intended and can, over time, lead to radical change (Balogun and Hailey, 2004; Plowman et al., 2007; Weick, 2009).

Continuous change also contrasts with cybernetic explanations of policy change. While cybernetic theory also repudiates many of the assumptions of rational choice, namely by favouring incremental change rather than planned change, it also fails to embrace the opportunities offered by the continuous change approach. Cybernetic theory states that, instead of choosing value-maximising options, decision-makers possess limited repertoires of “responses” and decision rules devised from past experiences which determine their course of action (Steinbruner, 2002). When the repertoire of action is no longer able to maintain “acceptable-level goals” and “performance failures” are detected, decision-makers use feedback channels to adjust

policies. This process creates a narrow assortment of solutions due to the fact that the use of a limited set of pre-established, sequential response actions leads only to marginal policy adjustments. Once acceptable-level goals are achieved, policy routines are again activated. Therefore, policy change is restricted in terms of options and process. In other words, according to cybernetic theory, change in a response pattern can occur and “if it restores the critical variable to its desired range, then persists until another disruption occurs” (Steinbruner, 2002: 78). This perspective does not leave any room for innovation and human agency. In fact, according to cybernetic theory, decision-makers are devoid of creative thinking and incapable of widespread political transformation.

Therefore, if we take stability or inertia as our point of reference than it seems entirely logical to understand change within the stages of unfreezing, changing, and refreezing. On the contrary, a theory based on continuous change requires we revise our basic postulates:

... in the face of continuous change, a more plausible change sequence would be freeze, rebalance, unfreeze. To freeze continuous change is to make a sequence visible and to show patterns in what is happening (...). To freeze is to capture sequences by means of cognitive maps (...), schemas (...), or war stories (...). To rebalance is to reinterpret, relabel, and resequence the patterns so that they unfold with fewer blockages. To rebalance is to reframe issues as opportunities (...), reinterpret history using appreciative inquiry (...), to differentiate more boldly among “the external world, the social world, and the world of inner subjectivity (...), or to be responsive to concerns about justice (...). Thus, a story of intense but unproductive meetings is rewritten as a story affirming the value of corporateness in an international nonprofit organization (...). Finally, to unfreeze after rebalancing is to resume improvisation, translation, and learning in ways that are now more mindful of sequences, more resilient to anomalies, and more flexible in their execution. (Weick and Quinn, 1999: 379-380)

TABLE 3 – COMPARISON OF EPISODIC AND CONTINUOUS CHANGE

| | EPISODIC CHANGE | CONTINUOUS CHANGE |
|--------------------------|--|--|
| Metaphor of organisation | Organisations are inertial and change is infrequent, discontinuous, and intentional. | Organisations are emergent and self-organising, and change is constant, evolving, and cumulative. |
| Analytic framework | Change is an occasional interruption or divergence from equilibrium. It tends to be dramatic and it is driven externally. It is seen as a failure of the organisation to adapt its deep structure to a changing environment. | Change is a pattern of endless modifications in work processes and social practice. It is driven by organisational instability and alert reactions to daily contingencies. Numerous small accommodations cumulate and amplify. |
| | Perspective: macro, distant, global. | Perspective: micro, close, local. |
| | Emphasis: short-run adaptation. | Emphasis: long-run adaptability. |
| | Key concepts: inertia, deep structure of interrelated parts, triggering, replacement and substitution, discontinuity, revolution. | Key concepts: recurrent interactions, shifting task authority, response repertoires, emergent patterns, improvisation, translation, and learning. |
| Ideal organisation | The ideal organisation is capable of continuous adaptation. | The ideal organisation is capable of continuous adaptation. |
| | The necessary change is created by intention. Change is Lewinian: inertial, linear, progressive, goal seeking, motivated by disequilibrium, and requires outsider intervention. | The change is a redirection of what is already under way. Change is Confucian: cyclical, processional, without an end state, equilibrium seeking, eternal. |
| Intervention theory | 1. Unfreeze: disconfirmation of expectations, learning anxiety, provision of psychological safety. | 1. Freeze: make sequences visible and show patterns through maps, schemas, and stories. |
| | 2. Transition: cognitive restructuring, semantic redefinition, conceptual enlargement, new standards of judgment. | 2. Rebalance: reinterpret, relabel, resequence the patterns to reduce blocks. Use logic of attraction. |
| | 3. Refreeze: create supportive social norms, make change congruent with personality. | 3. Unfreeze: resume improvisation, translation, and learning in ways that are more mindful. |
| Role of change agent | Role: prime mover who creates change. | Role: Sense maker who redirects change. |
| | Process: focuses on inertia and seeks points of central leverage. | Process: recognises, makes salient, and reframes current patterns. |
| | Changes meaning systems: speaks differently, communicates alternative schema, reinterprets revolutionary triggers, influences punctuation, and builds coordination and commitment. | Shows how intentional change can be made at the margins. Alters meaning by new language, enriched dialogue, and new identity. Unblocks improvisation, translation, and learning. |

(Source: Weick and Quinn, 1999: 366)

Equally important, the continuous change approach departs from planned change models by emphasising the role of power and politics in the change process (Burnes, 2004a). In fact, the dispersed nature of power within organisations was already identified

by Long (1949) when analysing US governmental administration over sixty years ago. Therefore, in accordance with Pettigrew (1985: 64), to appropriately understand organisational change, attention must be paid “both to man’s capacity and desire to adjust social conditions to meet his ends, and the part played by power relationships in the emergence and ongoing development of the processes being examined”. Given that government organisations are composed of an assortment of groups and subgroups with different (and sometimes conflicting) interests and objectives, assessing the internal power relationships involved in determining the definition of the policy problems and options in the decision-making process is crucial (Pfeffer, 1992).

This line of reasoning is in harmony with the emergent change approach’s accent on the “bottom-up” dynamics of change. Contrary to the rational and hierarchical, “top-down” perspective characteristic of planned change, emergent change envisions actors from all levels of an organisation as potential change agents. The underlying rationale underlying this perspective is twofold. First, it is argued that due to the speed and rate of environmental change, organisations must respond quickly to new challenges and opportunities. Accordingly, only by empowering actors throughout the organisation can actions be galvanised fast enough to be effective (Burnes, 2004a). A second line of reasoning is that contemporary organisations are essentially political entities composed of by competing perspectives and interests (Butcher and Atkinson, 2001). In this perspective, different individuals and groups compete over agendas and resources within the organisation.

This conception of emergent change applies unsurprisingly well to foreign policy. Foreign policy decisions rarely are obtained during a single decision process. On the contrary, issues are usually dealt with by several parts of the policy-making apparatus and are structured in a succession of decisions (Allison, 1980; Weiss, 1989). Even within the context of the ultimate decision unit, foreign policy is rarely the result of a one-shot decision (Hermann, 2001). What's more, FPA has also attested to the fact that “most foreign policy problems continue over an extended period of time and that policy makers often find themselves returning again and again to the task of coping with an issue they have addressed before” (Billings and Hermann, 1998: 53). Accordingly, foreign policy is

continually evolving as decision-makers are constantly adapting and adjusting to their perceived environment. In fact, officials involved in foreign policy decision-making resemble Orlikowski's (1996: 65) organisational actors who, in trying to make sense of and act coherently in the world, enact ongoing improvisations devoid of "predefined scripts and choreographed moves".

Moreover, power clashes are a standard of political decision-making within modern governmental organisations (Allison and Zelikow, 1999). Different individuals and groups will constantly seek to push their policy recommendations, leading to unremitting struggles to define foreign policy. I have previously indicated that the scholarly literature on the Carter Presidency greatly emphasises the struggle within the Administration to define foreign policy. While it is generally accepted that Brzezinski came to dominate the foreign policy decision-making, namely by garnering greater influence over Carter, competition did exist to define the foreign policy agenda, even beyond the confines of the Administration.

Therefore, there are numerous advantages of adopting a perspective which privileges continuous change in FPA. For instance, we could better understand the micro-processes of change at work in foreign policy decision-making and which are usually overlooked in more rational or cognitive oriented approaches. Moreover, by viewing change as a *fait accompli* we miss out on identifying many of the complex mechanisms permanently involved in foreign policy decision-making and the dynamic nature of the foreign policy-making process. Thus, it seems more appropriate to heed Weick and Quinn's (1999: 382) suggestion to shift our vocabulary from "change" to "changing" in order to gain a "greater appreciation that change is never off, that its chains of causality are longer and less determinate than we anticipated, and that whether one's viewpoint is global or local makes a difference in the rate of change that will be observed, the inertias that will be discovered, and the size of accomplishments that will have been celebrated".

An example of continuous change is the US Cold War policy of containment. Conventional accounts describe containment as the dominant US policy towards the Soviet Union throughout the Cold War. However, as several authors have accurately pointed out, the policy of containment experienced numerous variations in its articulation

and application since Kennan's initial conceptualisation in the immediate post-war period (Bernstein, 2002; Gaddis, 2005). In his masterful volume on the strategy of containment, Gaddis (2005) has identified five distinctive variations of the containment policy throughout the second half of the Twentieth Century – i.e., original strategy, NSC-68 adaptation, "New Look" version, flexible response variation, and détente adaptation. In his narrative we can corroborate how the policy of containment was reinterpreted and reconstructed throughout the decades. And while Gaddis identifies five distinct variants, a careful reading reveals the incessant nature of policy change, beset with continuous adaptations and adjustments. For example, although NSC-68 reinterpreted and changed the original proposal for containing the Soviet Union (until a new interpretation was shaped by the Eisenhower Administration's "New Look"), there were continuous policy adjustments brought on by other ensuing strategic evaluations, such as NSC-135/3 and NSC-141 (Gaddis, 2005).

While the continuous change approach is certainly relevant for FPA, this does not imply that we must choose any particular approach vis-à-vis the other. On the contrary, we should view the multiple approaches as complementing each other. As numerous studies have demonstrated, countless organisations, especially those with large, hierarchical structures, such as national governments, comprise both planned and continuous processes of change (Esain et al., 2008). Foreign policy results from both types of change. We may adopt Burne's (2004a) perspective and try to identify the type of change in accordance with the nature of the political environment (Figure 3). In this case, planned change is usually more characteristic of stable environments, whereas turbulent environments are more susceptible to emergent change. However, this might not always be the case. As argued above, many times, minor, on-going adjustments to policy might over time lead to large-scale policy transformations (Orlikowski, 1996; Weick and Quinn, 1999). The key to understanding foreign policy change is thus assessing the approach that best accommodates the reality of organisational life.

In the particular case of the Carter Administration, I claim that the continuous change approach is the most appropriate for explaining the dynamics involved in foreign policy-making. More precisely, in the current study, the Carter Administration's foreign

emphasising “evolution rather than metamorphosis” (Njølstad, 1995: 15). Nevertheless, Njølstad (2004: 22) sustains that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan “was instrumental in paving the way for a new and ambitious US-led security framework for the Persian Gulf region”.

Former NSC staff member William Odom (2006) has also reinforced this view by describing the origins of the US Central Command (CENTCOM). According to the author, the Carter Administration carried out a series of interagency reviews in the early months of the Presidency which “significantly altered US policies in the Middle East and Southwest Asia”. Moreover, Odom (2006) also testifies to the erratic policy process involved in the Administration’s Middle East policy due to cascading events. For example, in explaining the workings of the Persian Gulf Security Framework (PGSF/SCC) meetings, the former general sheds light on the emergent nature of the policy-making process:

The NSC approach, therefore, was to avoid a major and inevitably long interagency debate that would obstruct and delay the implementation of a new policy endorsed by the president six months earlier. Instead, we sought to address a series of catalyzing issues, secure presidential decisions on them, and then allow the agencies to move further on their own. Normally the PCSF/SCC would address only two or three specific actions at a single meeting, making recommendations to the president. Usually within a day, Carter made decisions based on the committee's recommendations, although sometimes not precisely what was recommended. At the end of each meeting, two or three new specific issues were assigned for the agenda of the next meeting that would be held three or four days later. Such rapid turnarounds—from decisions to new issues to decisions and again to new issues for analysis and proposals for decisions—put a great strain on the personnel involved. (Odom, 2006: 69)

Other researchers also bear witness to the continuous dynamics involved in the Administration’s foreign policy-making (c.f., Kupchan, 1987). However, these accounts have equally lacked an appropriate conceptual framework for explaining the change process. In order to assess how the Carter Administration’s policy towards the Middle East emerged throughout Carter’s presidential tenure we need a conceptual framework

that is capable of identifying the unremitting dynamics of the foreign policy decision-making process. In particular, due to the specific spatial quality underlying the Carter Doctrine, we need a framework which emphasises the geographic dimensions of foreign policy. In this case, the use of geographic mental maps as an analytical concept presents itself particularly useful. Decision-maker's mental maps are never fixed. Policy-makers are constantly re-charting policy issues, constructing and reconstructing different places and spaces. Since their early conceptualisation, Henrikson has argued that mental maps are well suited to the study of the fluid nature of international affairs:

One of its major strengths is that it enables us immediately to recognize the vague and shifting character of the environments within which statesmen act. The method also helps us to recognize that formal, two dimensional territorial boundaries do not contain the consciousness of peoples. Mass energies and aspirations may extend far beyond such lines, as, increasingly, do peoples' welfare and security needs. (Henrikson, 1980a: 505)

This is particularly the case during the Carter Presidency. Carter himself recognised the fluid nature of international politics and even made it a centrepiece of his foreign policy agenda. In his Notre Dame address, Carter (1977a) claimed that "In less than a generation, we've seen the world change dramatically". In a speech at Wake Forest University on 17 March, 1978, Carter underlined some of those changes and their results for US national security:

The world has grown both more complex and more interdependent. There is now a division among the Communist powers. The old colonial empires have fallen, and many new nations have risen in their place. Old ideological labels have lost some of their meaning. There have also been changes in the military balance among nations. (Carter, 1983d: 21)

The Third World was profoundly changed by these and other related events. Moreover, the Middle East was particularly prone to this atmosphere of change. As Vance (1983) acknowledged, the events occurring in the Middle East during the previous

decades compelled the US to increasingly engage with the region to try to grapple with many of its multiple challenges and problems.

By analysing the Carter Administration's foreign policy through a geographically-focused lense we derive an alternative understanding of the Carter Doctrine. By using geographic mental maps to assess the development of the Administration's policy toward the Middle East region we can overcome the tyranny of explanations focused on episodic planned change. Mental maps allow us to tell the story of the development of the Carter Doctrine differently and, therefore, broaden our understanding of the dynamics involved in foreign policy change.

However, before I can proceed to analyse the Administration's changing mental maps, I must begin by providing a comprehensive description of geographic mental maps as a concept. While there are numerous studies applying the mental maps in foreign policy research, there are several conceptual and theoretical issues that warrant a thorough explanation and rationalisation. Accordingly, Part 2 of this study devotes particular attention to defining geographic mental maps and conceptualising their role in foreign policy change.

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PART 2

**GEOGRAPHIC MENTAL MAPS AND FOREIGN POLICY
CHANGE**

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GEOGRAPHIC MENTAL MAPS AND FOREIGN POLICY DECISION- MAKING

“We can live with the Vietnam war so long as we remember that it is a peripheral contest, but we do not always act as if we thought so. Sometimes we behave as though Southeast Asia did lie at the center of power (...) but any shooting war takes a large toll in the emotions of the public and the attention of the top government leaders who are responsible for navigating the ship of state in international waters. Moreover, it tends to confuse priorities and leads to navigation by a distorted chart – like something drawn by a medieval cartographer, in which Vietnam appears as a major continent lying just off our shores and threatening our national existence.”

(George Ball, *The Discipline of Power: Essentials of a Modern World Structure*)

It has long been understood that the way individuals perceive their geographic environment is important to foreign policy decision-making and policy-making. Halford Mackinder, the *pater familias* of modern geopolitics, recognised almost a century ago that each era has its own particular geographic perspective:

The influence of geographical conditions upon human activities has depended, however, not merely on the realities as we know them to be and to have been, but in even greater degree on what men imagined in regard to them. (Mackinder, 1996: 21)

This view was perpetuated throughout numerous geographic treatises in the following decades. The perceptions of geographic configurations and geographic patterns of history assumed a heightened relevance for geographers in explaining the interaction between states. More precisely, throughout the generations, societies and governments

have developed particular perspectives and views of the world which have influenced strategic considerations and political behaviour (Sloan, 1988).

However, despite the continued clamour of the importance of the role of geographic representations on policy-making throughout the 20th century, very little theoretical development and empirical evidence has been presented to endorse such claims. With the exception of a few ground-breaking studies treating foreign policy issues, the study of geographic cognition evolved along very different trajectories, leaving explanations of inter-state relations for others theorists to explain. It was only in the 1980s that a systematic effort to “operationalise” the concept of geographic mental maps⁵⁹ in foreign policy analysis (FPA) was undertaken, beginning with Alan Henrikson’s (1980a) essay *The Geographical “Mental Maps” of American Foreign Policy Makers* (c.f., Criekmans, 2009; da Vinha, 2012; O’Loughlin and Grant, 1990).

The last decades have tenuously furthered this line of investigation. Predictably, most of those who have adopted this approach have naturally been geographers. IR theorists have occasionally dallied with geographic mental maps but without contributing significantly to the theoretical development of the concept. While some studies dedicated to geographic cognition have been published in recent years (c.f., Akçali, 2010; Bilgin, 2004; Glassman, 2005; Latham, 2001; Le Rider, 2008; Scheffler, 2003; Walker, 2000), most have tended to focus on regional perspectives. Other works, while more global in scope (c.f., Bialasiewicz et al., 2007; Lewis and Wigen, 1997; Sloan, 1988), have not focused directly on the way that geographic mental maps inform the decision-making processes, but rather concentrating on the way geographic constructions justify foreign policy decisions.

In fact, some of the epistemological propositions stressed by the earlier studies on mental maps have come under criticism from critical geopolitics. Klaus Dodds (1994) has questioned the geographic practice of representing the political world, specifically calling on critical and post-structuralist theories to point out that “‘geography’ (or ‘international

⁵⁹ The term “cognitive maps” has also been applied to describe geographic cognitive constructions. However, the term “mental map” will be used in this research proposal in order to avoid confusion with the concept of “cognitive map” as applied by Robert Axelrod (1976a; 1976b) and which refers to a mathematical model of a person’s belief system, illustrated by a pictorial representation of the causal assertion of a person as a graph of points and arrows.

relations') as a technology or an academic discipline is not simply about 'geographing' or 'earth-writing', i.e., a practice whereby geographers simply record the already legible surfaces of the earth" (Dodds, 1994: 187). According to Dodds, discourses of geographic representations are frequently central to the legitimisation of foreign policies which fix the boundaries between "Us" and "Others".

Critical geopolitics has thus focused on exploring how foreign policy professionals represent political space according to their position in the world⁶⁰. This differs from previous research according to Dodds (1994: 197) who criticises Henrikson's work on mental maps for having "little recognition that the observer might be implicated within these observations or that it might be reasonably problematic in assuming one could (re)present the activities of others". Consequently, scholars committed to critical geopolitics have developed much of the work on geographic representations in foreign policy. Relying on discourse analysis and similar methods, the central assertion of critical geopolitics is "that geography is a social and historical discourse which is always bound up with questions of politics and ideology" (Ó Tuathail and Agnew, 1998: 79). More specifically:

Fundamental to this process is the power of certain national security elites to represent the nature and defining dilemmas of international politics in particular ways. From a geographical perspective this can be described as their power to write international political space by constituting, defining and describing security, threats and perceived enemies in regularized ways. These representational practices of national security intellectuals generate particular "scripts" in international politics concerning places, people and issues. Such scripts then become part of the means by which hegemony (in the Gramscian sense) is exercised in the international system. (Ó Tuathail, 1992: 438)

However, more recently, some research has returned to analysing the mental maps of particular decision-makers, or decision-making groups, revealing their world-views and the way these ultimately affect their foreign policy decisions (Casey and

⁶⁰ However, more recent research labelled critical geopolitics has centred its attention on "geopolitical cultures" and their commonsensical expression in television, films, novels, and newspapers, as well as in the formal education system and the customary politics of ordinary nationalism (Atkinson and Dodds, 2000).

Wright, 2008; 2011; Henrikson, 2008). It is precisely in this context that the current study is framed. With its focus on the discourses and representations of geographic space, critical geopolitics undeniably treads common ground with the mental map research program. Both highlight the representational dimensions of geographic phenomena in foreign policy, emphasising the subjective and plastic nature of geographic knowledge. However, rather than focus on the discursive practices that decision-makers employ to justify and legitimatise particular policies⁶¹, my interest is on how geographic representations influence the decision-making process. In the end, I am much more concerned with *how* a foreign policy decision was achieved than with the resulting policy.

Consequently, several issues need to be addressed beforehand. Despite the various efforts to clarify and explain the conceptual framework underlying the geographic mental map research agenda, there still persists a good deal of theoretical bewilderment. The concept of geographic mental map has diverged considerably in its definition and numerous methodological approaches have been undertaken. A scholarly compromise has yet to be established (c.f., da Vinha, 2012). Accordingly, the geographic mental map, as an analytical concept, needs to be clarified in order to be useful to scientific inquiry. Furthermore, geographic mental maps must be distinguished from other cognitive approaches so that they are not understood as just another name for an already existing concept.

In the following pages I will look to examine some of these issues. To begin with, the geographic mental map will be defined as an analytical concept. This implies clarifying some of the conceptual misunderstandings which have accompanied mental maps in the last decades and make it difficult to distinguish them from other similar concepts⁶² – e.g., “cognitive geopolitics” (Crikemans, 2009), “geopolitical codes” (Dijkink, 1998; Gaddis, 2005), “geopolitical images” (O’Loughlin and Grant, 1990), “geopolitical imaginary”

⁶¹ It is worth stating that much of the work done under the rubric of critical geopolitics has lost some of this character. According to Dalby (2010: 281) the recent proliferation of scholarly research has implied that “the focus on critique, deconstruction and strategic discourses... has been diluted and stretched as the label ‘critical geopolitics’ has been applied to numerous matters of war, politics, culture, representation, identity, economy, resources, resistance, gender, development, fear, emotional geographies and related matters”.

⁶² In fact, Montello and Freundschuh (1995: 170) have acknowledged approximately 200 combinations resulting from the “lists of terms that have been or could be used as labels for knowledge of spatial relations in the environment”.

(Latham, 2001), “geopolitical imagination” (Agnew, 2003), “geopolitical scripts” (Ó Tuathail, 2002), “imaginative geographies” (Bialasiewicz et al., 2007), “metageographies” (Lewis and Wigen, 1997), and “role concept” (Maull, 2000). Accordingly, I will look to define what geographic mental maps are and explain their utility as a conceptual construct. Accordingly, I will review theories and empirical findings from assorted fields of research, such as behavioural geography, cultural geography, foreign policy analysis, cognitive psychology, and social psychology. Evidently this does not claim that the existing conceptualising methodology is the only correct approach. As with all other conceptualisations, the question is not whether the present conceptualisation of geographic mental maps is correct, but whether it is useful. The important features of conceptualisation’s usefulness are the extent to which it can further our understanding of a specific phenomenon and the distinction it allows with reference to similar concepts.

5.1) Defining Geographic Mental Maps

Despite Henrikson’s (1980a) initial conceptualising effort, very little research has since been devoted to developing geographic mental maps as an analytical concept. While it is relatively effortless to encounter numerous references to mental maps throughout the foreign policy literature, they are rarely developed in any theoretical detail. In an effort to broaden its range of application, mental maps have become subject to an exercise of “conceptual stretching” which reveals no analytical precision whatsoever (c.f., Sartori, 1970). As stated elsewhere, “the geographic ‘mental map’ is still used as a catch-all term with only very vague notions of its conceptual underpinnings” (da Vinha, 2010: 61). While I am certainly not against some explanatory leeway, a concept which is too inclusive presents a serious predicament for scientific enquiry. As Moscovici (2000: 30) has hinted, “by attempting to include too much, one grasps little”.

Concepts are fundamental elements for the development of the social sciences. Yet many scholarly endeavours have overlooked the need for proper conceptualisation and proceeded to advance straight to determining measurements and causal inferences (Goertz, 2005; Munck and Verkuilen, 2002). The search to uncover the “what is” question

has often been superseded by the determination to discover the “how much” character of a phenomenon. This, however, has not aided in developing and promoting the research on mental maps in any fashion. We must recall that we can never measure or compare anything satisfactorily without first knowing exactly what it is we are measuring or comparing (Goertz, 2005; Sartori, 1970). As a result, we should proceed to conceptualise geographic mental maps in a way which can comprise the following essential aspects of concept formation (Gerring, 1999: 1) the events or phenomena to be defined (i.e., the extension, denotation, or definiendum); 2) the defining properties or attributes (i.e., intension, connotation, definiens, or definitions); and 3) a label encompassing both 1 and 2.

This does not imply that we should discard previous scholarly endeavours. On the contrary, much gratitude is due to those who have already contributed extensive scholarly labour in developing the mental map concept for application to international politics, in particular to FPA. For instance, the Sprouts’ (Sprout and Sprout, 1957; 1960; 1965) work is undeniably a major contribution to the scholarship on mental maps. The Sprouts parted with the traditional realist perspective centred on the acceptance of the existence of “real world” to which decision-makers reacted. On the contrary, they proposed that “the real world may exist, but its ‘true’ characteristics are unknown or unknowable to the enviroined individuals” (Sprout and Sprout, 1965: 119). As a result of this shortcoming, the Sprouts argued that “what matters in the explanation of decisions and policies is how the actor *imagined* his environment to be” (Sprout and Sprout, 1960: 147).

Though many of the Sprout’s theoretical propositions resonated with many IR scholars in the following decades, it was Henrikson’s *The Geographical “Mental Maps” of American Foreign Policy Makers*, published in 1980, that first applied the geographic mental map as a conceptual instrument for FPA. Acknowledging that traditional political science has long been ill-equipped to deal with the geographic perceptions underlying foreign policy decisions, Henrikson (1980a) contends that the mental map allows for a better comprehension of how individuals make sense of different spatial relationships. With the intention of providing a functional framework for analytical purposes, Henrikson

expanded the conceptual knowledge of geographic mental maps, first by identifying the formational factors subjacent to mental maps – i.e., the maps *cognitive base* and a person's world-view (or *Weltanschauung*) – and then by describing the appropriate methods for analysing an individual's mental maps – the *geographic mind* and the *geographic field*.

Borrowing from Downs and Stea's (2005) earlier work, Henrikson (1980a: 498) defined geographic mental maps as "an ordered but continually adapting structure of the mind – alternatively conceivable as a process – by reference to which a person acquires, codes, stores, recalls, reorganizes, and applies, in thought or action, information about his or her large-scale geographical environment, in part or in its entirety". In this sense mental maps are cognitive processes that structure geographic information in order for individuals to understand their environment, relate it to their prior experience, and make it susceptible to problem-solving activities.

However, this is a rather limited definition since it reveals nothing about the function and utility of geographic mental maps as an instrument for FPA. As a result, we must increase our definition to encompass greater analytical convenience. More precisely, geographic mental maps, are useful for revealing "the awareness, images, information, impressions, and beliefs that individuals and groups have about the elemental, structural, functional, and symbolic aspects of real and imagined physical, social, cultural, economic, and political environments" (Moore and Golledge, 1976: 5). In this sense, they "refer not only to *information*, with its implication of truth and validity, but also to admittedly subjective *beliefs* based on partial, incomplete, or intentionally misleading information" (Moore and Golledge, 1976: 5). *Put very simply, a geographic mental map is a cognitive construct which encloses an individual or group's beliefs about the geographic character of a particular place or places and their relationship to other places or spatial phenomena.*

While clearly underdeveloped in terms of their structures and processes, geographic mental maps are commonly regarded as fundamental to foreign policy decision-making (Best, 2008; Casey, 2008; Casey and Wright, 2008; 2011; Henrikson, 1980a; Latham, 2001; Sloan, 1988; Sprout and Sprout, 1965; Walker, 2000). Even while recognising that geographic mental maps are prone to numerous distortions, few authors

would question that “the *decisions* that lead to political action, however, are taken in the more amorphous, nuanced world of the mental map” (Henrikson, 1980a: 497). Political decision-makers have to make decisions based on information and events that are generally outside their national or even regional contexts. Therefore, mental maps are “systems of orientation” which are used for guidance in foreign policy-making (Henrikson, 1980a; 2002). Mental maps are not only representations of past and current geographic experiences, but are also prospective in that they include expectations about the future (Henrikson, 1980a).

To make sense of the diversity and complexity of the political world, decision-makers rely on simplified representations or mental models (Barr et al., 1992; George, 1969; Golledge and Stimson, 1997; Holsti, 1976; Sapienza, 1987). No one individual can encompass the complexity of the world in its entirety (Lowenthal, 1961). Scientific studies have established that individuals and groups have cognitive spatial constructs which they use to simplify reality and aid political decision-making (Golledge, 2002; Henrikson, 1980a; Mark et al., 1999). Consequently, “the beliefs that compromise these [mental] maps provide the individual with a more or less coherent way of organizing and making sense out of what would otherwise be a confusing array of signals picked up from the environment by his senses” (Holsti, 2006c: 34).

More precisely, decision-makers act with regard to their perceived geographic context, meaning “what matters in the explanation of decisions and policies is how the actor *imagined* his environment to be, not how it actually was” (Sprout and Sprout, 1960: 147). Accordingly, different actors can respond differently to the same event in the international environment (Bilgin, 2004; Gould and White, 1974; Jervis, 1976; Kiesler and Sproull, 1982). As a result, mental maps are essential to policy-making in the sense that they are a “critical component of general spatial problem-solving activity” (Golledge and Stimson, 1997: 239). By informing decision-makers about particular geographic contexts and relationships, mental maps contribute to the process of spatial choice inherent in foreign policy decision-making.

From the arguments presented above, we can assume that individuals have multiple geographic mental maps (Battersby and Montello, 2009; Tversky, 1993; 2003;

Tversky et al., 1994; Walker, 2000). Since individuals possess multiple representations about different parts of the world, originating from numerous sources, each mental map varies in detail, perspective, and accuracy. Essential to this differentiation is the issue of scale⁶³ (Brenner, 1999; Marston et al., 2005). The variables relevant to individuals at each particular moment adjust to and are adjusted by the scale of analysis (Meentemeyer, 1989). Therefore, as Henrikson (1980a: 498) has pointed out, “the ‘scale’ of a mental map (which, of course, cannot be calibrated) is appropriate to the geographical scope of the particular problem being addressed”. Another important aspect in differentiating mental maps is the issue under consideration. Walker (2000) has illustrated this fact in his analysis of US decision-makers’ different mental maps of post-Cold War Europe. More precisely, Walker identified multiple maps in accordance with the features focused on by US officials, such as the security map, economic map, cultural map, religious map, geographic map, and political map.

This has led authors, such as Tversky (1993; 2003) to refer to “cognitive collages” in which different information is assembled in accordance with the geographic requirements at each individual moment. In a similar fashion, Battersby and Montello (2009: 289) claim individuals use “atlas-style representations” to express the assortment of different mental maps individuals’ possess. In fact, instead of being integrated into a single map, geographic knowledge can fall into separate components, with little or no interrelation (Kuipers, 1982). Hence, it would be wiser to understand the multiple mental maps individuals have as resulting from a “mapping” process (Downs and Stea, 2005). In effect, Downs and Meyer (1978: 68) argue that

What we “have” is the capacity to generate a representation of the spatial environment, and the product of the mapping process is a cross-section representing some part of the world at one instant in time. We have not turned to a page in any “mental atlas” for there are no pages to turn; we have generated or constructed a representation (or map or image). (Downs and Meyer, 1978: 68)

⁶³ Geographic scale is the taken-for-granted concept which refers to “the nested hierarchy of bounded spaces of differing size, such as the local, regional, national and global” (Delaney and Leitner, 1997: 93).

Thus, geographic mental maps are dynamic in the sense that they are mapped every time a particular spatial decision is required, reflecting the perceived situation in that specific moment. Prior knowledge and beliefs are essential for the mapping process. However, as I will demonstrate in the following chapters, knowledge and beliefs are consistently being challenged and reconstructed through the multiple interactions individuals carry out during the decision-making and policy-making process.

5.2) Placing Geography in the Mental Map Concept

Several colleagues have questioned me about what is so exceptional about “geographic” mental maps? To be more precise, I have often been interrogated as to whether including the word “geographic” is not just another meaningless terminological concoction which merely renames an already existing concept? The common reservation is “what does the geographic mental map have to offer FPA that hasn’t already been accomplished using other analytical concepts such as the operational code, cognitive map, or schema theory”? While initially taken aback by such queries, I have repeatedly argued that the change of terminology denotes in fact a genuine change of perspective – i.e., a geographic perspective.

While the cognitive research agenda has witnessed the development of a wide assortment of models and methods of analysis and explanation, the geographic dimensions associated with cognition remain clearly lacking. When geography is emphasised in FPA it is almost always acknowledged as an essentially spatial feature. Despite the fact that there has been a recent renewal of interest in geography within IR, the discipline has yet to “develop a sophisticated understanding of the term” (Flint et al., 2009b: 827). Therefore, the themes of physical distance, contiguity, location, and the physical features of the terrain continue to prevail in the majority of the academic research.

To be sure, as Henrikson (1980a: 507) has noted, geography is rarely the decisive factor in determining international politics. But it would be imprudent to dismiss geography altogether, for IR scholars have long acknowledged that decision-makers act

with regard to their perceived geographic context, i.e., psycho-milieu (Sprout and Sprout, 1960; c.f., Golledge and Stimson, 1997; Jervis, 1976; Moore and Golledge, 1976; Sloan, 1988). Nevertheless, geography's spatial attributes have been the overriding concern for those researchers attentive to geographic variables in their studies. Of the numerous spatial attributes (or "spatial primitives") identified by Golledge (1995; c.f., Nunes, 1991), only a few have been of interest to IR scholars – i.e., location, distance, order, density, and dispersion.

Several significant studies have recently been published that buttress this point (Colaresi et al., 2007; Mearsheimer, 2007; Starr, 2003; 2005; Walt, 1985). In fact, distance has traditionally been the dominant geographic attribute for IR and FPA (Henrikson, 2002; Wohlstetter, 1968). Geographic proximity has long been considered a highly relevant factor in international conflict. Several studies applying formal analytical models have determined that "there can be little doubt that the effect of state-to-state contiguity on the occurrence of war is quite strong" (Bremer, 1992: 327). When considering the main factors contributing to international threats, Walt (1985: 10) has reinforced this conviction by supporting that "because the ability to project power declines with distance, states that are nearby pose a greater threat than those that are far away".

There is no denying the importance of the spatial attributes for IR and FPA, but the scope of geographic mental maps surpasses this narrow analytical dimension. They inevitably must focus on *all* the geographic dimensions. Ultimately, this implies defining the object of geographic research – an endeavour that has spurred controversy since the dawn of the discipline (Claval, 2006). Though this task clearly exceeds the intentions of the current study, a few considerations must be made in order to truly comprehend the scope of geographic mental maps and their value for FPA.

Accordingly, we can only benefit from geographic knowledge when we approach geography from a holistic perspective. This implies that we cannot submit to partial perspectives in geography. If it is impossible to reach a consensual definition of geography, it is however possible to identify three core concepts which have permeated geographic thought throughout the ages – i.e., space, place, and environment (Massey, 1994; Matthews and Herbert, 2008). As pointed out above, the concept of geographic

space has long been embraced by IR. Even the vastly multifaceted concept of environment has been gaining considerable terrain in IR and FPA, namely through the ecopolitics and critical geopolitics research agenda.

Yet the concept of place has not been central to IR research. Indeed, “place” is as disputed a concept as you can find in the social sciences. It is in the context of Human Geography that the concept of place is usually attributed great significance, and for “many geographers, place and the difference between places are the stuff of Geography, the raw materials that gives the discipline its warrant” (Gregory et al., 2009: 539). Defining place is certainly no easy undertaking. Staeheli (1993) identifies five conceptualisations of place – 1) place as physical location or site; 2) place as a cultural and/or a social location; 3) place as context; 4) place as constructed over time; and 5) place as process. In the first approach, place is featureless point of reference that locates one position in relation to another. In contrast, place held as cultural or social location suggests that the local cultural, social, economic, and political networks help shape people’s identities. In a similar fashion, place as context attributes identities to particular places and spaces, rather than people. As opposed to identity-in-place (as in the previous conceptualisation), the contextual perspective favours identity-of-place. Another conceptualisation further develops this reasoning, introducing the factor of time. Accordingly, in this perspective place is a dynamic concept which is subjected to the historic layering of human activity. Finally, when place is conceptualised as a social process it breaks with the prior perspectives of place as a product. As a result, the emphasis is on the process of social construction of place, namely those operating at different scales. Accordingly, place is perceived as “intricately binding locales with broad processes and with other locales” (Staeheli, 1993: 163).

Despite the peculiarities inherent in each approach, the dominant feature underlying the different conceptualisations presented by Staeheli (1993) – with the exception of the first – is the unmistakable attribution of meaning to place. In each of these conceptualisations place is imbued with symbolic social significance. Ultimately, the use of place “provides a context for the formation of political identities and the identification of political interests” (Jones et al., 2004: 99).

These conceptualisations do not deny the existence and value of the physical landscape. Rather, they imply that “a landscape has no meaningful shape and significance until it is accorded place and identity in the social and cognitive worlds of human experience” (Helms, 1988: 20). Moreover, the conception of place as a social process is particularly important for international politics and FPA. The allegedly fixed, unchanging nature of geography has been one of its main attractions for scholars subscribing to traditional geopolitical theories (Gray, 1999; Kaplan, 2009; Spykman, 2008). However, due to its social structure, we must recognise places’ fluid and volatile nature (Flint, 2005). Consequently, understanding the distinction between space and place is essential for grasping the true potential of geographic mental maps for international politics and FPA.

Space is associated with abstractness, quantitative modeling (the spatial approach), freedom, movement, formality, and impersonal location; while place is associated with familiarity, security, home, intimacy, historical tradition, social-cultural relations, context, and geo-sociological effects. (O’Loughlin, 2000: 133)

In effect, by focusing exclusively on space we risk missing out on a great deal of information and knowledge that is useful for appreciating foreign policy. Most notably, human agency, with its emphasis on spontaneity and creativity, is side-tracked (Ley, 1996). Human agency is an essential element of geography. Individuals socially construct and are socially fashioned by geography. As Flint (2006: 4) has suggested “Since places are unique they will produce a mosaic of experiences and understanding”. From this perspective, our milieu contributes to our understanding of the world. However, the social construction of place is equally important to grasp. In other words, individuals actively contribute to the construction of place by providing images and narratives that portray and explain them and their relationships to other places. This is precisely the strength of the traditional geopolitical theories. Flint (2006: 13) claims that “Geopolitics creates images: geopolitics, in theory, language, and practice, classifies swathes of territory and masses of people”. Therefore, geopolitical representations associate spatial attributes, such as geographic location and configuration, with the cultural attributes of a place.

In fact, research on mental maps has demonstrated the predominance of the human dimension in geographic knowledge. For instance, studies of students' sketch maps of the world have revealed that a "factor common to almost all maps, [is] the predominance of *human over physical features*" (Saarinen, 2005: 151). Likewise, Schulten (2001) has confirmed that various means of conveying geographic information, such as maps, atlases, and geographic journals, generally placed great emphasis on human traits. For example, late 19th century atlases combined physical and human aspects of geography creating distant, homogeneous, and underdeveloped places ripe for colonial modernisation. In fact, the non-cartographic pages conveyed as much information as the maps, if not more:

As a result we find an emphasis on "quantifiable" information such as industrial production, ethnic breakdown, and religious association. Though apparently idiosyncratic, the information generally related to the human rather than to the natural world. These atlases framed the world as a racial hierarchy by highlighting the unified relationship between race, climate, and "progress," and in the process created an ethnographic world that functioned according to certain laws. (...) As a result of cartographers' treating the nation as a product of both the physical environment and the racial constitution of its inhabitants, race and nation – sometimes race and continent – became conflated. (Schulten, 2001: 33)

We need not look so far into the past to encounter such evocative representations. Contemporary society is replete with similar examples. Skimming over the more than one thousand pages of the recently edited *Encyclopedia of the Peoples of Asia and Oceania* (West, 2009) we can encounter literally hundreds of "informative" and "enlightening" descriptions of the different "peoples" of the regions of Asia and Oceania. For example, we are informed that, while among the poorest citizens of the former USSR, the Tajikistanis "are peaceful, but prosperity is still a long way off for most" (West, 2009: 770). Similarly, whilst the Aeta "are all small in stature, dark skinned, with curly dark hair and dark eyes", resembling some African communities, recent genetic research has demonstrated that "they are as removed from African gene pools as the rest of the population of the Philippines" (West, 2009: 23).

However, these sorts of representations are not restricted to encyclopaedic works. On the contrary, many policy oriented texts in journals of reputable stature also develop similar reasonings. Consider, for instance, Robert Kaplan's (2009) recent acknowledgment of the importance of geography for the future of international politics. While admitting that ideas are important in foreign policy, they are nevertheless geographically determined:

The wisdom of geographical determinism endures across the chasm of a century because it recognizes that the most profound struggles of humanity are not about ideas but about control over territory, specifically the heartland and rimlands of Eurasia. Of course, ideas matter, and they span geography. And yet *there is a certain geographic logic to where certain ideas take hold*. Communist Eastern Europe, Mongolia, China, and North Korea were all contiguous to the great land power of the Soviet Union. Classic fascism was a predominantly European affair. And liberalism nurtured its deepest roots in the United States and Great Britain, essentially island nations and sea powers both. Such determinism is easy to hate but hard to dismiss. (Kaplan, 2009: 100; *emphases added*)

This deterministic outlook allows Kaplan (2009: 101) to identify that the "Eurasia of vast urban areas, overlapping missile ranges, and sensational media will be one of constantly enraged crowds, fed by rumors transported at the speed of light from one Third World megalopolis to another". The same logic underlies the prediction that "the plateau peoples of Turkey will dominate the Arabs in the 21st century because the Turks have water and the Arabs don't" (Kaplan, 2009: 105).

In sum, the object of geographic knowledge is quite vast. IR theories have not benefited from the full potential that geographic knowledge has to offer. By merely acknowledging the spatial attributes inherent to geography we fail to understand how geography actually affects decision-making, particularly with regards to foreign policy. More precisely, a geographic outlook implies we proceed to

...study the specifics of the world, not just where Pyongyang is but what are its characteristics. "Characteristics" may include weather patterns, physical setting, the shape

of the city, the pattern of housing, or the transport system. (...) Understanding a place requires analyzing how its uniqueness is produced through a combination of physical, social, economic, and political attributes – and how these attributes are partially a product of connections to other places, near and far. (Flint, 2006: 2).

It is difficult to understand this disregard for place considering the territorial state is crucial to IR scholarship (Agnew, 1994; Flint et al., 2009b). As cultural geographers have stressed in their research program, identity and space are usually coalesced into a unitary object. This is especially true when we consider nationalities which are “seen as both fixed object, passed from generation to generation, and as territorial where the space of the culture becomes imbued with ethnic or national ideas” (Crang, 1998: 162). The involuntary denial of this holistic perspective has led to discarding the geographic mental map as a useful analytical concept for understanding foreign policy decision-making. Nevertheless, I am certain that a better appreciation of how geographic factors influence our beliefs can aid in comprehending foreign policy decision-making.

5.3) From a Cognitive Psychological to a Social Psychological Approach to Geographic Mental Maps in FPA

There has been very little theorising on how geographic mental maps influence foreign policy decision-making. Though it is widely accepted that “individuals have cognitive images of places which they use to simplify reality” and that these “perceptions [are] important in foreign policy decisionmaking” (O’Loughlin and Grant, 1990: 506), this causal relationship has not been compellingly demonstrated. The best that has been achieved is framing geographic mental maps within the cognitive research agenda (c.f., da Vinha, 2010; 2011; Golledge and Stimson, 1997; Henrikson, 1980a; Moore and Golledge, 1976). The cognitive approach is predisposed to examine the individuals involved in the decision-making process and the complex environment in which they work (Hudson and Vore, 1995; Rosati, 2005). Particularly important for this line of investigation is the focus on individual decision-makers ideas and beliefs. Political scientists have claimed that beliefs,

while “subjective representations of reality”, are important in explaining world politics (Walker and Schafer, 2006). Accordingly, in order to understand the role of geographic mental maps on foreign policy decision-making, mental maps have traditionally been conceptualised in much the same manner as belief systems (Best, 2008; Casey, 2008; Casey and Wright, 2008; 2011; Henrikson, 1980a; Golledge and Stimson, 1997).

Beliefs can be defined as propositions which we assume to be true about causal relationships or elementary assumptions regarding the way the world functions (Renshon, 2008; Rosati, 1991; Vertzberger, 2002). The sum of an individual’s beliefs makes up his belief system. In essence, belief systems comprise all the accumulated and organised knowledge that an individual possesses about himself and the world (Holsti, 2006b; Rosati, 1991). While several different types of beliefs can be identified (c.f., Goldstein and Keohane, 1993)⁶⁴, it has generally been accepted that beliefs contribute to an individual’s understating of the world. Beliefs help individuals simplify and deal with the complexity of the real world (however defined and determined) (Holsti, 1976; George, 1969; Jervis, 2006b; Renshon, 2008; Rosati, 2000; 2005). They are important in decision-making because no one individual can encompass the complexity of the political world in its entirety. Even large bureaucratic institutions cannot process all the available information and produce an infallible portrait of the world (Allison and Zelikow, 1999; George, 1969; Henrikson, 1980a; Kiesler and Sproull, 1982). To make sense of the diversity and complexities of the political world, decision-makers rely on simplified representations which help organise all the intricate variables and give them meaning (Axelrod, 1976a; Barr et al., 1992; Golledge and Stimson, 1997; Holsti, 1976; 2006b; 2006c; Renshon, 2006; 2008; Sapienza, 1987; Stein and Tanter, 1980). Accordingly, beliefs “provide the individual with a more or less coherent way of organizing and making sense out of what would otherwise be a confusing array of signals picked up from the environment by his senses” (Holsti, 2006c: 34).

As a result, beliefs acquire an important function in foreign policy decision-making. They serve simultaneously both a descriptive and prescriptive purpose. At the most basic

⁶⁴ Laffey and Weldes (1997) have contested Goldstein and Keohane’s conceptualization of ideas and beliefs. A principal critique contests the rationalist approach that treats ideas as “objects” and the “neo-positivist” conception of causality associated with them.

level, beliefs act as filters through which we manage and interpret incoming information about political world (Brodin, 1972; Deutsch and Merritt, 1965; Eidelson and Eidelson, 2003; Renshon, 2008). Due to their position between the environment and behaviour, beliefs serve as relatively stable templates which help individuals select, organise, process, and understand the plethora of signals they receive (George, 1980; Rosati, 1991; 2005). Beliefs comprise assimilation and appraisal mechanisms that aid individuals in assimilating new information within existing knowledge structures and representing it in ways which reduce conflict with expectations – i.e., beliefs help man maintain his quality of “consistency seeker” (George, 1980; Holsti, 2006b; Jervis, 2006b).

In their prescriptive role, beliefs provide orientation guides for behaviour. By providing norms and standards for action, beliefs stipulate what George (1980) has termed “choice propensities” which bound the policy choices available to decision-makers. While not completely determining behaviour, beliefs do serve as “road maps” (Goldstein and Keohane, 1993) which lay down the moral and ethical boundaries for political action. Therefore, they can determine “what is right and wrong, provide new social visions, or merely suggest what economic policy will steer a nation towards increased wealth” (Goldstein and Keohane, 1993: 16). Equally, beliefs can provide key “focal points” (Goldstein and Keohane, 1993) that allow disparate individuals to rally around and take action. Beliefs can also be embedded in institutional frameworks (Goldstein and Keohane, 1993), generalising rules and actions and associating diverse issues. Once beliefs are institutionalised they tend to constrain policy in the absence of innovation. In other words, once beliefs are entrenched in organisational and normative structures they “can affect the incentives of political entrepreneurs long after the interests of its initial proponents have changed” (Goldstein and Keohane, 1993: 13).

By providing a number of different cognitive cues, these various features facilitate the decision-making process by abridging the complexity involved in foreign policy decision-making (Rosati, 2000). Accordingly, beliefs can act upon individual’s behaviour through a wide gamut of formulas. But this does not imply that they mechanically affect foreign policy decision-making. The role of beliefs in foreign policy decision-making is not as straightforward and direct as many assume. Their influence is more subtle and

discreet. By affecting the way individuals define the situation they indirectly condition the options for action.

Rather than acting as direct guides to action, they form one of a several clusters of intervening variables that may shape and constrain decision-making behaviour. They may serve the policy makers as a means of orienting him to the environment; as a lens or prism through which information is processed and given meaning; as a diagnostic scheme; as one means of coping with the cognitive constraints on rationality; as a source of guidelines that may guide or bound – but not necessarily determine – policy prescriptions and choices. Thus, attention should be directed to the linkages between beliefs and certain decision-making tasks that precede a decision – definition of the situation, analysis, prescription, and the like. (Holsti, 1976: 34-35)

In this sense, by answering the causally prior question “what were they thinking?” ideas and beliefs are essential to foreign policy decision-making (Flibbert, 2006). In effect, it is precisely in the definition of the situation (i.e., problem representation) that geographic mental maps contribute to foreign policy decision-making, for it has been accepted that “the initial problem representation strongly constrains subsequent behavior” (Taber, 1998: 26; c.f., Hudson, 2005; Moreland and Levine, 1992; Sylvan, 1998; Vertzberger, 2002; Voss, 1998; Weiss, 1989). Even seasoned policy-makers have acknowledged the influence that the definition of the situation has in determining policy choices. According to former US official William Quandt (2005: 8) in foreign policy “the most important factor [...] is the view of the conflict – the definition of the situation – held by the president and his closest advisers, usually including the secretary of state”. The underlying logic is that the problem representation shapes decision-making because “the kinds of alternative solutions that are developed for a problem and the ways in which those solutions are evaluated and implemented depend on how the problem is diagnosed by group members” (Moreland and Levine, 1992: 21).

More precisely, when a problematic state of affairs arises in international politics, decision-makers develop a problem representation in alignment with their geographic knowledge and beliefs (Beasley, 1998; Voss, 1998). This representation is an essential part

of the information processing stage of foreign policy decision-making. Its significance derives from the fact that it helps recognise and concentrate on incoming information, evaluate its relevance to the problem under consideration, and integrate it into the existing knowledge structures (Vertzberger, 2002).

When an individual needs to make a spatial decision, his mental map is “triggered”, allowing him to make sense of the diversity and complexities of his environment by cognitively categorising, associating and ordering disparate geographic information (Golledge, 2002; Henrikson, 1980a; Mark et al., 1999). In other words, the complexity resulting from the various geographic factors present in a specific place or places is abridged in order to be manageable and intelligible to individual decision-makers. In this sense they help mediate our geographic beliefs about the world (Golledge and Stimson, 1997).

However, this traditional perspective of geographic mental maps is insufficient for IR research, particularly FPA. To begin with, by framing mental maps within a cognitive psychology theoretical approach, focus is on the individual decision-makers (c.f., Casey and Wright, 2008; 2011; Henrikson, 2008). In fact, while most cognitive approaches to foreign policy usually centre on individual leaders, foreign policy is very rarely the result of one individual’s decisions (Allison and Zelikow, 1999; Gaenslen, 1992; Hermann, 2001; Kowert, 2002; Stein and Tanter, 1980; Stern and Sundelius, 1997; Tetlock et al., 1992). In fact, group dynamics are at the heart of FPA⁶⁵. In evaluating the “hard-core” assumptions of FPA, Ripley (1993: 406) has acknowledged that “*decision-making elites are the most*

⁶⁵ It is necessary to clarify that the scholarly literature usually establishes a distinction between groups and teams. A team is commonly defined as a particular type of group, namely one in which members “interact dynamically, interdependently, and adaptively toward a common and valued goal/object/mission, who have each been assigned specific role or functions to perform, and who have a limited life span of membership.” (Salas et al., quoted in Cooke et al., 2007: 240). Teams are a type of group where each member plays a specific role which is interdependent on other member’s actions and behaviours. Thus, heterogeneity is a common distinguishable feature of teams, due to their tendency to involve a division of labour or information/knowledge between members. In this sense and for the purpose of the current research, a foreign policy decision-making group is more similar to a team, for it usually comprises some sort of specialization of the different members who interact to achieve a common political objective. Nevertheless, while acknowledging this conceptual distinction in the present study the concepts “group” and “team” are used interchangeably.

important actors in international politics"⁶⁶. Whereas defining exactly the structure of an elite group is a trying task, George (1980: 83) recognised, in his seminal work on foreign policy decision-making, that "most real-world decisionmaking groups tend to be quite small – between two and seven members according to one study – and their size tends to be reduced at times of crisis, or when 'crucial choices' have to be made". More importantly, foreign policy decision-making groups share many of the same features as expert decision-making teams and groups (or project teams – c.f., McComb, 2007), which require a high level of coordination between the different members in order to be successful in complex situations.

Nevertheless, due to its over-reliance on cognitive psychology the cognitive research agenda in foreign policy has been excessively focused on individual decision-makers, namely with the top political leaders. This is a natural outcome given that most cognitive models discard supra-individual, cultural, and social dynamics in favour of the individuals' cognitive performance (Cooke et al., 2007; Lorenzi-Cioldi and Clémence, 2001). The social sciences in general have had difficulty in assuming that meaningful thought is possible beyond the individual. Society is void of any capacity to "think". The dominant paradigms have regarded the human mind "as little black boxes, contained within a vast black box, which simply receives information, words and thoughts which are conditioned from the outside in order to turn them into gestures, judgements, opinions and so forth" (Moscovici, 2000: 29). In fact, the "black box" analogy in political science has had considerable impact on scholarly inquiry. Another important constraint has been many social scientists' suspicion of the possibility of successfully measuring cognition at the group level (Mohammed et al., 2010). Given the difficulties already existing in assessing individual cognition, the extension to collective cognitive representations places an increased strain on the methodological approaches currently employed.

⁶⁶ The other "hard-core" assumptions of foreign policy analysis identified by Ripley (1993) are 1) we must understand the decision-maker's definition of the situation in order to interpret patterns of behavior in global politics; 2) foreign policy can best be understood as an continuous task of sequential problem-solving by goal-directed elites operating within organizational and cognitive constraints; 3) the primary currency of foreign policy is information; 4) the global system is the arena of politics rather than the major force in international politics; and 5) policy prescriptions entail efforts to compensate for individual misperception and organizational pathologies.

Although some early work on FPA focused on small group dynamics this scholarly impetus quickly eroded⁶⁷. Gaenslen (1992) has attributed the lack of research on foreign policy-making groups to the difficulty in studying them. Some of these difficulties are due to reservations about the source of the information relevant to studying group decision-making. The reliability of archival materials detailing how groups make foreign policy decisions has been questioned on various points. First, the accuracy and veracity of the textual and verbal accounts can always be subject to image-management concerns⁶⁸ (Gaenslen, 1992). Second, the context in which group decision-making is made is not always clear and explicit to researchers (Stern and Sundelius, 1997). The third problem concerns the incomplete nature of archival materials. As Gaenslen (1992) has warned, not everything that happens in a meeting is memorialised and many times discussions relevant to the decisions are conducted in informal settings that escape any possibility of verification. I would add that another major difficulty in analysing group foreign policy decision-making is epistemological. As mentioned above, FPA has privileged an individual-oriented approach to its research. Cognitive psychology has been the frame of reference for most studies and consequently individual level decision-making has been favoured.

Equally determinant has been the negative connotation of group dynamics on decision-making. Group decision-making has habitually been associated with defective or low quality policy outcomes. Especially significant was Irving Janis' work on the occurrence of the groupthink phenomenon (George, 1997a; 't Hart, 1991; Turner and Pratkanis, 1998). According to Janis (1971; 1983), groupthink is a form of concurrence-seeking that affects group members and leads to high levels of agreement and to avoidance of intergroup conflict. As a result, due to the value placed on group cohesion, the policy choices resulting from a flawed process can ultimately bring about disastrous policies. However, numerous studies have cautioned against the overgeneralisation of the groupthink phenomenon. In an overview of the empirical research conducted in the two

⁶⁷ Gaenslen (1992) identifies two distinct research categories. The first focused on group the decision-making structure and had as a scholarly reference the works of Snyder *et al.* [1962]. The second category of inquiry centred on group processes and was epitomised by Janis's work on groupthink.

⁶⁸ The issue of the validity of written and spoken sources has been tackled by many cognitive oriented political scientists who have argued that "at-a-distance" assessments are reliable sources for scholarly investigations (c.f., Renshon, 2009 and Young and Schafer, 1998).

and a half decades since the original presentation of the groupthink concept, Turner and Pratkanis (1998) found that there have been very few laboratory and case studies in which the full assemblage of groupthink effects were confirmed. In fact, contrary to common perception, “few experimental studies have documented the end result and the hallmark of groupthink: the low quality, defective decisions” (Turner and Pratkanis, 1998: 110). While the concept has significantly flourished in the field of political science, especially in International Relations, ‘t Hart et al. (1997: 12) argue that it has solely served to reinforce the prevalent tendencies which “cling to a negatively biased view of groups, forgoing an impressive body of evidence detailing the many positive aspects of group behaviour”.

As a matter of fact, numerous studies carried out over the last couple of decades have revealed that certain group dynamics contribute to more efficient decision-making (Cannon-Bowers and Salas, 2001; Lieberthal, 2009; McComb, 2007; Mohammed et al., 2010; Straus et al., 2011). The opportunity for group members to pool information and experience should, in theory, provide for more informed decisions. As Stasser and Titus (1985: 1467) remind us, group “discussion can perform a corrective function when members individually have incomplete and biased information”. In this sense, groups possess a more extensive array of resources than individuals which should permit an enhanced exchange of information.

Even Janis (1971: 85) admits that a functional group is likely “of making better decisions than any individual group member working alone”. The main threat to the group decision-making process is the acquiescence to “powerful psychological pressures that arise when the members work closely together, share the same set of values and, above all, face a crisis situation that puts everyone under intense stress” (Janis, 1971: 85).

Moreover, mental map research has traditionally emphasised the static nature of individuals’ geographic representations. As the research above illustrated, the association to cognitive psychology, in particular to belief systems, has presented mental maps as essentially inert constructs. Since cognitive psychology stresses cognitive consistency and other cognitive heuristics favouring an individual’s cognitive stability, mental maps have also tended to follow these theoretical propositions. As a result, geographic mental maps

are usually considered rigid representations because individuals' cognitive structures tend to resist change.

Even when collective mental maps have been studied, their immobile character is often highlighted. This is in line with the postulates of conventional group research. According to this outlook, group beliefs have traditionally been considered more resistant to change than individual beliefs (Eidelson and Eidelson, 2003). For many years empirical research emphasised the power of group dynamics to reinforce existing beliefs. The individual risks arising from divergence from collective beliefs and interpretations discouraged attempts to review the dominant cognitive structures. This is particularly true for geographic mental maps.

Accordingly, while acknowledging the potential limitations involved in group decision-making, recent explorations in social psychology, especially in socio-cognitive theories and research on group dynamics, may provide a more promising future for understanding geographic mental maps. In contrast to the traditional cognitive approaches, with their emphasis on the internal processing structures of the brain, the latest developments in social psychology offer a more comprehensive approach, which favours the role of history, social interaction, culture, and the environment.

According to Thompson and Fine (1999), the retreat from a cognitivist perspective has its source in the transformations that swept the field of social psychology in recent decades – i.e. regarding the purpose of the discipline, the misdirection of group research, the renewed focus on emotion and behaviour, and the prevalence of organisational behaviour research. In particular, in recent years, research in organisational development and organisational psychology has found evidence that groups can achieve change more readily than single individuals. Several reasons have been put forward to explain this fact (Hackman and Edmondson, 2008). The first is the group's greater capacity to maintain momentum and commitment to change. While an individual can lose the impetus for change for various reasons, groups can surmount most of these obstacles with superior ease. Secondly, groups tend to comprise greater credibility in promoting change due to the fact that they are likely to be more representative of the different elements in the organisation. Thirdly and directly associated with the former, groups can wield a superior

set of competences and knowledge than individuals. As a result, they have available a greater number of means and skills to carry out changes. Lastly, the interaction between group members can contribute to analysing and assessing different ideas, policies, and outcomes.

By applying a social psychological approach to the analysis of decision-makers geographic mental maps I believe we can better understand the complex social phenomenon at work in foreign policy-making and foreign policy change. Rather than focusing on the individual mental maps of those involved in the decision-making process we should look to the geographic representations recurrently created and recreated by decision-making groups. We should try to understand in each particular instance how the group – i.e., the decision unit – constructs the political world, namely how it creates places and spaces and the foreign policies it deems most appropriate for engaging them.

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SOCIAL COGNITION AND INFORMATION PROCESSING

“The information processing approach to groups embraces social cognition as a product of communication and interaction, and focuses directly on how the content of individual cognition is shared with other people. The information processing approach applied to groups combines individual cognitive processes with social processes of communication, thereby offering a richer framework for future research.”

(Brauner and Scholl, *The Information Processing Approach as a Perspective for Groups Research*)

The main factor contributing to the increased emphasis on collective information processing is the importance currently ascribed to socially shared meaning⁶⁹ (Cannon-Bowers et al., 1993; Echterhoff et al., 2009; Klimoski and Mohammed, 1994; Levine et al., 1993; Mohammed et al., 2010; Thompson and Fine, 1999; Tindale et al., 2001). In other words, the renewed attention given to “social cognition challenges the assumption that cognition is exclusively and individual act, distinguishable from external social processes that may influence it” (Thompson and Fine, 1999: 281). Accordingly, social cognition is the result of social interaction which allows groups of individuals to construct, share, and distribute information and knowledge. Therefore, social interactions “generate shared perceptions, behaviors, and products, including memories, norms, belief systems, and interpretations of shared events and activities” (Thompson and Fine, 1999: 281).

⁶⁹ There are a plethora of other terms also applied to refer to collectively created and shared meaning in the thematic literature (Thompson and Fine, 1999), e.g., socially shared cognition, sociocognition, situated cognition, shared reality, group cognition, contextualised cognition, social cognition, shared mental models, team mental models, distributed cognition, collective identity. Throughout this paper I essentially privilege the terms “social cognition” and “shared cognition” and use them interchangeably.

The ways social cognition influence group decision-making will be developed with greater depth and precision further ahead. In the meantime, it is worth noting that, considering the role that small groups play in foreign policy decision-making, a social psychological approach seems more appropriate than theories focused on the individual (Stein, 2005; Tetlock, 1998; 't Hart et al., 1997).

Particularly relevant is social psychology's contribution in explaining how groups develop shared representations of a particular decision problem – i.e., problem representation / definition of the situation. While traditional FPA approaches, founded on the concepts and methods of cognitive psychology, have endorsed many studies focusing on problem representations, these have traditionally involved individual decision-makers or treated political entities (such as states) as rational unitary actors. Constructivist inspired research, for its part, has drawn nearer to social psychology by subscribing to issues of shared identity. Constructivists, in accordance with Stein (2005: 303), “have expanded the repertoire of psychological explanations of international relations – that traditionally focused on beliefs, images, and judgement of leaders – to include the collective or shared beliefs that constitute a common identity, and processes of norm creation and norm observance”. Weldes (1996) exploration of the construction of US national interest attests to this view. Rather than assume the existence of some “real” and “objective” national interest like most realist theorists, Weldes's constructivist stance privileges the act of social interpretation. For that reason, she argues, a constructivist approach “allows us to examine the intersubjectively constituted identities and interests of states and the intersubjective meanings out of which they are produced” (Weldes, 1996: 280).

The significance of the social outlook for geographic mental maps in FPA should not be underestimated. As previously mentioned, research on geographic mental maps has centred predominantly on individual decision-makers. Some studies have explored the mental maps of particular policy-making groups (Mitter, 2008; Read, 2008), but any reference to the social dynamics involved in the construction of the shared geographic representations have been absent. In fact, though recognising a person's cognitive limitations, Henrikson's (1980a: 502 *emphases added*) initial conceptualisation reinforced

the individual quality of the mental map by asserting that “No single mind – which, strictly speaking, *is the only unit of consciousness to which a mental map can attach* – can encompass all that is humanly known of the global environment”.

The notion of collective mental maps is not, however, unusual. Behavioural geographers have long envisioned the existence of collective geographic representations. In their influential study on mental maps, Gould and White (1974) pointed to the need to consider how we could construct a single representative map assembled from many individual mental maps. Whilst admitting that the notion was not yet clearly defined and conceptualised, this process of “homomorphic mapping” would allow for the construction of a single mental map revealing a group’s geographic preferences by combining the various individual mental maps. Nevertheless, the problem with this approach is analogous to that in much of the work conducted on the role of beliefs and ideas on group decision-making, i.e., the collective quality of beliefs or ideas is only obtained through the process of aggregation. This is in line with the conventional argument which states that only an individual can construct a problem representation (Axelrod, 1976b; Beasley, 1998). In fact, Axelrod (1976b: 239) is categorical in asserting that “collectivities do not think and have internal cognitive processes as individuals do”. However, since there is quite likely a certain degree of correspondence in the ideas and belief systems of the different decision-makers in a group, the various individuals’ problem representation affect decision-making through the process of aggregation (Beasley, 1998; Rosati, 1991). One such process consists of regarding a collectivity as “an artificial aggregate of its members, with ‘beliefs’ that are than simply aggregated from known beliefs of its members” (Axelrod, 1976b: 239). In fact, in the past, most research centred on measuring group cognition has applied and adapted individual measurement methodologies to groups (Cooke et al., 2007).

The theoretical assumptions underlying this perspective can be traced back to the early social psychological research on group decision-making which solely emphasised the individual group members’ preferences as the only reasonable contributions for aggregation. In particular, Davis’s Social Decision Scheme (SDS) model laid down the theoretical foundations:

Just as preference structures over alternatives dominated early individual decision-making literature, the process of aggregating the preferences of group members in order to achieve consensus has played a major role in theory and research on group decision making. (...) SDS theory starts with the assumption that small group interaction can be seen as a *combinational process* wherein preferences for decision alternatives across group membership must be combined in such a way as to allow the group to reach consensus on a single group choice. (Kameda et al., 2003: 461)

However, recent developments in several different disciplines focusing on group research have contributed to alter this perspective. As referred above, cognition is increasingly being treated as a fundamentally social activity (Tindale et al., 2001). Levine et al., (1993) have challenged the conventional wisdom that cognition is exclusively an individual act and identified several ways in which social factors influence individuals' cognitive contents and processes. At the most basic level, the mere physical presence of other people can affect an individual's cognition (Hare, 1981). Numerous studies conducted throughout the years have demonstrated that either the active or passive presence of other individuals can generate episodes of social facilitation and social loafing. Equally, the presence of others can contribute to the sensation of crowding which can lead to situations of insecurity, hesitation, and cognitive overload. Another way in which the mere presence of individuals can affect individual cognition is through group composition. The social organisation of a group can affect individual cognition namely by shaping judgments, projections, and identities. As Moreland and Levine's (1992) work on group problem-solving has suggested, the mere presence of the other individuals of the group can facilitate or impede the process of problem identification.

Another way in which social features influence individuals is by providing social roles, positions, and identities. Research in social psychology has confirmed that "cognitive activity is strongly affected by how people construe the social situation in which they find themselves" (Levine et al., 1993: 591). Social roles for their part confine individual behaviour by establishing a set of predictable expectations in a position or particular organisation. For instance, institutions generally "distribute roles that mutually constrain actions and that increase the probability of a strong correspondence between

expectations and outcomes; that is, once state actors adopt a particular role they usually limit their behaviour in a continuous and predictable manner” (Barnett, 1993: 272). Social positions, characterised as a socially accepted category of actor, play a comparable function. According to Levine et al. (1993: 592), “when a positional category is assigned to a person, the individual is expected to possess particular attributes and is responded to on the assumption that he or she has these attributes”. This is the case, for example, of designated experts in foreign policy groups (c.f., George, 1980). The role of the US National Security Advisor is illustrative of the need to conform to certain socially established behaviour, namely by maintaining an honest and/or impartial role in counselling the President and managing the information process (Burke, 2005).

In a similar fashion, social identities also determine individual cognition and behaviour. By ascribing to a group’s identity, an individual assumes some actions as legitimate and intelligible and others as not so. In this sense, the social group is deemed to work as a source of positive social identity for its members, specifically by comparing and distinguishing itself from other groups (Tajfel, 1982). Such is the case of ethnic interest groups⁷⁰ or ethnic lobbies involved in influencing foreign policy decision-making (c.f., Ambrosio, 2002).

Even when not in the presence of others, the mental representations of others can influence an individual’s cognition given that individuals can possess or expect to acquire knowledge about others behaviour. Role taking – i.e., when an individual looks at his own performance from the perspective of another – is one case in point. By assuming to place oneself in another’s position, we are inferring their reaction to the situation. This logic is quite analogous to that of social comparison. By comparing oneself to others, an individual uses his cognitive capacities to construct and distort information to achieve his objectives. Also, a person can be influenced by the presumed reaction of a reference individual. While physically absent, the idea of being judged by another leads to self-evaluation which can “involve a reflected appraisal process whereby self is assessed

⁷⁰ An ethnic group can be defined as a collectivity of individuals which distinguishes itself from others or is distinguished in accordance with their inclusion within a set of cultural, linguistic, racial, and religious boundaries (c.f., Moore, 2002). Accordingly, an individual’s belonging to a certain ethnic group can result from self-identification, being treated as such by non-group members, or both.

according to how significant others would likely respond” (Baldwin et al., 1990: 436). Moreover, anticipated interactions with others also encourage anticipatory cognitive activity. The multiplicity of possible anticipatory interactions with others – e.g., receive, transmit, or receive and transmit information – weighs heavily on the amount and type of cognitive activity that occurs.

A typical example of this type of phenomenon is the way in which a foreign policy decision-maker acts due to his perceived accountability to his constituency (Tetlock, 1998). The pressure to perform in accordance with a specific constituency’s believed desire has led decision-makers to behave contrary to their own inclinations on many occasions. For instance, despite various forewarnings of the need to assure all the required operational conditions in Afghanistan, George W. Bush pressed Cabinet members for action. In his view, the American public would not understand the delay in answering the terrorist attacks of 11 September (Woodward, 2005).

While the aforementioned phenomena relate to the way in which individual cognition is affected by diverse social factors, Levine et al. (1993: 599) also suggest the fusion of the social and the cognitive by envisioning cognition as collaboration, wherein “each person’s ability to function successfully depends upon coordinated interactions with others, and the cognitive ‘products’ that emerge from these interactions cannot be attributed to single individuals”. Accordingly, rather than focusing on the individual or simply reducing group processes to individual cognition, the group is now judged as the primary unit of analysis (Brauner and Scholl, 2000).

This line of inquiry has witnessed considerable development in relation to group information processing. Groups are currently viewed as information processors that are capable of encoding, storing, and processing sizable amounts of information (Brauner and Scholl, 2000; Hinsz et al., 1997; Kerr and Tindale, 2004; Tindale and Kameda, 2000). More specifically, group information processing entails “the degree to which information, ideas, or cognitive processes are shared, among the group members and how this sharing of information affects both individual- and group-level outcomes” (Hinsz et al., 1997: 43). Subsequently, as previously mentioned, “social sharedness” is the fundamental concept for understanding group information processing. At the most basic level, “the concepts

‘shared’ and/or ‘sharing’ are what make group information processing possible, and distinguish it from individual-level information processing” (Tindale and Kameda, 2000: 124). The quintessential belief underlying this theoretical perspective is that “things that are shared to a greater degree within groups will have greater influence on the relevant group outcomes/responses than those things shared to a lesser extent” (Tindale and Kameda, 2000: 124). In other words, by approaching information processing through the concept of social sharing we can gain a superior understanding of what separates effective from ineffective decision-making groups because it is assumed that members of an effective decision-making group possess similar or compatible knowledge that they can use to guide their actions⁷¹ (Cannon-Bowers and Salas, 2001; Mohammed et al., 2010).

Surely enumerating all the things that group members can share is an impracticable feat⁷². Nor is it central to the objective of the current study. Accordingly, rather than providing a detailed review of all the current theoretical models, I will put forward a general account of some of the models which most contribute to our understanding of how social sharedness influences information processing⁷³ – i.e., shared preferences, shared information, shared identity, shared metacognition, and shared task representations.

The initial research on group decision-making focused essentially on the preferences of members. As mentioned above, the SDS model was the dominant framework for aggregating individual preferences. While SDS models have spawned a

⁷¹ Cannon-Bowers and Salas (2001) suggest that the notion of shared cognition has considerable potential value for three main reasons. First of all, it has great potential value as an explanatory mechanism, namely by explaining how members of effective groups interact with each other. Secondly, it also has potential to be a predictive variable in groups, i.e., it can serve as an indicator of a groups “readiness” or “preparedness” to take on certain tasks and challenges. Lastly, the concept of shared cognition has potential prescriptive qualities. In other words, if it allows for a better appreciation of the group information processing, it can diagnose problems and inefficiencies in the process and provide possible solutions or corrective measures.

⁷² For a review of the various definitions and models of “sharing” see Cannon-Bowers and Salas (2001) and Klimoski and Mohammed (1994).

⁷³ There has been some debate on how information processing is conducted at the group level (Cooke et al., 2007). It has commonly been assumed that groups process information in much the same way as an individual and, consequently, individual-level models have been used to analyse group-level phenomena (Hinsz et al., 1997). While there is still need for more empirical studies, research carried out by Kerr et al., (2000: 214) suggests that the “differences in the *output* of individual vs. group information processing need not reflect real (quantitative or qualitative) differences in individual and group information processing”.

great amount of research and empirical results, the most consistent findings suggest that in group decision processes the majorities/pluralities generally triumph (Tindale et al., 2001). In particular, when groups cannot provide an “optimal” or “correct” alternative during the discussion, the “correct” alternative is defined by the group consensus which is established by the larger factions (Tindale and Kameda, 2000). SDS models have been criticised for being constrained to decision situations with discrete decision alternatives. Recently, several models have been developed that consider preference aggregation for continuous responses. For example, the Social Judgment Scheme (SJS) put forward by Davis looks to determine how groups reach consensus on a continuous response scale. The SJS model is based on the discrepancies of the position— i.e., distance among preferences – along a response continuum among the group members (Kameda et al., 2003). Like the original SDS model, SJS and other recently developed models (c.f., Kameda et al., 2003; Kerr and Tindale, 2004; Tindale and Kameda, 2000) reveal the influence of social sharedness at the preference level by demonstrating that the members which share a particular preference can impose that preference on the group.

However, the models above fail to calculate how individual-level preferences will perform after a consensus in the group has been reached. Other studies have revealed that after a group choice has been made, group members generally subscribe to, or move closer to, the consensus position:

Even in situations where consensus is not required, members are influenced by the positions held and arguments generated by other members. Thus, after group discussion, preference sharing tends to increase, regardless of whether the members must all agree on a single choice alternative or judgment position. In other words, the degree to which preferences are shared among group members both influences, and is influenced by, group decision making. (Tindale et al., 2001: 10)

The sharing of information among group members is also important to information processing and decision-making. Information sharing in groups should be understood by two distinct approaches – the common knowledge effect and the cognitive centrality of group members. In the first case, the work of Stasser and Titus (1985)

opened up the field for appreciating how shared information affects group decision-making. Contrary to former theories which postulated that unshared or unique information was determinant to decision-making, their research confirmed that “unshared information will tend to be omitted from discussion and, therefore, will have little effect on members' preferences during group discussion”⁷⁴ (Stasser and Titus, 1985: 1476).

In a subsequent study, Stasser and Titus (1987) developed an information-sampling model that confirmed that the probability of a particular piece of information being recalled by the group during discussion is a function of the number of individuals possessing that same information. In this case, in group discussions, shared information is much more likely to be recalled than unshared information, with obvious consequences for the decision-making process:

We conclude that face-to-face, unstructured discussion while trying to reach a consensus is a poor way for members to inform one another of previously unconsidered information. The information-sampling model and our results suggest that much of discussion is devoted to reiterating already-shared information. In addition, information that is exchanged is seemingly biased toward confirming members' prior preferences and does not give members a more adequate and representative picture of the decision alternatives. (Stasser and Titus, 1987: 92)

Effectively, some of the negative consequences of the common knowledge effect can be attenuated (Tindale et al., 2001). Research has revealed that unshared information becomes more accessible and widespread in group discussions over time. Also, the assignment of roles to group members also contributes to a greater pooling of unshared information (Tindale and Kameda, 2000; c.f., George, 1980).

Another way in which information sharing influences decision-making is through its distribution among group members – i.e., cognitive centrality of group members. A member's status or power in the group can be determined by the amount of information

⁷⁴ In the thematic literature this paradigm is commonly referred to as the “hidden profile” technique and the findings are generally known as the “common knowledge effect” (Tindale and Kameda, 2000).

shared with the other members. Due to the importance attributed to shared knowledge in information-processing, it is argued that the members holding the greatest amount of pooled information will have greater influence over the group decision-making process (Tindale and Kameda, 2000). Using a network framework similar to the SJS model, Kameda et al. (1997) measured the cognitive centrality of group members to determine their position in the sociocognitive network of the group. After conducting two different experiments, the study confirmed earlier findings that attested to the importance of shared knowledge in group information processing:

The results of two studies confirmed our hypothesis that cognitively central members acquire pivotal power in a group and can exert not-negligible influences on group consensus - a phenomenon obtained independently from a member's preference majority-minority status. More specifically, we found that central members took a more active part in group discussion and were more resistant to other members' persuasion than were cognitively peripheral members (Study 1). Even when they were in the preference minorities, cognitively central members exerted more influences on group decisions, guiding consensus outcomes toward their preference to a larger extent than peripheral members (Study 2). (Kameda et al., 1997: 305-306)

One of the reasons for the bias attributed to shared information in group decision-making may be the tendency for members to positively evaluate one another when mentioning shared information. Shared information can be validated socially, contrary to unshared information. In a series of trials, Wittenbaum et al. (1999) demonstrated that shared information is granted greater importance than unshared information because its exchange during discussion serves to validate members' task knowledge. This process of "mutual enhancement" facilitates collective interaction by helping members relate to one another. More precisely, individuals who communicate shared information obtain more affirmative evaluations from other members for doing so⁷⁵. For their part, recipients of

⁷⁵ Wittenbaum et al. (1999) hypothesised that the discussion of shared information is evaluated among group members and is communicated verbally and nonverbally – e.g., members may smile when shared information is mentioned and remark on its importance – and consequently making that information more likely to be repeated.

shared information feel better about their own knowledge when another group member reiterates their information. In sum “members who are positively reinforced (verbally or nonverbally) for communicating shared information may continue to do so because they enjoy the validation and encouragement from others” (Wittenbaum et al., 1999: 977).

In a more recent study Wittenbaum and Bowman (2004) conducted a pair of experiments to determine if the need for social validation drives mutual enhancement and concluded that while social validation is important for information sharing other processes may also operate in conjunction with it – e.g., group composition and social ties. In addition, their results suggest that the mutual enhancement effect is due not so much to the discussion of shared information, but rather to the discussion of unshared information. This is particularly relevant to the discussion of partially shared information. Wittenbaum and Bowman’s experiments revealed that if at least one member of the group can validate partially shared information that information and its communicator can be evaluated in a more positive fashion than if no one can corroborate the information. The implications for the decision-making process are remarkable considering that, according to the experiments, “the most effective way to persuade a group to consider new information may be to make sure that at least one member knows and can validate it for the others” (Wittenbaum and Bowman, 2004: 182).

As mentioned above, social identity theory has also become a major focus in small group research. Its basic assumption is that individuals in a group identify themselves in a similar manner and share a definition of who they are, what attributes they have, and how they relate to and contrast with out-groups, namely by defining the features and boundaries of the group (Gergen et al., 2001; Hogg et al., 2004; Potsmes et al., 2005). The notion of social categorisation is essential to understanding social identity, for people tend to categorise the social world into in-groups and out-groups which are cognitively represented as prototypes:

These are fuzzy sets, not checklists, of attributes (e.g., attitudes and behaviors) that define one group and distinguish it from other groups. These category representations capture similarities among people within the same group and differences between groups. In other words, they accentuate intragroup similarities (assimilation) and intergroup differences

(contrast) and thus transform a bewilderingly diverse social stimulus domain into a smaller set of distinct and clearly circumscribed categories. (Hogg and Reid, 2006: 10)

In a certain sense, a prototype may be understood as a cognitive representation of a group norm (Hogg et al., 2004; Hogg and Reid, 2006). Norms are embodied by group membership and define member behaviour. In this sense, norms exhibit a prescriptive character and are therefore a source of social influence in groups (Hogg et al., 2004). Accordingly, by categorising oneself as a member of a group, an individual implicitly accepts sharing a set of characteristics and behaviours that define the group (Bar-Tal, 1998). More significantly, a shared identity contributes to the definition of what is right and justifiable and what is wrong and illegitimate (Gergen et al., 2001).

An additional way in which social sharedness affects the information process is through the knowledge group members have of the degree of sharedness – i.e., metacognition. Most research on social sharedness has centred on the degree to which group members share certain knowledge or information. However, some scholarly endeavours have also investigated members' knowledge of what other members know and how the awareness of information distribution affects decision-making (Tindale and Kameda, 2000; van Ginkel and van Knippenberg, 2008). Particularly relevant in this field of inquiry is the concept of transactive memory developed by Wegner (1987). By adopting an individual-level cognitive template, Wegner argues that groups encode, store, and retrieve information in a manner quite similar to a single individual. According to Wegner, the possibility of group members acting as external storage locations produces a knowledge-holding system that surpasses the individual capacities of the sum of the individual group members. This allows for groups to remember much more than individuals. However, a transactive memory system requires that members know who has what information in order to access it. In other words, "a transactive system begins when individuals learn something about each others' domains of expertise" (Wegner, 1987: 191).

Wegner's experiments focused essentially on long-standing dyads – i.e., married couples and couples in relationships. Since then, many scholars have explored how transactive memory systems work in organisational settings. Most studies have

corroborated the theory. For example, Moreland (2006) and colleagues conducted a series of trials to determine the effect of individual and group training on group performance. All the experiments demonstrated that transactive memory can contribute to considerably improve a group's work performance. However, Moreland has cautioned to the possible negative implications of member turnover on transactive memory systems:

... turnover can be harmful when a group's performance depends on its transactive memory system. As members come and go, that system must be modified to reflect changes in the distribution of expertise within the group. When turnover is frequent and/or unexpected, such modifications may be difficult to make, raising doubts among group members about who really knows what. A group that relied on such knowledge to perform its tasks might thus have more trouble coping with turnover than a group whose members never knew much about one another's expertise. (Moreland, 2006: 337-338)

This admonition is particularly important for foreign policy decision-making groups if we consider their fluid nature. Contrary to popular belief, foreign policy decision-making comprises various groups situated at the different administrative levels and small groups "often have shifting memberships caused by stratification into inner and outer circles, chronic Cabinet and staff turnover, and the ad hoc incorporation of experts into the decision unit or units" (Stern and Sundelius, 1997: 146; c.f., Hermann and Hermann, 1989).

Especially important for the argument of the current study is the concept of shared task representations. Much of the research mentioned above is devoted to analysing specific pieces or types of information and knowledge that group members can share. However, scholarly inquiries have also confirmed that group members can share a "conceptual system of ideas that allows them to realize when a proposed solution is correct within that system" (Kerr and Tindale, 2004: 638). These shared conceptual systems – i.e., shared task representations – help researchers explain deviations from majority/plurality and other faction-size related models. While majority/plurality models had demonstrated robust results in most experiments, numerous studies revealed

asymmetric deviations from majority-type processes. Laughlin justified these variations by asserting that in group problem-solving tasks small factions can influence larger factions by advocating the existence of “demonstrably correct solutions”⁷⁶, thus supporting “truth-wins” or “truth-supported-wins” decision schemes (Tindale et al., 2001). Demonstrability for Laughlin and his colleagues was achieved through

a system of axioms or beliefs that were shared among the members. This shared belief system serves as a background for the members understanding the logic behind the correctness of a given alternative. Thus, using the shared belief system for a correct alternative can win out over majorities favoring an incorrect alternative (Tindale and Kameda, 2000: 129)

Tindale et al. (1996: 84) expanded on this work and corroborated that the existence of a shared task representation in a group allows for alternatives consistent with that representation to be more easily defended and consequently more prone to prevail as the groups’ ultimate collective choice. Tindale et al. (1996: 84) defined shared representation as “any task/situation relevant concept, norm, perspective or cognitive process that is shared by most or all of the group members”. By attributing task relevancy to the shared representation it is inferred that it will “have some implication for the choice alternatives involved” (Tindale et al., 1996: 84). In other words, the shared task representations can influence the decision-making process as well as the final outcome.

It is generally assumed that the sharing of task representations generates beneficial effects on the group decision-making process (Klimoski and Mohammed, 1994; van Ginkel et al., 2009; van Ginkel and van Knippenberg, 2008). Particularly, by involving group members in a discussion of the group’s tasks and goals – i.e. “reflexivity” – it is expected that individual members will become mindful of the eventual differences between their own and others’ representations. Once these differences are recognised and acknowledged group members can try to reconcile them and develop more shared

⁷⁶ Laughlin distinguished between problem-solving (or intellectual) tasks and decision-making tasks. In the former a demonstrably correct solution exists, whereas in the latter “correctness” is defined by the group consensus (Tindale et al., 2001).

and task appropriate representations (van Ginkel et al., 2009). As a result, “if all the members of a group share a knowledge or belief system that lends credence to a particular alternative, that alternative becomes easier to defend in a group discussion” (Tindale et al., 1996: 86).

In a more wide-ranging perspective, shared task representations can be understood in much the same way as Moscovici’s (1988; 2000; 2001) social representations. In fact, Tindale et al. (1996: 84) consider their concept of shared representations as a “subset of Moscovici’s social representations, delimited by the relevance of the representations to a specific group task”. For Moscovici (1988: 214) social representations are associated with “the contents of everyday thinking and the stock of ideas that gives coherence to our religious beliefs, political ideas and the connections we create as spontaneously as we breathe”. In this sense, the creation of social representations serves both to conventionalise objects and prescribe human actions.

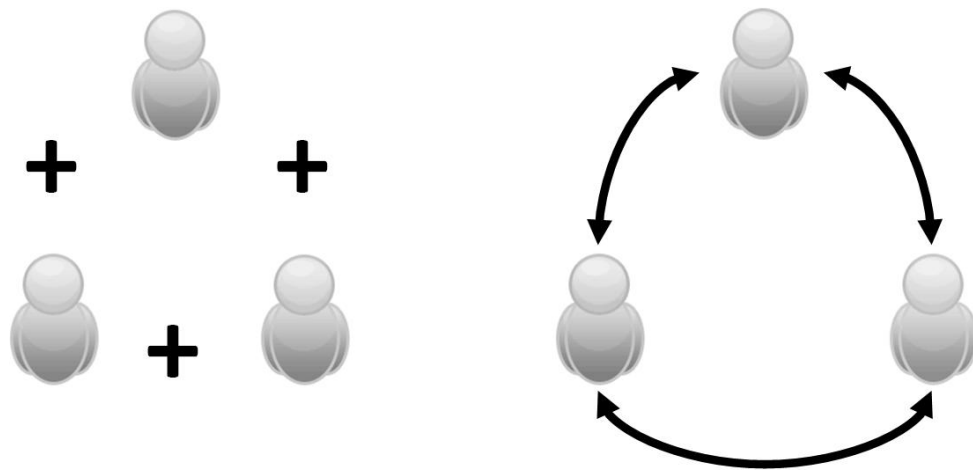
6.1) The Convergence Process: From Individual Mental Maps to Shared Mental Maps

The correspondence of the concept of shared task representation to the concept of definition of the situation (or problem representation) described in the previous section is considerable. It should be recalled that I stated above that geographic mental maps influence foreign policy decision-making exactly by contributing to the problem representation. However, rather than framing the problem in an individual account like most cognitive research theories, we should try to understand the social dynamics involved. Instead of trying to understand the problem representation of a decision-making group merely as an aggregation of individual cognitive experiences, a social cognition approach, namely through shared representations, looks much more promising.

Traditional aggregation techniques focused on assessing individual group member knowledge and averaging the results across the group (Cooke et al., 2007). However, as numerous researchers have pointed out, aggregation not only approaches the group as a

homogenous entity, but, more importantly, fails to highlight the importance of social interaction and communication between group members (Cooke et al., 2007; Klimoski and Mohammed, 1994; Mohammed et al., 2010). Aggregating presumes that the individual members are independent of each other and that the relations between group members are irrelevant to the final result. However, I argue that the relations established between the different members of the group are determinant to the result. Rather than the sum of the parts, we need to appreciate how the interactions between group participants create new and different knowledge and representations (Figure 4).

FIGURE 4 – AGGREGATION VS. INTERACTION



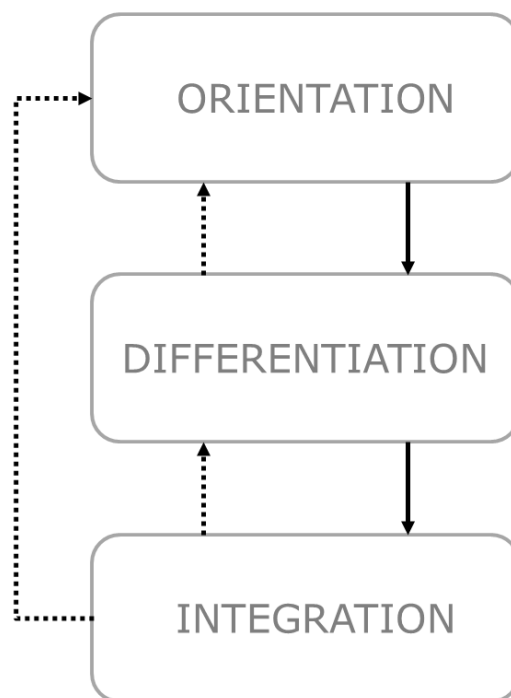
(Source: Adapted from Cooke et al., 2007: 256)

In this sense, we need to understand how individual’s mental maps converge through interaction between group members and become shared. While it is acknowledged that there is a great deal of research necessary to assess how the developmental processes by shared cognition evolves over time, some conceptualising efforts have been made (Mohammed et al., 2010). Of particular significance McComb (2007) has developed a three-phase framework for understanding the convergence process for mental models and which we can adapt to geographic mental maps⁷⁷ - 1)

⁷⁷ McComb (2007: 98) defines mental models as “cognitive structures that include specific knowledge that humans use to describe, explain, and predict their surroundings”. Accordingly, due to the similarity of this

orientation; 2) differentiation; and 3) integration. More precisely, her framework allows us to comprehend how individuals focused on their own goals and objectives can work together as a team and create mental representations that contribute to their activities by orienting themselves to the group, differentiating the different perspectives of the group members, and integrating these views into a shared perspective. (The convergence process is illustrated in Figure 5).

FIGURE 5 – CONVERGENCE PROCESS



(Source: McComb, 2007: 103 [reproduction authorised by the author])

In accordance with the phenomena described in the previous section, the convergence process should be understood as a bottom-up procedure. More exactly, shared cognition always derives from individual cognition, where each individual has a unique, independent perspective⁷⁸. Only through interaction between the individuals can

concept and that of the geographic mental map, we are confident that the adoption of this approach to our research object is not misguided.

⁷⁸ As described in greater detail in the following chapter, each individual cognitive representation is naturally a process of social interaction, i.e., it is socially constructed. However, in an initial group setting, each individual brings with him his particular individual cognitive representation.

cognition converge within the group (Cronin et al., 2011; Ilgen et al., 2005; Kennedy and McComb, 2010; Klimoski and Mohammed, 1994; McComb, 2007; Mohammed et al., 2010). This implies that at the initial stage individuals only bring their own singular cognitive representations to the group. It is exactly the conversion process that allows for a shift to occur to the group level.

Regardless of the time and speed that characterises different groups' interactions, McComb (2007) argues that the conversion process always follows the same three-phase process. Accordingly the first phase is orientation stage in which group members assemble new information and gather unshared information about the group through observation, experimentation, and inquiry. This interaction allows individual members to accumulate group-relevant information and knowledge which was previously undisclosed. As a result, group members exchange information with one another in a manner quite similar to individual information retrieval from memory. Thus, the initial orientation process can be best understood as "a collective induction process, in which information – in the form of ideas, knowledge, and strategy – is disseminated among all members" (McComb, 2007: 105).

There are various different modes through which information can be exchanged by members. The most elementary is through verbal articulation which allows the group members to pool unshared information. Yet, as mentioned above when discussing the common knowledge effect, individuals have a tendency to discuss information which is most common between the group members. Therefore, in addition to verbal articulation, individuals acquire information through observation, experimentation, and inquiry. Regardless of the method used for acquiring information, individual members must also gain knowledge of the differences amongst each other. This implies that group members must achieve an understanding of how the other members of the group interpret the information exchanged and what significance they attribute to the differences of interpretation. As a result, the orientation phase allows for a comprehensive understanding of the group situation and "represents the foundation upon which the remaining convergence process rests and facilitates the emergence of the most complete mental models possible" (McComb, 2007: 106).

Subsequently, the differentiation phase sorts, consolidates, organises, and stores the information previously collected, creating a transactive memory system that can be accessed when necessary. While the information organised is about the team, McComb (2007: 107) recalls that “the focal level remains the individual because the content is the team members’ perspectives, which may or may not be shared across team members at this point in the convergence process”. This stage is critical in the sense that it is essential for each individual member to recognise the different perspectives about the information collected held by each other member. This process is thus analogous to the creation of a transactive memory system. As described above, individual members hold their own individual knowledge about a situation as well as a directory of the information held by the other group members. Accordingly, a meta-knowledge system is created through the sharing of storage responsibilities amongst members.

The last stage of the convergence process involves integration. This entails the reconciliation of the differences between individual perspectives and the shifting of the focal point to the group as a whole. More than just group members thinking similarly, it is essential for integration that the individuals are cognisant of this convergence (van Ginkel and van Knippenberg, 2008). The process is somewhat complex, but according to McComb it is essential to the definition of the group *per se*:

As part of this reconciliation process, the focal unit of interest shifts from the individual level to the team level. To accomplish this shift in focal unit, team members interact and negotiate with one another about the differences in their mental model content that were identified during the differentiation phase of mental model convergence. Thus, integration is a transformational process through which individuals modify their own mental models. As the mental model content converges across team members, the information contained in the mental models becomes shared and shared mental models emerge. In sum, the result of integration is a reconciliation of the various team members’ individual mental models into shared mental models that will allow team members to collaborate effectively as they complete their assignment. (McComb, 2007: 108)

The final stage of this process is completed when the group has achieved a degree of integration which allows it to conduct its task successfully. Naturally the degree of integration affects the performance of the group. For example, when integration is not sufficiently achieved the group may not perform up to its optimal capacity due to the lack of information and knowledge among the members. On the contrary, too much integration may render decision-making defective, facilitating groupthink. However, as McComb (2007: 111) has suggested, the “precise degree of integration may depend on the scope and nature of the team’s assignment, the team’s unique cognitive style, and the content of its mental model”. In particular, simple assignments may lead to a high degree of integration in which information is commonly held by all members. In contrast, when assignments are complex there is very little opportunity for redundant knowledge and the information needed to be shared is carefully considered. Also, integration can be influenced by the team’s particular cognitive structures and cognitive processing style. In this sense, McComb identifies four cognitive approaches along four pairs of dimensions:

- Introverted (discuss among group members) versus extroverted (discuss with individuals outside group).
- Sensing (gather detailed, specific information to frame problems in operational terms) versus intuitive (gather abstract information that focuses on possibilities to frame problems in strategic terms).
- Thinking (use logic and facts to evaluate information) versus feeling (use relative weights and merits to evaluate information).
- Perceptive (focus on gathering – versus evaluating – information) versus judging (seek closure based on information available for evaluation). (McComb, 2007: 112)

Notwithstanding these particularities, the conversion process as a whole is essential to determining the power that shared representations have in influencing the decision-making process. More precisely, the process is fundamental to the creation of the group’s “reality” and it is in accordance with this “reality” that they will decide:

We must therefore rid ourselves of the idea that representing something consists in imitating by thoughts or language facts and things that have meaning outside the communication that expresses them. There is no social or psychological reality “as such”, no transparent image of events or persons unconnected with the person who creates the image. (...) Mental states that are shared do not remain mental states, they are communicated, take shape, tend to materialize, to become objects. In that light, they acquire power. (Moscovici, 1988: 230)

Central to the convergence process is the role of language as a means of communication and interaction. The following chapter will analyse in greater detail the role of language and communication in creating “realities”.

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THE MECHANISMS OF CHANGE: COMMUNICATIVE INTERACTION

“For it is through patterns of discourse that we form relational bonds with one another; that we create, transform, and maintain structure; and that we reinforce or challenge our beliefs. The very act of communicating is the process through which we constitute experience. Habituating this meaning over time provides the background of common experience that gives organizational members a context for their organizing behaviour. Communication, then, is not just a conduit for transferring information from one person to another, rather it is the very process by which organizing comes to acquire consensual meaning. Organizing, therefore, is continuously created and recreated in its acts of communication among an organization’s members.”

(Barrett et al., *The Central Role of Discourse in Large-Scale Change*)

In this chapter I intend to explain how shared geographic mental maps change, namely by identifying the causal mechanisms involved in the process. The mechanisms do not trigger change, but rather they are “the things that are *triggered* by something else” (Guzzini, 2011: 337). Studying the mechanisms of change is fitting to our agent-centred approach. Identifying the mechanisms involved in changing decision-makers mental maps contributes to generating more precise and intelligible explanations. Mechanisms have acquired several distinct meanings over the years (Hovi, 2004). Gerring has identified several different applications of the concept, such as

(a) the pathway or process by which an effect is produced, (b) a micro-level (microfoundational) explanation for a causal phenomenon, (c) a difficult-to-observe causal factor, (d) an easy-to-observe causal factor, (e) a context dependent (tightly bounded or middle-range) explanation, (f) a universal (i.e., highly general) explanation, (g) an

explanation that presumes probabilistic, and perhaps highly contingent, causal relations, (h) an explanation built on phenomena that exhibit law-like regularities, (i) a technique of analysis based on qualitative or case study evidence, and/or (j) a theory couched in formal mathematical models. (Gerring, 2010: 1500-1501)

Nevertheless, underlying all these diverse approaches to mechanisms is the emphasis on identifying clearly and coherently the regularities observed by detailing precisely how they have come to be created. This does not mean however that mechanisms are identical to covering laws. The latter assume that explanations consist of robust empirical generalisations which are invariable under different conditions (Tilly, 2001). Therefore, mechanisms differ from covering-laws due to their rejection of the deterministic nature of laws. From a mechanisms approach perspective, a particular type of event will not always produce the same type of effects. As Hedström and Swedberg (1998) have pointed out, social sciences are of a much more probabilistic nature.

Rather than focus on the relationships between variables, a mechanism-centred approach focuses on the actors, particularly on their relationships, and the intentional and unintentional results of their actions (Hedström, 2008). The underlying rationale is thus “to know not only whether X causes Y but also *how* it does so” (Gerring, 2010: 1502); it surpasses the mere description of relationships and concentrates on identifying and explaining the processes involved. According to Hedström

mechanisms can be said to consist of *entities* (with their properties) and the *activities* that these entities engage in, either by themselves or in concert with other entities. These activities bring about change, and the type of change brought about depends upon the properties of the entities and the way in which the entities are linked to one another. A mechanism, thus defined, refers to a constellation of entities and activities that are organized such that they regularly bring about a particular type of outcome, and we explain an observed outcome by referring to the mechanism by which such outcomes are regularly brought about. (Hedström, 2008: 321).

In this account, actors are the entities and their actions are the activities that bring about change. However, mechanisms are frequently difficult to identify. In many cases,

mechanisms are simply analytical constructs which “provide hypothetical links between observable events” (Hedström and Swedberg, 1998: 13). This results from the fact that it is impossible to enumerate all the possible causal mechanisms in a particular relationship (Gerring, 2010). In this sense, we have to choose which events we include in our descriptions, for even the most descriptive explanations are no more than representations of concrete social situations which accentuate certain features and ignore others. In other words,

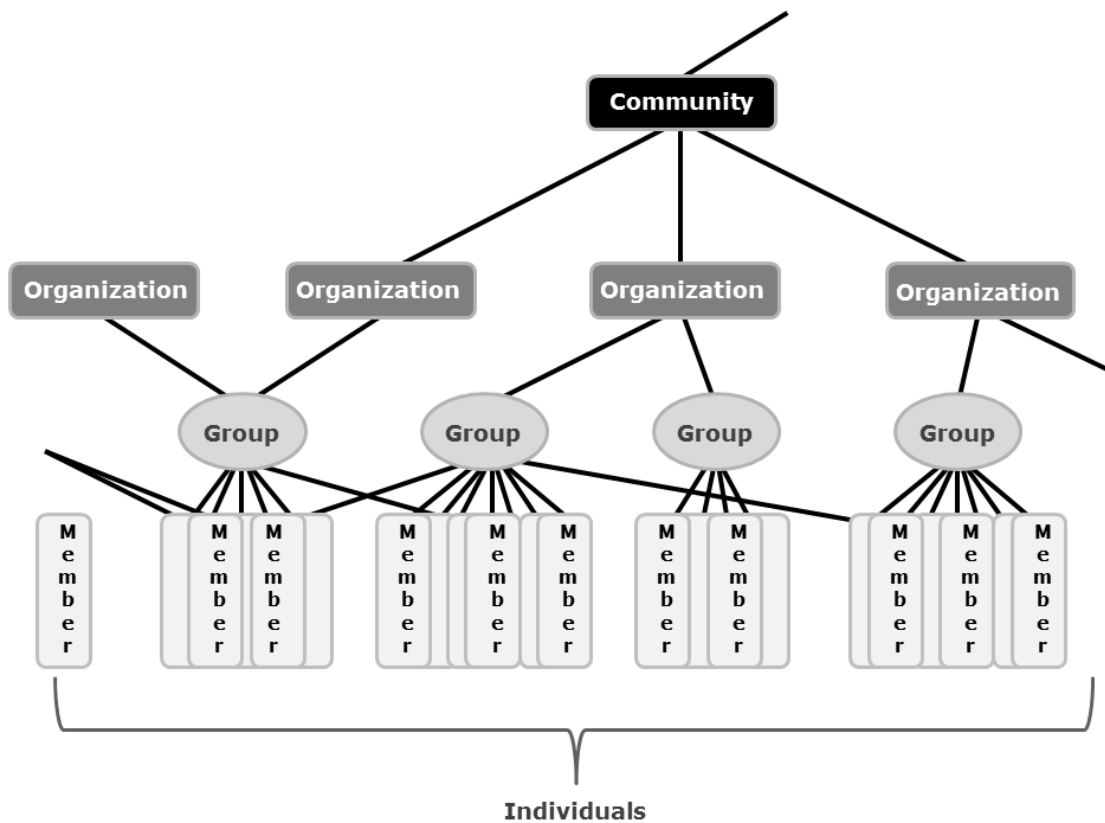
The choice between the infinitely many analytical models that can be used for describing and analyzing a given social situation can never be guided by their truth value, because all models by their very nature distort the reality they are intended to describe. The choice must instead be guided by how useful the various analytical models are likely to be for the purpose at hand. (Hedström and Swedberg, 1998: 15)

In order to understand how geographic mental maps change and how this change potentially influences foreign policy decision-making, I have turned to organisational and group research. As I have stated previously, the current study assumes that foreign policy decision-making is a collective endeavour. Accordingly, it focuses on group decision-making. Groups, particularly, foreign policy-making groups, are however, framed within broader collective structures. More precisely, just as individuals are nested in groups, groups are themselves nested in larger social entities, such as organisations. While we may concentrate our attention on decision-making groups, we must be thoroughly mindful of their embeddedness in an intricate network of complementary social relationships (Forsyth, 2010; Kozlowski and Bell, 2003; Stern and Sundelius, 1997). Graham Allison (1980: 43) makes the case when, in his assessment of US Government, he claims that “virtually no issue of importance in public policy falls exclusively within the domain of a single department or agency”.

Accordingly, in order to fully appreciate the dynamics involved in foreign policy decision-making, we must assume a multilevel perspective (Figure 6) in which:

group dynamics are shaped by processes that range along the micro-meso-macro continuum. Micro-level factors include the qualities, characteristics, and actions of the individual members. Meso-level factors are group-level qualities of the groups themselves, such as their cohesiveness, their size, their composition, and their structure. Macro-level factors are the qualities and processes of the larger collectives that enfold the groups, such as communities, organizations, or societies. Groups, then, are nested at the meso-level, where the bottom-up micro-level variables meet the top-down macro-level variables. (Forsyth, 2010: 19-20)

FIGURE 6 – A MULTILEVEL PERSPECTIVE ON GROUPS



(Source: Forsyth, 2010: 21)

To explain the mechanisms involved in changing mental maps I will focus on the communicative interaction process involved in foreign policy decision-making. A focus on communication allows for a better understanding of how interactions amongst individuals alter their shared geographic representations. From this perspective, language and communication are the heart of change. More precisely, it is through communication

within and between groups that geographic mental maps are recreated and transformed. The simple fact is that people belonging to different cultures or subcultures speak different languages though many times they are unaware of it (Schein, 1993). This naturally assumes that communication is the essential process in creating a groups “reality”. As I have suggested above, language is *the* means of communication and social interaction. It does more than represent – it enables and limits human action (Marshak, 2002). Language, according to Semin (2001: 159), should be considered a tool that not only constructs and represents meaning, but also can “transform reality by conveying meaning”.

According to Sylvan and Thorson, politics is founded on language:

The plausibility of this claim flows from the (controversial) observation that much (perhaps all?) of politics is constituted in language. Language becomes the medium within which politics is constituted, modified, and played out. Representations, which themselves are linguistic, do not point to the objects that they represent... but rather are themselves components in webs of socially constituted rights, rules, responsibilities, and other such conventions. (Sylvan and Thorson, 1992: 715-716)

The authors’ claim intends to deny the idea that objects can be understood detached from their structures of representation and interpretation. On the contrary, any knowledge structure results from the interaction and communication established between individuals (Duveen, 2000; Moscovici, 1988; 2000). It also implies that the approach promoted here breaks with views, such as structural-functionalist theories, that accept the existence of a real world “out there” (Barrett et al., 1995; Billings and Hermann, 1998). These theories argue that language merely constitutes a system of symbols which serves to represent a concrete and tangible reality. Thus, change “ultimately depends on the ability to accurately mirror or represent reality and choose and implement interventions appropriate to that reality” (Ford, 1999: 480).

However, by assuming an approach partial to constructivist reasoning⁷⁹, I assume that reality is socially constructed. Language is a vital instrument for constructing reality since it is through the combination of words, phrases, sentences, and other linguistic symbols that we describe, report, explain, and interpret all types of situations and affairs (Barrett et al., 1995; Ford, 1999; Gergen et al., 2001; Hardy et al., 2005; Heracleous and Barrett, 2001; Plowman et al., 2007; Tsoukas, 2009). Thus, language defines and consequently confines our understandings.

Nevertheless, language is not neutral. It must always be understood framed within its particular socio-historic context. This means that the language we use is always situated in some kind of preconceived knowledge structure. For Barrett et al., (1995: 357) “people live within interpretive communities, or discourse communities that (...) provide a horizon of understanding and guide what members notice as fact”. Social customs tend to objectify language giving them a facade of permanence and enduring meaning to individuals and groups (Ford, 1999)

There are several ways in which language creates meaning. Moscovici (1988; 2000) highlights two distinct but complementary processes: anchoring and objectifying. Anchoring allows us to integrate an unknown object or event into our system of categorisation and give it meaning:

To anchor is thus to classify and to name something. Things that are unclassified and unnamed are alien, non-existent and at the same time threatening. We experience a resistance, a distancing when we are unable to evaluate something, to describe it to ourselves or to other people. The first step towards overcoming such resistance, towards conciliating an object or person, is taken when we are able to place it or him in a given category, to label it or him with a familiar name. (...) By classifying what is unclassifiable, naming what is unnameable, we are able to imagine it, to represent it. (Moscovici, 2000: 42)

⁷⁹ In much of the scientific literature used for this study the terms “constructionist” and “interpretivist” were commonly found to refer to what is known as constructivism in IR, but I will continue to employ the latter.

Objectifying, for its part, transforms the unknown into a tangible reality. It is the materialization of an abstraction accomplished through symbolic reproduction. This embodiment of abstract concepts results from human interaction, in which individuals communicate with each other and create meaning:

...to objectify is to discover the iconic quality of an imprecise idea or being, to reproduce a concept in an image. (...) A tremendous stock of words is in circulation in every society referring to specific objects, and we are under constant compulsion to provide their equivalent concrete meanings. Since we assume that words do not speak about “nothing”, we are compelled to link them to something, to find non-verbal equivalents for them. (..) Yet not all words that constitute this stock can be linked to images, either because there are not enough images readily available, or because those they call to mind are taboo. Those which, owing to their ability to be represented, have been selected, merge with, or rather are integrated into, what I have called a pattern of *figurative nucleus*, a complex of images that visibly reproduces a complex of ideas. (...) Once a society has adopted such a paradigm or figurative nucleus it finds it easier to talk about whatever the paradigm stands for, and because of this facility the words referring to it are used more often. Then formulae and clichés emerge that sum it up and join together images that were formerly distinct. It is not simply talked about but exploited in various social situations as a means of understanding others and oneself, of choosing and deciding. (Moscovici, 2000: 49-50)

Weldes (1996) has presented similar claims. While not addressing social representations *per se*, she has identified similar mechanisms for the construction of problem representations – i.e., articulation and interpellation. Articulation corresponds to the production of meaning through the use of existing cultural and linguistic resources. While always culturally contextualised, articulation allows for the formation of “chains of connotation”, in which different terms and ideas are linked together. This process facilitates the association of certain phenomena to particular meanings and representations that guide action. Although the nature of the associated meaning can be contested and rearticulated, the essential claim stands: “Objects, actions, events and relations, that is, do not simply present themselves to us in an unmediated or self-evident fashion” (Weldes, 1996: 286). Rather, meaning is created through communicative

interaction which articulates different linguistic elements to create particular problem representations.

Interpellation, for its part, entails an individual's incorporation into a particular subject-position or identity. In other words, according to Weldes, social relations create specific identities which comprehend different understandings of the world, power relations and interests and, subsequently, allow individuals to naturally identify and relate with those same relations and interests. Ultimately, it is through interpellation that "representations appear to be common sense, to reflect 'the way the world really is'" (Weldes, 1996: 287). Thus, just as in Moscovici's social representation concept, Weldes illustrates how representations are created through communication and social interaction and consequently circumscribe human interaction. However, while representations arise from communication, the latter is also dependent on representations. In other words, communication is only possible due to existing representations (Duveen, 2000).

Just as communication is responsible for creating our shared representations of reality, e.g., shared mental maps, it is also accountable for changing them (Cronin et al., 2011; Kennedy and McComb, 2010). As Kennedy and McComb (2010: 347) have stated "communication is the mechanism that provides the information necessary to update and modify individual mental models". As each individual in the group exchanges his personal cognitive representation with the other members, the groups' shared mental maps transform in order to adjust to the new social context⁸⁰.

It is through communication that individuals can create, change, and maintain their beliefs. It allows for more than the sheer transmission of information between individuals. Rather, it is the process by which groups and organisations come to create and recreate shared meanings and beliefs. As Barrett et al. (1995: 358) have suggested, "meaning making is a shared and public activity" since language is only meaningful within a particular social context. For that reason, language should be understood as a tool which allows "members of a culture to coordinate ongoing relations with one another" (Barrett et al., 1995: 358). The more individuals communicate, the greater the possibility

⁸⁰ Once more, I emphasise the fact that there is no organisational change independent of individual change (Ford, 1999).

that new narratives, representations, and mental maps are generated since opportunities for discussing new realities surface (Ford, 1999; Ford and Ford, 1995; Schein, 1993).

While Lewis (2011) has confirmed that communication is not the only factor responsible for change, she does acknowledge its importance. It is through the communicative process that other change variables – e.g., physical, financial, emotional, and political – are mediated. Without communication new information is not considered and existing representations are not evaluated and checked against inconsistencies. Communication can add new information and refocus people’s attention to new situations and issues (Ford, 1999; Tsoukas, 2009). Moreover, all decision-making units are permeable to some kind of external influence, no matter how self-contained they are (see Hermann and Hermann, 1989). Thus, interaction is an intrinsic condition to the decision-making process.

Yet, before I elaborate any further, some conceptual clarifications are once again required. The literature on organisational change which underlies the present argument differs considerably in the terminology used to describe the communication involved in the dynamics of change – e.g., conversation, dialogue, discourse. While recognising that “*communication* is a broad term” as Keyton et al. (2010: 274) have admitted, I have opted to use the term communication to embrace the complex and dynamic interactions between two or more people embodied in the verbal and non-verbal practices which bring an object into being through the production, dissemination, and consumption of texts (Grant et al, 2004; Hardy et al., 2005). These texts assume a varied assortment of forms such as verbal expressions, written documents, pictures, and symbols (Cooren, 2004; Grant et al., 2004; Hardy et al., 2005; Smith, 2001). Ultimately, communication reproduces the multiple linguistics tools that allow individuals and groups to construct reality (Semin, 2001).

I have also used the concept communication in order to distinguish the current research from other related discourse-oriented approaches (c.f., Heracleous and Barrett, 2001). Above all, I have chosen communication to set the study apart from mainstream critical research in IR. From this perspective, discourse analysis contemplates the linguistically communicated, historically located, socially embedded, power/knowledge

relationships (Heracleous and Barrett, 2001). Moreover, critical discourse analysis has political overtones that exceed mere theoretical considerations; i.e., “[t]heories, descriptions, methods and empirical work are chosen or elaborated as a function of their relevance for the realization of such a sociopolitical goal” (van Dijk, 1993: 252). As a result, the focus is primarily on the hegemonic representations constructed by those in positions of power (c.f., Ó Tuathail and Agnew, 1998). Even researchers using a discursive practices approach fail to highlight the interaction between decision-makers in the construction of a particular representation (c.f., Doty, 1993). Overall, discourse approaches treat official representations as a given. In contrast, the present study focuses on the process of communicative interaction involved in producing geographic representations and how these ultimately influence foreign policy decision-making. When considering relations of power, my interest is to identify the power nexus involved within the decision-making group, particularly in how that relationship influences the group’s mental maps.

Therefore, assuming this wide-ranging conception of communication allows us to avoid concepts which limit social interaction to mere verbal exchanges. In reality, many of the discursive approaches to change focus exclusively on verbal interaction (c.f., Ford, 1999; Ford and Ford, 1995; Tsoukas, 2009). The concepts of conversation and dialogue are particularly focused on the sequential verbal utterances established between individuals and tend to highlight a reflective behaviour in which individuals contemplate the taken for granted meanings in the language they use (Isaacs, 1993).

This, however, is too limited a perspective to grasp the complex interaction actually involved in foreign policy decision-making. As the case study in the following chapters illustrates, communication in foreign policy has to take into consideration the non-verbal linguistic tools decision-makers use in the decision-making process, namely edicts, memoranda, reports, studies, and other non-official sources (Donovan, 1997; Doty, 1993; Fear, 2012; Jervis, 2006a; Lieberthal, 2009; Marrin and Davies, 2009; Quandt, 1986a; Walcott and Hult, 2005). For example, in the context of US foreign policy the *President’s Daily Brief* (PDB) is a key document for communicating the intelligence community’s principal security concerns to the President. While intended “For the

President Only”, depending on the leadership style of the different leaders, the PDB can be an instrument motivating broader interaction, as was the case in the George W. Bush Administration where “he often used the intelligence briefing as an opportunity to review and explore policy options with some of his principal advisers, typically the Vice President, National Security Advisor, and Chief of Staff, who regularly sat in on the briefings” (Lieberthal, 2009: 10). Memos and letters are another example of how decision-makers may interact non-verbally. As the case study demonstrates, the President’s principal advisors used personal memos as a preferential means of communication.

However, official documents are not the only means of interaction between decision-makers. As Bloodgood’s (2003) research has revealed, due to the growing influence of information technologies and globalisation, foreign policy decision-makers are increasingly depending on personal and material sources of information from outside of their organisations. In fact, her study confirmed that decision-makers are progressively turning to non-governmental sources of information such as “newspapers, industry representatives, and NGOs”⁸¹ (Bloodgood, 2003: 21). Therefore, we can differentiate between formal and informal communication (Lewis, 2011). Whereas the former uses official channels, the latter arises from spontaneous interaction between the different stakeholders. The fact that communication is informal does not imply that it is any less significant to the change process. The only difference is it is usually “undertaken without the force of official authority or access to official channels, and sometimes in a manner that enables participants to deny ownership of what is shared” (Lewis, 2011: 53).

Non-verbal texts have other significant characteristics for decision-making. Contrary to verbal communication which is a more short-lived phenomenon (even when there is a prolonged verbal interaction), written texts have durability, i.e., they stay active as long as they are acknowledged or are not revoked or destroyed (Cooren, 2004). More importantly, written communication is more easily institutionalised. Political verbal communication, especially public communication, is often intentionally vague (Brodin,

⁸¹ Bloodgood (2003) used a survey to identify the sources of information used by US and British decision-makers in the legislature and executive and found that out of the 163 respondents, over 80% used newspapers for information of foreign affairs. Moreover, in the British case, it was found that decision-makers used external sources of information more than internal ones (however, internal sources are given more credence).

1972). Written communication, on the other hand, allows for the severance of the author's initial intention and meaning. In other words, once written, the author loses control of the meaning of text, as it is continually reinterpreted by others. William Fear skilfully illustrates this phenomenon using legal minutes as an example:

...as a text the minutes are a purported record of intentional and meaningful activity. Within an organization they are a special case of a text of body of texts (the texts presented to the board and the dialogical interactions of the board over successive meetings). Not only that, the minutes are by their very nature recursive. That is, the minutes of the board meeting at time t are re-presented, and reread, in the meeting at time $t+1$ and consensually agreed, sometimes by default, as a true and accurate reflection of the proceedings of the previous meeting at time t . Thus the minutes continually reinforce and propagate ideas, meanings, ways of thinking, what is taken for granted, beliefs, and so on; they are an institution... and they have institutionalizing effects... But the minutes, as any text does, escape their authors' finite horizons and create new worlds. This is not, though, a static process occurring intermittently as the minutes are collated, even if by default, to form structured collections that can, and may, produce social categories and norms that shape the understandings and behaviors of actors... The minutes also function to allow and disallow, and privilege and discredit, subject positions, bodies of knowledge, and further discourses as they escape the authors' finite horizons. (Fear, 2012: 491-492)

Accordingly, the interpretation of communication embraced in the present study is that of transformative communication. In other words, it refers to the multiple communicative interactions that contribute to transforming the relationships between individuals and groups possessing distinct and sometimes antagonistic geographic representations in order to construct shared mental maps and policy practices (Gergen et al., 2001; Goodwin and Heritage, 1990).

This outlook is in complete harmony with the constructivist approach I referred to above. It refutes the structural-functionalist tradition in change research which claims that there exists a "true" reality independent of the observer and that communication is merely an instrument used for describing the objects in the world through language. Rather, the approach offered in the following pages assumes that reality as we know it

depends on social interaction for its interpretation, construction, and representation⁸². As Ford and Ford have so plainly stated

In this case, change is not a response to a shift in understanding that corresponds more closely to some underlying “truth”, but rather is a function of a shift in the constructed reality. In the constructivist approach, change managers use interventions not to bring about a greater alignment with a “true” reality, but rather to construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct organizational realities, i.e., to author new realities. Since constructed realities provide the context in which people act and interact, shifts in these realities open new possibilities for action and the realization of new orders of results. In other words, shifts in context provide for shifts in action which provide for shifts in the results that are produced. By the same token, continuation of existing realities means a continuation of corresponding actions and results. (Ford and Ford, 2003: 142)

Therefore, transformative communication requires embracing a process-oriented, i.e., a “performative” approach, to change which assumes that human agency is critical to understanding how mental maps are altered (Barrett et al., 1995; Tsoukas and Chia, 2002). From this perspective, “meaning” does not exist outside of social practices. Language *per se* has no significance detached from human praxis. Rather, it is through “speech acts” that language becomes performative. These actions in language “bring into existence a social reality that did not exist before their utterance” (Ford and Ford, 1995: 544). Thus, communicative acts are more than mere utterances; they are actions that orient individuals and groups (Gergen et al., 2001; Heracleous and Barrett, 2001). As a result, it is through performing speech acts that we can transform reality and ultimately change our actions. Keeping in line with Butler’s (1988) reasoning, we can therefore conclude that a geographic reality is real only to the extent that it is communicatively performed.

All communication is performative in that it embodies actions through language. Generally, the performative nature of speech acts has been attributed only to verbal

⁸² Some authors distinguish between 1st and 2nd-order constructed realities, however since the distinction is not relevant to the present study I will not develop them. For more information see Ford (1999).

communication. But, as I have stressed above, we must contemplate the performativity of the non-verbal linguistic tools involved in foreign policy decision-making. In fact, in recent years several authors have demonstrated and accentuated the performative nature of other communicative acts (Cooren, 2004; Fear 2012; Smith, 2001). Cooren, for instance, has demonstrated how different forms of non-verbal communication also exhibit textual agency:

Signs, memos, and contracts display a form of agency by doing things that humans alone could not do. Created by human beings, these texts participate in the channeling of behaviors, constitute and stabilize organizational pathways, and broadcast information/orders. (Cooren, 2004: 388)

Nevertheless, the idea of communication in catalysing change is not innovative. As Ford and Ford (1995) have accurately reminded us, communication has traditionally been considered a multidimensional instrument of change. More precisely, communication has been

...seen as tool for announcing and explaining change, preparing people for the positive and negative effects of change... increasing others' understanding of and commitment to the change... and reducing confusion about and the resistance to the change... and reducing confusion about resistance to change... Communication is also seen as a tool for diffusing dissatisfaction with the status quo in order to inspire people to change... as a mechanism for sustaining the change... and as a way to receive feedback on what a change means to people and how they believe it will affect them... Communication is considered a critical element in enabling people to change their attitudes and behaviors... and in their gaining ownership of the change. (Ford and Ford, 1995: 542)

From this perspective, communication is always considered an instrument operating within the change process. Therefore, communication serves to provide and obtain information, produce understandings, and manufacture control. However, the outlook subscribed to in the current study acknowledges that change is experienced

within communication. Since change naturally occurs within the context of social interactions, these communicative interactions are constantly reconstructing individuals and groups realities. In other words, “change is a recursive process of social construction in which new realities are created, sustained, and modified in the process of communication” (Ford and Ford, 1995: 542).

In this sense, organisations should be understood as networks of communication (Ford, 1999). They do not have one monolithic communicative interaction. On the contrary, organisations have numerous sequential interactions acting simultaneously and which are all contributing to the construction of its reality. In fact, due to the contemporary complexity of information and the pace of change, organisations need to distribute functions internally, which require the development of shared mental models created by interaction and communication in order to be effective (Schein, 1993). Consider, for instance, the multiple communicative interactions at work in a Government – e.g., communication on foreign policy, defence policy, budget policy, economic policy, domestic policy, environmental policy, etc. Despite treating different issues and subject matters, the organisation has to have a shared cognitive model which helps orient and guide a coherent general policy.

Building on the work of Searle and others, Ford and Ford (1995) identify five categories of “speech acts” through which communication can produce change. While the authors used their classification applied to verbal communication (i.e., “conversations”), these categories appear to fit without problems to all types of communication for the reasons argued above and I will use them to apply to all types of linguistic tools previously referred to⁸³, renaming them “communicative acts”. Accordingly, the five communicative acts are⁸⁴:

⁸³ Ford and Ford (1995) argue that the five categories are performative due to the fact that they establish a new reality or reinforce the existing reality with which individuals must interact. In this sense, I believe that this does not differ in any aspect from the other multiple linguistics tools that allow individuals and groups to construct reality, namely the non-verbal tools.

⁸⁴ For a more comprehensive understanding of how non-verbal communicative acts function see Cooren (2004).

1. Assertives (a.k.a. claims) – statements which are sustained by some kind of evidence. They are generally “assessable and assailable on a dimension of true and false”, based on other evidence or the acceptability of the evidence provided” (Ford and Ford, 1995: 544). According to Searle (1976: 11), the most straightforward way to assess an assertive is to determine if you can “literally characterize it (*inter alia*) as true or false”;
2. Directives (a.k.a. requests) – elements of communication that try direct the receptor of the message to behave in a certain way. These include such acts such as invitations, instructions, orders, directions, commands, and advice. A prime example of a directive in foreign policy is a National Security Strategy or a Presidential Directive. These documents set out a course of action, identifying the general objectives and ensuing strategy which guides foreign policy;
3. Commissives (a.k.a. promises) – the natural reaction to a request, committing the individual responding to some kind of behaviour or action. They are the products of agreements resulting from communication. For instance, “a promise may be implicit, as when someone accepts a position with a specified job description, or it may be explicit, as when someone schedules a project or promises to produce a result at a certain time” (Ford and Ford, 1995: 545);
4. Expressives – expression of an affective condition, such as an apology for a mistake, concern about a problem with a task, satisfaction with a particular outcome, or disappointment with a failure. The veracity of the expression is assumed at face value since it reflects a psychological state of sincerity (Searle, 1976);
5. Declarations – are communicative acts associated with initial and closing instances. According to Ford and Ford (1995: 545) “The adhering qualities of declarations are a function of the speaker’s [communicator’s] position and are not based on evidence. Just as a judge declares a verdict of guilty, as so it is, or an umpire declares a pitch to be a strike, and so it is, an executive can declare that a new project is under way, an office is renamed, or a person is promoted, and so it is”. Declarations differ from the preceding categories due to the fact

that they bring about a transformation in the status or condition referred to simply by performing the declaration (Searle, 1976).

The combination of these communicative tools allows for communication to bring about change. Ford and Ford (1995; 2003) identify four different combinations of communicative acts, corresponding to four different types of interactions, involved in the change process⁸⁵. Once again, I adopt the authors' model, adapting it where necessary in order to frame it in a broader understanding of communication:

1. Initiative communication – comprises the initial stage of a change process by focusing the receivers' attention on the situation by using assertions, directives, commissives, and/or declarations. In combination or separately, the communicative acts are used to initiate the change process, either intentionally or non-intentionally. For instance, the process can be set off by "an assertion (e.g., 'We need to do something about the deteriorating situation in the East'), a request (e.g., 'Will you approve our undertaking a new program to restructure the department?'), a promise (e.g., 'We will reduce the budget deficit this year by 25%'), or a declaration (e.g., 'We will substantially increase the availability of health care')" (Ford and Ford, 1995: 546). Initiatives can always be identified, even in the context of continuous change;
2. Communication for understanding – generally involves assertives and expressives in which arguments are put forward, evidence is provided, theories are analysed, beliefs and judgments are evaluated, and debates are upheld. This type of communication is important for individuals and groups to assess and understand a particular situation and indentifying the causal mechanisms involved. It can be understood as a problem-solving stage in which assumptions are examined, a common language is developed among participants, and a shared context is created which allows individuals to communicate with each

⁸⁵ Kelman (2008) has presented a similar conceptual argument in his research on interactive problem solving. However, Kelman's research emphasises intentional face-to-face interactions as a vehicle for change.

other. Ford and Ford (1995) have identified three important by-products resulting from this communication. The first is the common establishment of the “conditions of satisfaction” for change, i.e., the desired result of the change process. The second is the involvement and participation of the individuals involved in the communication process⁸⁶. This participation allows for the individuals to share their representations and perspectives with the others involved in the communication process. The third by-product is the construction of interpretations resulting from the development of a shared and integrated understanding of the events under consideration, i.e., the definition of the situation;

3. Communication for performance – composed by an interchanging network of communicative acts, such as assertives, directives, commissives, and expressive, this communication seeks to initiate some kind of action for change. This communication comprehends the exchange of communication between the various individuals involved in the communication process as they work out the best course of action to adopt. In this process they can create a shared understanding of the objectives and strategy that best satisfies their needs.
4. Communication for closure – involves the use of assertives, expressives, and declarations to conclude the change process⁸⁷. Ford and Ford (1995: 551) underline the importance of the closure process for the restoration of equilibrium and order which ensures that individuals “are released from their change effort to go forward”. However, assuming that change is also a continuous process, closure is momentary phenomenon at best.

Even the authors (Ford and Ford, 1995: 552) acknowledge that “the future will, presumably, encourage new initiative conversations”. In fact, if foreign policy-making is

⁸⁶ Ford and Ford (1995) have identified three important by-products resulting from this communication. The first is the common establishment of the “conditions of satisfaction” for change, i.e., the desired result of the change process. The second is the involvement and participation of the individuals involved in the communication process.

⁸⁷ Ford and Ford (1995) admit the use of directives and commissives in this type of interaction but they argue that they are subservient to the closure process.

extended and connected throughout time as I have referred above, it is natural that most of the communication involved will also be extended and entwined with multiple other communication processes. Therefore, rather than view this communicative interaction as a linear process (as is contemplated in the authors' original model), we should consider it a cyclical model in which individuals and groups are constantly reviewing their existing beliefs and representations. As Figure 7 demonstrates, the communicative process is influenced (and can influence) by other parallel interactions occurring within the organisation and with other external actors. It is particularly important to acknowledge the interaction with individuals and groups outside of the decision-making group or organisation. As the case study reveals, many of the changes in the Carter Administration's mental maps resulted from interactions with actors outside the Administration. These actors many times contributed to the Administration's representation of the situation by providing new or additional outlooks. Therefore, communicative interactions are in constant flux and do not always have to follow the same sequence. In fact, many times feedback loops will reverse course or stages will be jumped.

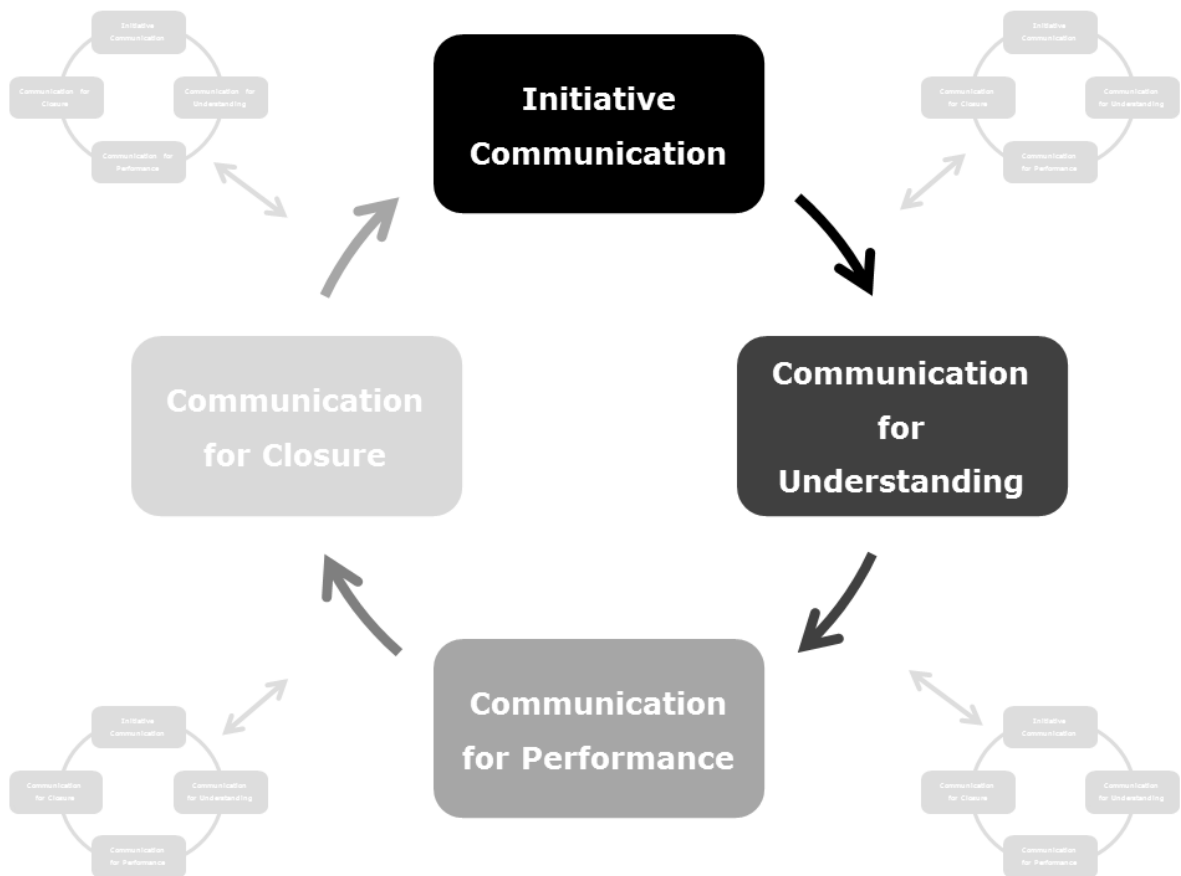
The following is a schematic, idealised outline. While I have acknowledged that interaction involved in change is a continuous process, I will describe the different dynamics involved by breaking down the process of change through communication into discrete stages *only* for the purpose of analytical systematisation and conceptual clarity.

Accordingly, initiative communication is considered the first stage of the change process. It is usually prompted by the recognition of an incongruity or problem (Huber et al., 1993; Louis and Sutton, 1991). As Moreland and Levine (1992) have pointed out, the identification of a problem is important because it initiates the process of group problem solving. The identification of a problem or incongruent situation must be communicated in order to initiate the change process⁸⁸. Once again, problem identification is an individual occurrence. While group members may be involved in the subsequent stages, "only a *person* can actually notice the symptoms of a problem, feel sufficiently aroused to

⁸⁸ The communication process is essential, for as Moreland and Levine (1992) have acknowledged a problem can be detected, but individuals may not be motivated to act.

try to solve it, and perform the cognitive processes needed to develop a problem representation” (Moreland and Levine, 1992: 21). Lebow and Stein (1993) have argued that foreign policy change results from the actions of individual leaders. According to the authors (1993: 95), “[i]t is the leader, alone or in consultation with senior advisers, who redefines a problem, reorders goals, or chooses new strategies”. While leaders do certainly have a decisive role in the decision-making process, the initiative communication can be commenced by other members of the group or organisation. For instance, as Aronoff (2006) has corroborated in her study on the Carter Administration, advisors and other political officials are important sources of change, especially in originating interaction within the group or organisation that leads to a transformation of the existing policy.

FIGURE 7 – THE PROCESS OF CHANGE THROUGH COMMUNICATION



(Source: Adapted from the model presented by Ford and Ford, 1995; 2003)

Most of the times, individuals and groups rely on cognitive heuristics which guide their understanding of the situations and their actions. As a matter of fact, many of the tasks we encounter daily do not require any conscious awareness. As I have discussed in previous chapters, individuals have several cognitive structures which help them automatically and routinely manage their activities, e.g., schemas, scripts. However, there are several circumstances in which individuals can become consciously engaged. Louis and Sutton (1991) have identified three such situations. The first results from the encounter of a novel or unusual situation. The second is provoked by a discrepancy, i.e., “when ‘acts are in some way frustrated,’ when there is ‘an unexpected failure,’ ‘a disruption,’ ‘a troublesome... situation,’ when there is a significant difference between expectations and reality” (Louis and Sutton, 1991: 60). The third situation is the outcome of a deliberate initiative, such as when one responds to a request or demand for increased attention and awareness to a situation. Moreover, individuals can also learn from previous or historical experience, re-evaluating and reviewing prior beliefs (Hall, 1993; Levy, 1994). Any of these thought provoking conditions can lead an individual to recognise a problem and communicate it to his peers or the organisation.

Once initiative communication has been acknowledged by the group, its members are now ready for the following stage of change⁸⁹: communication for understanding. In this phase, group members assess the need for transforming the situation and they initiate an interaction process in order to establish the actions necessary to solve the problem or incongruence detected⁹⁰ (Ford and Ford, 1995). Ultimately, communication for understanding is the fundamental dynamic involved in defining the problem representation, i.e., the definition of the situation. Before any problem can be resolved, decision-makers must first diagnose the situation (Moreland and Levine, 1992). This involves the construction of a shared mental map that identifies and explains the problem, specifically why and how it occurred and what can happen if it is not addressed. When existing mental maps are challenged or contradicted there is an incentive for

⁸⁹ An important caveat should however be stated. Some groups will reinforce existing beliefs when faced with dissonant information, rather than try to understand the situation (Gersick and Hackman, 1990).

⁹⁰ Initiative communication can proceed to communication for understanding stage without any prior agreement for change.

decision-makers to assess this discrepancy and redefine the situation (Barr et al., 1992). Contrary to traditional minimalist theories, recent research demonstrates that the identification of inconsistencies can lead to a wholesale transformation of individuals' mental models (Walsh and Johnson-Laird, 2009).⁹¹

There are several factors contributing to how the group comes to understand a problem, namely the issues related to the problem, the group, and the political environment (Moreland and Levine, 1992). Problems may differ in severity, familiarity, and complexity, while groups may be influenced by their internal norms, scanning capabilities, and levels of performance. The political environment can also effect the definition of the situation due to the level of uncertainty and the presence of out-groups and outsiders. Many of the complications associated with these factors can be surpassed by group interaction. As previously stated communication provides the information required for updating and modifying individual cognitive representations. The communicative interaction enables the group as a whole to gradually recreate shared meaning and develop a common cognitive process (Kennedy and McComb, 2010; Schein, 1993). As group members communicate with each other they can share their representations and beliefs, contributing to a better assessment of the situation and to the convergence of the group's mental maps.

Since every organisational culture has its own specific language, it essential to create a shared linguistic context (i.e., vocabulary) in order for members to effectively communicate (Sapienza, 1987). From this perspective, according to Schein, communicative interaction is a crucial element in creating a shared understanding of the situation or problem at hand, because

...only with a period of dialogue is it possible to determine whether or not the communication that is going on is valid. If it is not valid, in the sense that different members are using words differently or have different mental models without realizing it, the

⁹¹ Minimalist theories argue that when an individual encountered a conflicting fact they would seek minimal changes to accommodate the new facts, while maintaining a consistent set of propositions. However, recent research indicates that rather than making minimal adjustments to their beliefs, individuals tend to explain the occurrence of the inconsistency and eventually promote extensive alterations in their beliefs and representations (Walsh and Johnson-Laird, 2009).

possibilities of solving problems or making effective decisions are markedly reduced. Dialogue, then, is at the root of *all* effective group action. (Schein, 1993: 42)

It is precisely this process of shared problem identification which begins unravelling individuals' existing schemata and cognitive categories (Chi, 2008; Hermann, 1990). These categories are inherently unstable and questioning their accuracy and validity can lead to their revision, erosion, or modification (Lakoff, 1987). As individuals interact with each other they come to share the same linguistic categories and cognitive structures (Sapienza, 1987; Tsoukas and Chia, 2002). The interdependence of individuals' cognitive categories implies that revisions in one geographic mental map will subsequently lead to a reconsideration of associated mental maps (Deutsch and Merritt, 1965; Lakoff, 1987; Peuquet, 2002). As interactions continue throughout time, even the most stable discursive structures will eventually shift (Heracleous and Barrett, 2001) allowing for radical transformations in the group's geographic mental maps.

It should be stressed that creation of these shared narratives is not an uncontroversial process. As Stone (1989) has acknowledged, problem representations are not a given. In other words, the situations political actors face do not possess inherent properties which automatically make them problematic. Rather, "political actors *deliberately portray* them in ways calculated to gain support for their side" (Stone, 1989: 282; c.f., Ng and De Cock, 2002; Pettigrew, 1977). Naturally, there are numerous complementary representations within the decision-making group or organisation which are pushed forward during the interaction process. This practice of "issue selling" is essential in the early stages of the interaction process in order to direct and affect the group's attention to and understanding of the issues under discussion (Dutton and Ashford, 1993). As the different individuals or groups within an organisation push their representation of the situation, multiple change narratives compete with each other in the communicative interactions.

The likelihood of a particular narrative being incorporated into the groups shared problem representation depends on a multitude of factors. Dutton and Ashford (1993) and Dutton et al., (2001) have presented some crucial aspects which influence the success of selling a particular representation within to group or organisation. To begin with, much

depends on how and issue is packaged. Issue packaging is “how an issue is linguistically framed, the way an issue is presented, and how an issue’s boundaries are established” (Dutton and Ashford, 1993: 410). A representation will be more likely to be shared to the extent that the problem is portrayed – i.e., “packaged” – as being strategically important, that the ultimate decision unit of the organisation is capable of responding to it, and a successful outcome is envisioned (Dutton and Ashford, 1993). In addition, the selling process and the degree to which a problem is “bundled”, i.e., the extent to which it is related to other issues, is also important for its successful integration into the shared mental model. More recent studies have also highlighted the importance of the sense of timing in introducing an issue and the contextual knowledge of the advocates of a particular problem representation: “The process is also deeply contextual in the sense of requiring issue sellers to have in-depth knowledge of ‘how the system works’ in order to effectively make change happen” (Dutton et al., 2001: 730). Ultimately, as Buchanan and Dawson (2007: 670) argue, “The accounts that win this competition and that ‘stick’ often do so through a combination of fact, narrator credibility and influence, political tactics, skilled ‘storytelling performances’ [...], and the symbolic influence that arises from the manner in which accounts are articulated and presented”.

All the same, once a shared problem representation is established, the group can proceed to the communication for performance stage. As documented beforehand, the construction of problem representation is critical for future action, for it has repercussions on “which kinds of evidence bear on the problem, which solutions are considered effective and feasible, who participates in the decision process, how policies are implemented, and by which criteria policies are assessed” (Weiss, 1989: 97-98). However, understanding does not imply action, so a catalyst is needed to move the change process forward. Communication for performance usually generates requests (directives) and promises (commissives) that will produce the actions that will allegedly satisfy the desired objectives. From this perspective, communication enables action by initiating “a simple structure of possibilities for continuing to some kind of completion” (Flores et al., 1988: 157).

As a result, communicative interaction is also essential to changing our behaviour and actions. While all language is embedded in social conventions, the meaning of words and symbols is not static. Rather, words gain meaning in relation to other words that are themselves evolving. Words and symbols can always acquire new meanings through social interaction. Therefore, if communication helps individuals co-create their social reality, it can also contribute to transforming it:

Discourse creates, sustains, and transforms organizational structures by altering or augmenting the set of interlocking assumptions that in turn shape the linguistic patterns and conventions. Knowledge processes in organizations are recursive and dynamic: Through time, members' linguistic forms shape actions and actions in turn stimulate linguistic forms. In this sense, every utterance is an intervention into the interpretive horizon of a discourse community. The challenge in understanding the change process rests in grasping the embeddedness of language in historical patterns of gestures and assumptions. Language offers the opportunity for change by enabling new action alternatives, while reflecting the constraints of previous patterns, actions, and assumptions. (Barrett et al., 1995: 358)

In other words, as communication generates a new language for defining the situation, it correspondingly creates a new language for action. Thus, according to Ford (1999: 489), what we have is something similar to a "reverse language shift" in which the new language replaces the existing language, "bringing forth new conversations into an existing community and having those conversations prosper such that they become naturalized within the network of conversations that constitute an organization". Accordingly, as communicative interactions transform existing assumptions and beliefs, the need for new actions is also created (Barrett et al., 1995; Gersick and Hackman, 1990). Communicative interaction allows for group members to share their expectations and objectives in order work out the course of action that best satisfies the group or organisations requirements. The communication for performance stage is concluded when the proposed conditions for actions have been satisfied and the means of achieving the group's objectives and goals are shared.

Finally, the communication for closure stage involves placing in “perspective all that has happened and allow participants to complete their relationship with the change effort” (Ford and Ford, 1995: 55). Ultimately, it indicates that the current change process has been concluded and policy options have been established. According to Tsoukas and Chia (2002), to enable future action the group must achieve a closure of meaning. To put it differently, “cognitive categories must be stable enough to be consistently and effectively deployed” (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002: 573; c.f., Barrett et al., 1995; Curşeu, 2011). Therefore, once the revised mental maps have acquired stability, then the group can choose the policy that they consider best deals with the problem. By sustaining the communication for closure through recurrent interactions, the geographic mental maps become embodied throughout the different units within the organisation. Thus recurrent communicative interactions contribute to holding particular mental maps in place in order to allow the implementation of the policy choices selected (Ford, 1999: 486).

However, as I have suggested above, the interaction process is extremely dynamic. Therefore, closure is a temporary phenomenon at best. Tsoukas and Chia (2002) identify two reasons for the ephemeral nature of the closure process. The first is due to the organisation and group’s interaction with the outside world. Different and contradicting information can always be found outside our group which can once more call into question our problem representations. The second reason derives from the capability that humans have to interact with their own thoughts. An individuals’ reflexive nature is also a potential catalyst for further change. From this point of view individuals and groups are “conceived as webs of beliefs and habits of action that keep reweaving (and thus altering) as they try to coherently accommodate new experiences, which come from new interactions over time” (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002: 575).

From this we can accept that there are numerous concurrent dynamics involved in the interaction process. Recursion, i.e., “the possibility of casual chains to feed back upon themselves”, is an important dynamic in group interaction (Cronin et al., 2011: 580). It is precisely the feedback that makes the communicative interaction process nonlinear. First of all, interpersonal communication does not follow a linear model. The group interaction process allows for multiple communication transmissions between groups members and

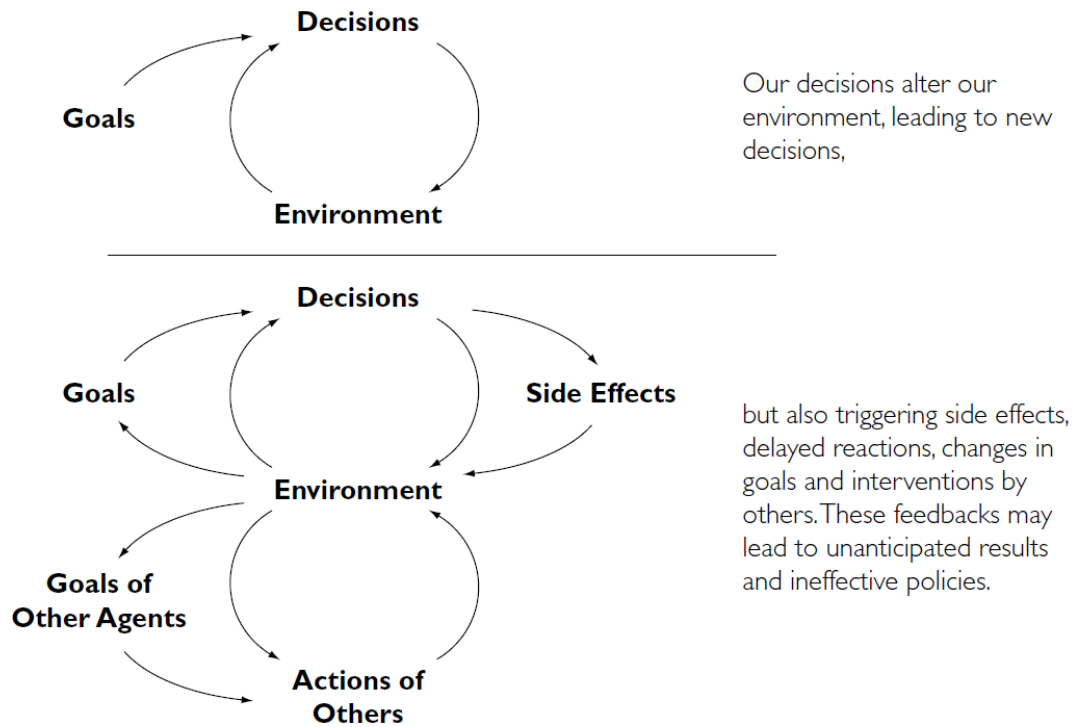
other outside actors throughout the change process. As a result, “[a]fter an initial transmission, the receiver(s) may become the sender(s) to further amend, update, reinforce, clarify, etc. the information being transmitted” (Kennedy and McComb, 2010: 350-351). Equally important is the fact that, whereas the creation of shared cognition is essentially a bottom-up process, we cannot disregard the feedback affect of the shared mental model on the individuals. The recursive dynamic of the emerging shared mental maps must be considered in the interaction process:

Emergent constructs can be in feedback loops with other constructs (...) But emergent constructs also have an internal feedback loop that allows them to evolve independently of other constructs. Both the individual aspects ($\sum i$) and the group aspect (G) are changeable and mutually influential in an emergent construct. The individual behaviors that generate the group-level property are themselves affected by the group-level property in the next time period. (Cronin et al., 2011: 582)

We must also consider the interaction with actors outside the organisation. Once we have acted in the political environment the system will react, creating feedback. In keeping with Sterman (2001), the effects of our political choices will define the political situations we must face in the future. In addition, our policy choices also produce unanticipated outcomes. For instance, “[o]ther agents, seeking to achieve their goals, react to restore the balance we have upset” (Sterman, 2001: 13), leading to a return to the interaction process in order to reappraise the situation (Figure 8).

Accordingly, the change through communication process is susceptible to numerous dynamics in which mental maps are repeatedly created and recreated. For instance, just as initiative communication can shift to communication for understanding without any prior agreement for change, it can also skip directly to the communication for performance stage. This is the case in circumstances where the problem is obvious and there is no need for its assessment – such as disasters or emergencies – and a shared agreement to take action exists (Ford and Ford, 1995). In other occasions, initiative communication can proceed to the closure stage when the impetus for change ceases.

FIGURE 8 – THE FEEDBACK VIEW OF THE WORLD



(Source: Sterman, 2001: 14)

The same dynamic pattern can be verified in the transition from communication for understanding. When communication for understanding is ineffective, the group may seek closure of the situation. While Weiss (1989: 98) admits that that the policy process may progress even though the problem representation may remain an open question, this is a highly unsound formula since “consensus unravels as circumstances change, competing definitions gain adherents, and new coalitions form”. On the other hand, communication for understanding can move directly to communication for closure when the necessary action for dealing with the problem cannot be established. According to Ford and Ford (1995: 554), “[i]f the change agent cannot facilitate the conversations for understanding such that it produces a statement of the conditions of satisfaction for the change, then the progress of the intentional change dialogue ends”. Moreover, new problems or opportunities may be detected during this stage and decision-makers may choose to re-initiate the communicative interaction.

By the same token, communication for performance can revert to communication for understanding if an individual or group of individuals request additional explanations or justifications for the actions being contemplated. Similarly, the advent of new considerations and prospects while considering possible courses of actions can also generate new initiative interactions.

Communication for closure can also shift to prior stages. For example, if group members detect inadequate information or alternative actions that could improve the change process, the group can return to communication for performance. Recursion can go even farther, namely “when people raise complaints, concerns, or questions about the change process in the midst of the closure conversation, they return the change process to the level of explanations, clarifications, and justifications” (Ford and Ford, 1995: 556).

Besides these intrinsic process dynamics, other factors also influence the change process and are worth mentioning briefly. What and how people decide to communicate determines the speed of change. Individuals and groups can espouse a proactive or reactive attitude in the interactions. As Ford (1999: 490) argues, “[s]ince what people talk about reflects what they pay attention to, the choice of whether to speak complaints [reactively] or possibilities [proactively] can make a difference in the progress of change”. In view of that, the rate of change rises as proactive, i.e., facilitating, communication increases. In contrast, reactive communication inhibits the change process by introducing obstacles in the communicative interactions.

Moreover, organisational and group-related features also contribute to determining organisational change and should be considered. We can summarily identify five main factors contributing to how communicative interaction determines the change process: 1) organisational environment; 2) organisational structure; 3) group structure; 4) group dynamics; and 5) leadership characteristics.

The organisational environment is important for the change process since it can determine several stages of interaction. Environments prone to catalyse change can be characterised as turbulent, competitive, or complex. These environments contribute to change because “they contain threats and opportunities that managers react to” (Huber et al., 1993: 228). In environments where these features are absent, individuals and

groups may not easily receive the stimuli necessary to proceed with initiative communication.

Decision-making groups, as we have confirmed earlier in the current chapter, are embedded in wider organisational assemblages. Accordingly, several features of the organisational structure will influence the interaction process, namely the levels of centralisation, standardisation, specialisation, and interdependence (Huber et al., 1993). Of particular importance are the characteristics of the boundaries between groups within the organisation. The fluidity of communication between groups and the permeability to new information or sources may have enormous impacts on the interaction process. The requirement for a certain level of secrecy in foreign policy decision-making is particularly significant in this case since senior decision-makers may be deprived of or can deny others the use of important information for the interaction process (Stern and Sundelius, 1997). The organisational structure also influences the interaction with other organisations and external sources, determining the amount and quality of extra-organisational communication. In this sense, the particular organisational culture has a pronounced impact on internal and external interactions (Burnes, 2004a).

There are several variables in the group's structure effecting communicative interactions such as composition, size, and power distribution. Access to the group may determine the type of interactions by determining the existence or absence of different outlooks and beliefs. The composition of the group can influence the change process. According to Tsoukas (2009: 954), "conceptual change is far more likely to occur when individuals reasoning together share a common background, yet, at the same time, bring their different experiences and/or expertise to the table". The size of the group also influences the prospect for open debate and the opportunity for changing group members' opinions and views (George, 1980). In addition, groups tend to form informal status patterns and power-prestige orderings which differentiate intergroup interactions, namely by allocating more time and authority to some group members over others (George, 1980; Stern and Sundelius, 1997). In other words, the amount of participation among group members can constrain interaction. Alexander George (1980: 85) has suggested that "groups composed of all high participators may suffer from competition,

and groups composed of all low integrators may find themselves short on ideas". More importantly, the internal power structure of the group creates asymmetries in interactions.

Group dynamics are particularly relevant in determining the change process. Group cohesion influences the communicative process by defining the level of exchange between individuals. In his seminal work on group dynamics in foreign policy-making, Janis (1983) argued that extreme forms of group cohesiveness constrain interaction and lead to groupthink. Recent research has indicated that although much of the research in social psychology does confirm that group cohesion reinforces member's compliance to group norms, these need not imply conformity ('t Hart, 1991). Moreover, group norms and decision rules may in many cases encourage open and pluralistic interaction. Whichever management style and model is adopted by a group will ultimately define if there exists space and opportunity for multiple perspectives and beliefs to be exchanged (George, 1980). In addition, the type and levels of conflict and rivalry within the group are determinants of the communicative process. Bureaucratic rivalry, political and ideological rivalry, personal rivalry, and antagonism are just a few of the internal dynamics which may have serious effects on the communicative interaction process (Stern and Sundelius, 1997). Many of these circumstances can be alleviated or aggravated depending on group norms and decision rules. Norms and decision rules are co-responsible for generating unique group interaction patterns which determine the exchange of communication. Decision rules are particularly important in guaranteeing expansive interaction process:

Decision rules are fairly specific procedural prescriptions regarding how to aggregate and weigh member preferences in order to reach closure on an issue and enable collective action. Decision rules are thought to have a dramatic impact on group deliberation process. For example, a unanimity rule may result in the application of a strong pressure in order to bring a minority into line with the apparent majority. At the same time, such a rule would tend to protect the rights of the minority to be heard, by providing with a veto. A consensus rule would tend to have similar, though slightly weaker effects, as a dissenting fringe might not necessarily block a choice favoured by the bulk of the members. In contrast, majority or plurality rules may result in the marginalization of minority views (...) Another decision

rule... is executive choice... which may result in communication patterns focused on the group leader. (Stern and Sundelius, 1997: 137-138)

As referred to above, the power asymmetries within the group determine that the creation of meaning is not offered to all group members (Barrett et al., 1995). From this we can conclude that the capability for each individual group member to initiate or catalyse change is limited. Group leaders are *ex officio* in a privileged position to initiate communicative interactions and carry them through the change process (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002). Thus, several attributes of the leader are essential to the exchange of communication, for instance personal experience, demographics (e.g., age and education), personality, leadership style (e.g., directive or facilitative leadership), and cognitive complexity (Huber et al., 1993; Preston and 't Hart, 1999; Stern and Sundelius, 1997).

Notwithstanding these numerous determinants, the communication process can also breakdown, hindering the course of change. Ford and Ford (1995) identify five types of breakdowns that can occur in the four stages of the communicative interaction process. The first kind of breakdown occurs when initiative communication is not acknowledged and no further communication for change comes about. A second type of breakdown results from the failure to create a shared understanding in the group about the definition of the situation at hand. The third breakdown paradoxically results from achieving a shared problem representation. Many individuals and groups believe that a reaching an agreement on a problem situation is enough and, consequently, do not progress to the communication for performance stage. A fourth breakdown occurs when communication for performance does not commit the group to any actions directed at changing the situation. Lastly, the absence of communication for closure can lead to failures in future interaction processes.

Therefore, for us to understand how the communicative interaction process contributes to changing decision-makers shared mental maps we must analyse group dynamics over time (Cronin et al., 2011). More precisely, we must follow the communication process between decision-makers from an initial point of interaction until the closure stage. Yet, even in this case, mental maps can continue to change as feedback

loops and new interaction processes come about. Furthermore, we must pay attention to the directions of communication during the interaction process. Communication transmission is not a linear phenomenon (Kennedy and McComb, 2010). We must understand the variable, nonlinear interactions which contribute to transforming mental maps in order to assess the power relationships within the decision-making group.

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PART 3

**RE-MAPPING THE CARTER DOCTRINE: THE CARTER
ADMINISTRATION'S GEOGRAPHIC MENTAL MAPS**

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FOREIGN POLICY DECISION-MAKING IN THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION

“How is one to inscribe so much that is invisible to the eye? All my work has become a gesture of trust. Everything I know is based on the perspectives of others. It is if they, not I, are responsible for the movement of my nib. They control the limits that I am straining to reach. Beyond these, I am entering a no-man’s-land, guided only by a belief in the ultimate value of what I am doing.”

(Fra Mauro, *A Mapmaker’s Dream*)

Before we analyse how the Carter Administration’s geographic mental maps of the Middle East changed during the course of its four year term in office, it is essential to assess the decision-making structure of the Administration. The decision-making structure is defined as the form that defines the organisational relationships between the senior presidential advisors (including Cabinet heads) and between the President and those advisors (Newmann, 2004). We must first understand who was involved in foreign policy decision-making and how the decision process was organised in order to evaluate the dynamics involved in the communicative interactions (Hagan, 2001; Hermann, 2001). Moreover, as argued above, foreign policy decision-making is not an isolated event, i.e., it is an ongoing process. Accordingly, we must be able to identify and assess the multiple actors and dynamics involved in the decision-making process (Hermann et al., 1987).

However, when analysing foreign policy in the US, we can never neglect the role of the President. While there are many actors involved in influencing US foreign policy (c.f., Jacobs and Page, 2005) we cannot avoid focusing on the President since the Presidency has become the heart of politics and policy in the American political system (Neustadt, 1960). As Graham Allison reminds us:

Executive responsibility in the American system rests exclusively with the president. The cabinet has no formal authority: it does not collectively make decisions, nor does it normally advise on questions of importance. While there exists language establishing "Executive Departments and Heads of Departments" whose "opinion in writing" would be an important source of advice to the president, the Cabinet as such has no constitutional mandate. Its institutional legitimacy derives solely from custom and function. (Allison, 1980: 41)

This is particularly so with regard to foreign policy. Notwithstanding the increased role played by Congress following the Vietnam War, foreign policy-making continues to remain primarily a domain of Presidential endeavour and responsibility (Greenstein and Burke, 1990; Peterson, 1994). Carter has acknowledged this fact by admitting that the most critical decisions are always solitary: "my most vivid impression of the Presidency remains the loneliness in which the most difficult decisions had to be made" (Carter, 1982: 61).

Nevertheless, since the dawn of the republic Presidents have sought advice from others (Allison, 1980). In fact, in the US, foreign policy decision-making has traditionally been a collective endeavour, involving the President and his closest advisors (George, 1980; Hoyt and Garrison, 1997). While there is no question as to the President's dominance over the decision-making process, the responsibilities and issues the modern Presidency must deal with are, as Kessel (1983: 431) has pointed out, "far too much for one person to do". As previously argued, collective decision-making increases the resources available to the decision-making process, namely by providing more information, knowledge, and perspectives (Hermann, and Preston, 1994).

However, advisors are essential to helping the President reach foreign policy decisions for many additional reasons (George, 1980). First they satisfy the President's cognitive needs by providing information and advice. Also, advisors can offer emotional support in critical moments of presidential decision-making. Presidents often rely on their advisors for legitimising their political decisions. In other words, the President may take comfort in knowing that the responsibility for foreign policy decisions is shared amongst a wider group of individuals.

The following section will analyse the Carter Administration's foreign policy decision-making structure and processes. The structure is assessed first because it determines the decision-making process. As Newmann (2004) has pointed out, the decision-making process is dependent on the organisational structure put in place by the President. There is no universally accepted "best" structure for decision-making and Presidents can adapt their advisory system to their particular needs. Also, Presidents can choose not to heed the advice of their counsellors. However, scholarly research has confirmed that "a well-devised advisory system will aid the president's process of choice and that a poorly devised one will lead him astray" (Greenstein and Burke, 1990: 574). In addition, it has long been accepted that the relationship between a President and his advisors is dynamic (Link, 2000). In time, Presidents will adapt their advisory system in order to try to deal more efficiently with the challenges presented by the multiple policy-making constraints.

8.1) The Decision-Making Structure in the Carter Administration

Carter ran for the Presidency on a platform of being an "outsider". Indeed, Carter's campaign was centred more on values than on specific issues (Kaufman, 1993). Confronted with the predicaments such as Watergate, Vietnam, and CIA covert operations in the Third World, Carter was very critical of the secrecy and *realpolitik* involved in past Administrations foreign policy. By contrasting his decision-making style to previous Presidents, particularly Nixon, his victory was ultimately the result of a revolt against the *status quo* in Washington. As a question of principle, Carter wanted a more transparent and plural decision-making system in which there would be "no anonymous aides – unelected, unknown to the public, and unconfirmed by the Senate – wielding vast power from the White House basement" (Carter quoted in Glad, 2009: 7).

Carter was extremely critical of the way the Nixon and Ford Administrations handled US foreign policy. His attacks on the previous Administrations were threefold (Moore, 1984). The first centred on the relationship with the USSR. From this perspective, the Nixon-Ford Administrations had acquiesced to Soviet parity and the US had become a

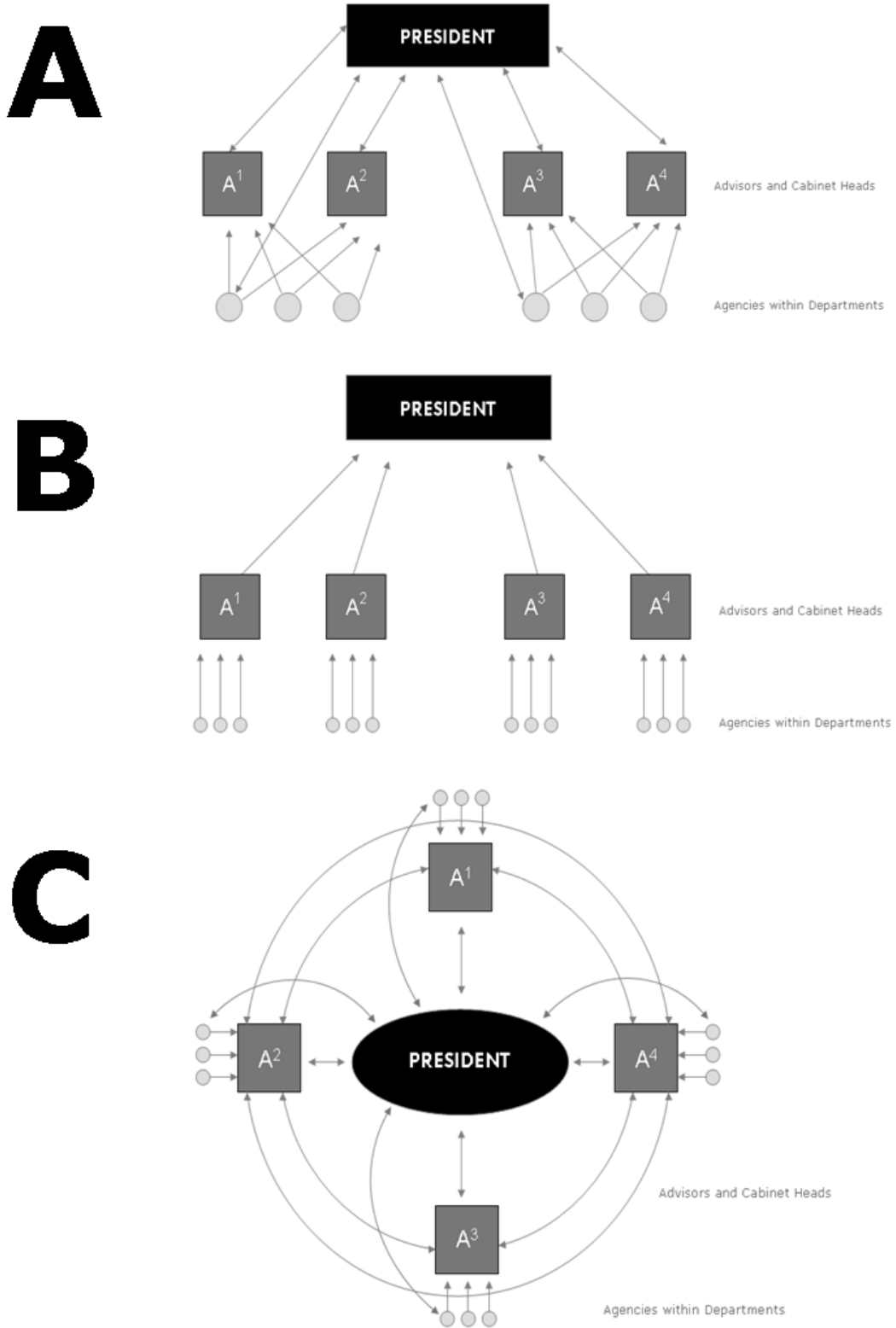
status quo power. The second attack was directed against the lack of any moral bearing in US foreign policy. In his second presidential debate with Ford, Carter (1976) chastised the previous Administrations for ignoring human rights and consequently weakening America's standing in the world. The third main critique involved the closed policy-making system espoused by preceding Administrations. Foreign policy was conducted irrespective of Congressional oversight and public opinion. Therefore, consistent with Carter's moralistic outlook, such a system contributed to America's tarnished international image (Moore, 1984).

In effect, the Nixon and Ford Presidencies witnessed the significant centralisation of the foreign policy decision-making in Kissinger, initially as Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and subsequently as Secretary of State⁹². In order to limit the influence of Cabinet and bureaucratic politics to the fullest extent, Nixon organised his decision-making structure around the National Security Council (NSC), placing Kissinger as chairman of all its committees. Therefore, Nixon created a decision-making structure that was "superimposed upon the departments and largely superseded the traditional hierarchical policymaking system" (George, 1980: 157). Ford, while implementing some adjustments to the NSC structure, did not change the decision-making process significantly and Kissinger continued to maintain supremacy over foreign policy and security issues (Best Jr., 2010; Bolton, 2008).

In coming to office, Carter wanted to rebalance foreign policy-making, particularly breaking with the Kissinger-dominated approach and ending the dominance of the NSC in defining policy (Best Jr., 2010; Bolton, 2008; Moens, 1988; Rothkopf, 2005). There are several different presidential management models that suggest different strategies for Presidents to deal with the foreign policy decision-making process (Newmann, 2001). The three most cited models applied to US foreign policy are illustrated in Figure 9 (George, 1980): a) the competitive model; b) the formalistic model; and c) the collegial model.

⁹² At one point, Kissinger assumed both roles simultaneously.

FIGURE 9 – PRESIDENTIAL MANAGEMENT MODELS



(Source: Adapted from George, 1980)

In the competitive model the President consciously encourages competition and conflict among his advisors and heads of Cabinet. In this model, communication or collaboration among the advisors is limited as the president occasionally interacts directly with subordinate departmental officials in order to acquire independent advice and information.

The formalistic model – typical of the Nixon and Ford Administrations – relies on a hierarchical flow of information and advice to the President from his advisors and Cabinet heads. The formalistic model encompasses a division-of-labour based on the functional expertise of each department or agency. In this case, the President does not circumvent Cabinet heads by reaching down to subordinates for advice, but rather keeps to officially ordered channels. Moreover, interaction between advisors is not encouraged, leaving the President to assume the responsibility of synthesising the specialised information received.

Finally, the collegial model resembles a hub-and-spoke model in which the President is at the centre of the decision-making process engaging advisors to interact with him and each other. This model is the closest to group problem solving, for advisors debate amongst each other to arrive at the best possible policy solution. Information is acquired from multiple sources and advisors are encouraged to act as generalists, rather than departmental specialists or experts. The collegial model envisions more informal procedures than the previous arrangement which allows for the President to sporadically interact with subordinate officials for obtaining more information and advice.

These models are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, in certain cases, different combinations of these models may be present in a Presidents policy-making system (George, 1980). The fact of the matter is that each President adopts his own organisational model, creating and implementing a decision-making system which he considers to be the most useful to achieving his goals and best reflect his management style and needs. The abundant research on presidential management attests to the fact that

presidents employ a number of management strategies or decision-making styles to gain control over self-interested departments and ambitious officials. These “management

styles” are partly a function of a president’s personal leadership style. From his own predispositions and from the advice of scholars and practitioners, a president creates committee structures, decision-making procedures, and roles and responsibilities for specific officials and agencies. Ultimately, the president hopes to make sure that decisions are made the way he wants them made and that the policy outcomes reflect his preferences. (Newmann, 2001: 72)

In view of the criticism of policy-making in the previous Administrations, Carter wanted to adopt a more collegial approach involving his Cabinet (Ayres, 1984; Burke, 2001; Hoyt and Garrison, 1997; Marchand, 1984; Moens, 1988; Newmann, 2004). As Carter (1983: 59) acknowledged, “I found through experience that a collegial model – with a group discussing the issue as equals – is good, provided the gathering includes primarily those who will be directly involved in carrying out the decision or explaining it to the public”. At this initial stage, Carter wanted to have a pluralistic and open decision-making system which could benefit from diversified inputs brought into the decision process. Thus Carter’s organisation of his advisory system was critical to his policy choices since “the type and quality of information and advice a president receives are a direct reflection of those he surrounds himself with” (Link, 2000: 235). To allow advisors to have greater access to him, Carter initially refrained from appointing a Chief-of-Staff. In this way Carter hoped to avoid hierarchical mechanisms which might try to control or regulate the necessary interaction between the White House and the rest of the Administration (Kaufman, 1993).

To be sure, Carter wanted a strong Cabinet to help develop and implement domestic and foreign policy (Table 4). In contrast with the Nixon Administration which relied heavily on the White House staff, Carter wanted his Cabinet to serve as his “first circle of advisors” and for them to be more responsible for policy-making (Warshaw, 1996: 107). The profile of the Cabinet heads selected by Carter essentially leaned towards bureaucratic managers. Rather than select personal allies for the Cabinet, Carter preferred individuals who could carry out widespread organisational renewal, particularly in improving the efficiency of the governmental apparatus. In Warshaw’s (1996: 102) view, Carter wanted to bring about a “drastic and thorough revision of the federal

bureaucracy” and that led him to place “management skills at the top of the list of Cabinet prerequisites”. Notwithstanding, the majority of Carter’s appointments to the Cabinet had previous experience in Washington politics. Largely due to Carter’s intense personal involvement, the selection process was the slowest since 1952 (Kaufman, 1993).

While the President was responsible for appointing the heads of Cabinet and thus possessed some degree of leverage over them, Carter wanted to grant them greater freedom of action. In order to give Cabinet members greater margin for carrying out their policies, Carter allowed them to hire their own staffs. In addition, Cabinet heads were to be delegated significant policy-making authority and authorised to administer their respective bureaucracies free of White House interference (Marchand, 1984). Moreover, Carter obtained Congressional approval for reorganising the Executive Office of the President (EOP) and, thus, dismantle many of the existing advisory groups that competed with the Cabinet for authority over policy-making⁹³ (Warshaw, 1996). The responsibilities of advisory groups that were dismantled were generally attributed to the respective Departments or to Cabinet-level policy groups, thereby greatly augmenting the power of the Cabinet and decreasing conflict with the White House.

On the other hand, personal confidence was an essential factor in Carter’s relationship with his advisors. As Carter (1983: 41) put it, “[t]he selection of loyal and well-known associates is the result of a need for maximum mutual confidence and a minimum of jealousy and backbiting within the Presidents inner circle”. Therefore, choices for the White House staff clearly mirrored this desire since nominations for the White House Office (WHO) are not subject to Senate confirmation and, thus, tend to be occupied by the Presidents most loyal associates (Link, 2000) (Table 5). Many of Carter’s closest advisors on the WHO staff had been associated with Carter since his 1970 campaign for Governor – e.g., Stuart Eizenstat, Hamilton Jordan, Robert Lipshutz, Frank Moore, and Jody Powell. Moreover, the majority of his senior staff was from Georgia and had previous political and personal relations with Carter. Their strong personal bond to Carter was verified by their perseverance through numerous staff reorganisations. In fact,

⁹³ Some of the White House advisory groups that were dismantled were the Domestic Policy Council, Economic Opportunity Council, Federal Property Council, Office of Drug Abuse, Office of Telecommunications Policy, Office on International Policy, and the Energy Resources Council.

despite the White House staff reorganisations of 1978⁹⁴ and 1979⁹⁵, the overwhelming majority of Carter's closest senior advisors endured the entire tenure of his Presidency⁹⁶ (Ayres, 1984).

Carter came to the White House with very little knowledge of international affairs. His choices for foreign policy advisors reflected his need for an experienced group of foreign policy professionals. For that reason, Carter chose Walter "Fritz" Mondale for Vice President. A seasoned Senator, Mondale was chosen for his political familiarity with the federal government, particularly the legislative branch. In contrast to the past, Carter wanted an involved and active Vice President, i.e., "a second in command" (Carter, 1982: 39). As a result, Mondale received all the security briefings sent to Carter, was invited to participate in all the President's official meetings, and assumed an active role in planning domestic, diplomatic, and security strategy. Additionally, the Vice President's personal office was relocated adjacent to the President's in the West Wing of the White House and the both staffs were integrated (Carter, 1982). Throughout their term, Mondale had considerable access to the President, second only to Brzezinski, and was a key-player in foreign policy decision-making (Bolton, 2008; Glad, 2009; Moens, 1990).

For Secretary of State, Carter selected Cyrus Vance, a New York lawyer with extensive policy-making experience in Washington. Vance had served as a Department of Defence counsel under Kennedy and Secretary of the Army and Deputy Defence Secretary under Johnson. Vance also had a vast experience in negotiating international issues, such as the Bay of Pigs prisoner release with Cuba, as mediator in the Turkey-Cyprus conflict, as negotiator in the USS Pueblo crisis with South Korea and at the Paris Peace Conference on Vietnam (Glad, 2009). Vance had counselled Carter on foreign policy issues during the

⁹⁴ In mid-1978 Carter reorganised the White House Office due to numerous charges of inefficiency and incompetence. Several new staff members were hired and/or promoted such as Gerald Rafshoon (Presidential Assistant for Communications), Tim Kraft (Assistant for Political Affairs and Personnel), and Anne Wexler (Assistant to the President). Nevertheless, the reorganisation was not very significant since the majority of the changes in personnel involved second-level appointments.

⁹⁵ The 1979 reorganisation was the most significant staff restructuring of the Carter Presidency. Over 85 positions were changed – though the majority was, once again, at the deputy level and below – and Hamilton Jordan was appointed Chief-of-Staff, substantially altering the chain of command in the White House (Ayres, 1984).

⁹⁶ Robert Lipshutz was the only one of Carter's senior Georgian staff which did not serve the entire term in Office.

Presidential campaign, notably in the writing of a memorandum on the foreign policy goals and priorities for the future President. On coming to the Administration, Vance requested that two conditions be met by Carter: 1) that he was to become the President's spokesman on foreign policy; and 2) that he must be able to present his own unfiltered views on foreign policy issues before any decision was made (Vance, 1983).

In effect, Vance sought to re-institutionalise foreign policy development and implementation back into the State Department. Breaking with the Kissinger system, Vance required that foreign policy have consistency which could only be established through a proper departmental institution: "The United States needs a firm, consistent foreign policy, understood and supported by its professionals, if we are to bridge the gap that exists between the formulators of policy at the political level and the professional executors of that policy in the Foreign Service" (Vance, 1983: 40). Carter and Vance developed a great personal friendship throughout the years (Carter, 1982), making Vance one of Carter's premier foreign policy advisors.

Harold Brown was Carter's nomination for heading the Department of Defence. The nuclear scientist that headed the California Institute of Technology had acquired considerable experience with defence-related issues during his tenure as director on weapons research at the Pentagon and as Secretary of the Air Force (Glad, 2009). Carter wanted someone who would discipline the Pentagon, namely by re-establishing priorities and introducing an efficient management model, while getting rid of unnecessary and redundant defence expenditures (Brown, 1983a). In his view, the Pentagon needed "both a scientist with a thorough knowledge of the most advanced technology and a competent business manager, strong-willed enough to prevail in the internecine struggles among the different military services" (Carter, 1982: 55). As a result of the preference for this particular profile, in the initial years of the Carter Presidency, Brown served essentially as a manager, rather than a general political advisor (Moens, 1990).

TABLE 4 – THE CARTER CABINET

| Cabinet | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Secretary of State | Cyrus Vance (1977–1980) |
| | Edmund Muskie (1980–1981) |
| Secretary of the Treasury | W. Michael Blumenthal (1977–1979) |
| | G. William Miller (1979–1981) |
| Secretary of Defence | Harold Brown (1977–1981) |
| Attorney General | Griffin Bell (1977–1979) |
| | Benjamin Civiletti (1979–1981) |
| Secretary of the Interior | Cecil D. Andrus (1977–1981) |
| Secretary of Agriculture | Robert Bergland (1977–1981) |
| Secretary of Commerce | Juanita M. Kreps (1977–1980) |
| | Philip Klutznick (1980–1981) |
| Secretary of Labour | Ray Marshall (1977–1981) |
| Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare | Joseph A. Califano, Jr. (1977–1979) |
| | Patricia Roberts Harris (1979–1979) |
| Secretary of Health and Human Services | Patricia Roberts Harris (1979–1981) |
| Secretary of Housing and Urban Development | Patricia Roberts Harris (1977–1979) |
| | Maurice "Moon" Landrieu (1979–1981) |
| Secretary of Transportation | Brock Adams (1977–1979) |
| | Neil Goldschmidt (1979–1981) |
| Secretary of Energy | James R. Schlesinger (1977–1979) |
| | Charles Duncan, Jr. (1979–1981) |
| Secretary of Education | Shirley M. Hufstедler (1979–1981) |
| Cabinet-Level Status | |
| Vice President | Walter Mondale (1977–1981) |
| Ambassador to the United Nations | Andrew Young (1977–1979) |
| | Donald McHenry (1979–1981) |
| Director of the Office of Management and Budget | Thomas "Bert" Lance (1977) |
| | James T. McIntyre (1978–1981) |
| Chair of the Council of Economic Advisors | Charles Schultze (1977–1981) |
| Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs | Zbigniew Brzezinski (1977–1981) |

TABLE 5 – WHITE HOUSE OFFICE STAFF: RELEVANT ACTORS

| Position | Name |
|---|----------------------|
| Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs | David Aaron |
| Special Assistant to Congressional Liaison (House) | Robert Beckel |
| Special Assistant to the President for Health Issues | Peter Bourne |
| Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs | Zbigniew Brzezinski |
| Deputy Assistant to the President | Landon Butler |
| Deputy Assistant for Congressional Liaison (House) | William Cable |
| Deputy Director, Domestic Council, 1977-1979 | Bertram Carp |
| Special Assistant to the President for Administration | Hugh Carter Jr. |
| Personal Assistant / Secretary to the President | Susan Clough |
| Assistant to the President for Public Liaison | Margaret Constanza |
| Counsel to the President | Lloyd Cutler |
| Senior Advisor to the President | Hedley Donovan |
| Assistant to the President for Domestic Affairs and Policy | Stuart Eizenstadt |
| Chief Speechwriter | James Fallows |
| Deputy Press Secretary | Rex Granum |
| Assistant to the President | Hamilton Jordan |
| Chief of Staff of the White House | |
| Counsel to the President | Robert Lipshutz |
| Assistant to the President for Congressional Liaison | Frank Moore |
| Press Secretary to the President | Joseph "Jody" Powell |
| Assistant to the President for Communications | Gerald Rafshoon |
| Deputy Assistant for Domestic Affairs and Policy Director | David Rubenstein |
| Assistant Press Secretary | Jerrold Schecter |
| Assistant to the President | James Schlesinger |
| White House Projects | Gregory Schneiders |
| Secretary to the Cabinet and Assistant to the President for Intergovernmental Affairs | Jack Watson Jr. |
| Assistant to the President | Sarah Weddington |
| Deputy Assistant for Domestic Affairs and Policy, 1979-1981 | |
| Assistant to the President | Anne Wexler |

(Source: Glad, 2009: 10)

The fourth principal advisor on foreign policy appointed by Carter was Columbia Professor Zbigniew Brzezinski⁹⁷. Brzezinski and Carter met through the Trilateral Commission and, beginning in early-1975, Brzezinski was to regularly send Carter documents on foreign policy issues (Brzezinski, 1983; Vaughan, 2009). Carter chose Brzezinski to take up the role of Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs knowing it was a controversial nomination (Carter, 1982). For the first time in history the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs was given Cabinet status. Brzezinski had direct access to Carter and consulted personally with him several times a day. Thus, Carter depended heavily on Brzezinski for knowledge on foreign policy issues:

Zbig was astute in his analyses, particularly knowledgeable about broad historical trends affecting the industrialized nations, and a firm believer in a strong defense for our country and in the enhancement of freedom and democratic principles both here and abroad. His proposals were innovative and often provocative, and I agreed with them – most of the time (...) I was an eager student, and took full advantage of what Brzezinski had to offer. As a college professor and an author, he was able to express complicated ideas simply. (Carter, 1982: 51)

Despite his contentious views and positions, Carter selected Brzezinski knowing he would not be deferential to the Secretary of State, therefore allowing for the airing of multiple perspectives and options. According to Carter, Brzezinski and Vance complemented each other. Brzezinski was innovative and bold in his proposals, while Vance was vigilant and meticulous. Both men and their organisations embodied two contrasting, but complementary approaches to foreign policy-making:

Zbigniew Brzezinski and his relatively small group of experts were not handicapped by the inertia of a tenured bureaucracy or the responsibility for implementing policies after they were evolved. They were particularly adept at incisive analyses of strategic concepts, and were prolific in the production of new ideas, which they were always eager to present to

⁹⁷ In reality, many of the key foreign policy decision-makers of the Carter Administration – Carter, Brown, Brzezinski, Christopher, Gelb, Holbrooke, Lake, Mondale, Vance, and Warnke – were members of the Trilateral Commission or had worked with the with the Commission as authors (Rothkopf, 2005).

me. I encouraged them to be unrestrained in their proposals, and consequently had to reject a lot of them. However, in the resulting discussions, we often found a better path worth following. Zbig was a first-rate thinker, very competent in his choice of staff members and able to work harmoniously with them (I do not remember any dissention at all). He was sometimes provocative in the extent and the way he expressed himself – irrepressible during hard times and exuberant during the good ones.

Compromised of highly qualified professional men and women, the State Department is a sprawling Washington and worldwide bureaucracy, with compartmentalized regional and national desks. Although I rarely received innovative ideas from its staff members about how to modify existing policy in order to meet changing conditions, the advice was generally sound, the information thoroughly researched, and the public statements mild and cautious. The inertia of the department was itself a beneficial restraint on overly rapid action or inadequately assessed plans. In many ways, Cy Vance mirrored the character of the organization he led. He was intelligent and experienced, thoroughly honourable, sound in his judgments, careful to explore all facets of a question before answering, extremely loyal to his subordinates, and protective of the State Department and its status and heritage. (Carter, 1982: 53)

Carter also appointed a host of other foreign policy advisors who assumed an equally important part in the decision-making process. Warren Christopher was selected as Deputy Secretary of State. With experience as Deputy Attorney General in the Johnson Administration, Christopher became a highly influential advisor and a loyal ally to Vance. For Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Carter appointed his long-time acquaintance Stansfield Turner. Turner, a former Rhodes Scholar, had been Commander of the Second Fleet of the US Navy and Commander-in-Chief of NATO's Southern flank. Another Georgian, Andrew Young, was appointed as the US Ambassador to the UN⁹⁸. Paul Warnke assumed leadership of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. With his prior experience as Assistant Secretary of Defence in the Johnson Administration, Warnke became the principal arms negotiator for the Carter Administration. The Department of

⁹⁸ Young was later replaced by Donald McHenry.

State and the Department of Defence were packed with other experienced officials who would also play an important role in foreign policy decision-making⁹⁹ (Table 6).

TABLE 6 – FOREIGN POLICY DEPARTMENT HEADS AND STAFF

| Department of Defence | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| Secretary of Defence | Harold Brown (1977-1981) |
| Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff | George Brown (1974-1978) |
| | David Jones (1978-1982) |
| Secretary of the Army | Clifford Alexander Jr. (1977-1981) |
| Department of State | |
| Secretary of State | Cyrus Vance (1977–1980) |
| | Edmund Muskie (1980-1981) |
| Deputy Secretary of State | Warren Christopher (1977-1981) |
| Under Secretary for Political Affairs | David Newsom (1977-1981) |
| Under Secretary for Security Assistance | Lucy Benson (1977-1980) |
| Assistant Secretary for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs | Patricia Derian (1977-1981) |
| Assistant Secretary for Politico-Military Affairs | Leslie Gelb (1977-1979) |
| Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs | Richard Holbrooke (1977-1979) |
| Assistant Secretary for African Affairs | Richard Moose (1977-1981) |
| Assistant Secretary for the Near East and South Asia Affairs | Harold “Hal” Saunders (1978-1981) |
| Deputy Assistant Secretary of State | Robert Beckel (1979-1981) |
| Director, Arms Control and Disarmament Agency | Paul Warnke (1977-1978) |
| Director of Policy Planning | Anthony Lake (1977-1981) |
| Special Advisor to the Secretary for Soviet Affairs | Marshall Schulman (1978-1981) |

(Source: Glad, 2009: 24)

True to his desire to implement a more collegial model of decision-making, Carter appreciated and encouraged competition between his advisors (Moens, 1988). Carter (1982; c.f., Brzezinski, 1983; Vance, 1983) wanted to weigh-in the multiple perspectives and options available to him. Ultimately, though, while Carter was open to discussing all the different points of view, the final decision belonged to the President. Carter (1982: 52) was adamant in guaranteeing that “the final decisions on basic foreign policy would be made by me in the Oval office”.

⁹⁹ For instance, in the Department of State, only Patricia Derian and Lucy Benson did not possess previous experience in international affairs.

In fact, the Carter Cabinet never dealt with foreign policy issues (Brzezinski, 1993). Foreign policy and security issues were allocated to the NSC. The NSC is the highest statutory coordinative and advisory body within the Government dealing with matters of national security. Since its conception in the years immediately following the Second World War, the NSC was created with the intent to coordinate the activities and policies between the multiple departments and agencies involved in national security issues (Best Jr., 2010; Wanis-St. John, 1998). Over the decades it has consolidated itself into the foremost institution for formulating US policy:

the National Security Council has come to be the hub of all US international engagement, the place where formal policies are adopted, agencies offer alternative choices to the president, and the president decides on the world's most powerful nation's course of action with (or without) regard to the rest of the planet. It became both the policy creation mechanism and the policy implementation mechanism that helped harness and coordinate the actions of an increasingly complex government in an increasingly complex world. (Rothkopf, 2005: 29)

The NSC structure is flexible and adapts to the President's needs (Brzezinski, 1983; Newmann, 2001; 2004; Vance, 1983). The NSC is exceptionally adjustable, in terms of staff and functioning, to the preferences and management style of each individual President and Administration (Best Jr., 2010; Rothkopf, 2005). In the case of the Carter Administration, the objective was to develop an open, yet efficient a decision-making body:

The problem as I saw it was to devise a system that would permit a thorough airing of key policy issues without engaging the senior foreign policy and national security advisers in time-consuming debate to no useful end. We needed a structure that would enable the president and his senior advisers to set policy and oversee its implementation by subordinates without senior officials becoming enmeshed in tactical considerations. (...) The difficulty was how to remain in control of the organization and the flow of events and not be at the mercy of others agendas'. (Vance, 1983: 34-35)

It was up to Brzezinski to come up with the Carter Administration's NSC new structure: "Carter wanted a system that would be simple and responsive to his personal control" (Brzezinski, 1983: 57). In late-December 1976, Brzezinski presented an initial organisational structure for the NSC with seven committees. The structure was largely based on the previous Administrations structure, except now the chairmanship of the majority of the committees was attributed to the Departments (Vance, 1983). Carter rejected the proposal outright, claiming it was too large and complex (Brzezinski, 1983; Vance, 1983). Therefore, Brzezinski developed in collaboration with Carter a new, less complex organisational model for the NCS which would deal with a wide range of issues (Brzezinski, 1983: 59):

- Foreign policy issues – regional and topical;
- Defence policy issues;
- International economic issues – especially relating to national security, such as oil prices;
- Intelligence policy issues;
- Arms control;
- Crisis management.

In fact, the first Presidential Directives¹⁰⁰ issued by Carter codified this restructuring of the National Security Council configuration and its operationalisation. PD-2, signed on 20 January, 1977, reorganised the National Security Council with the intent of "placing more responsibility in the departments and agencies while insuring that the NSC, with my Assistant for National Security Affairs, continues to integrate and facilitate foreign and defense policy decisions". With PD-2, the NSC upheld the functions, membership, and responsibilities established by the National Security Act of 1947 (and subsequent amendments)¹⁰¹ and sanctioned the participation, when required, of other

¹⁰⁰ Hereafter designated as PD.

¹⁰¹ The NSC is chaired by the President and its statutory members are, in addition to the President, the Vice President, the Secretary of State, and the Secretary of Defence. Throughout this study I will refer to the group composed of by the statutory members of the NSC, the Assistant to the President for National

senior officials, namely the Secretary of the Treasury, the Attorney General, the US Representative to the United Nations, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, the Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors, the Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Director of Central Intelligence, the Administrator of the Energy Research and Development Administration, and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (Table 7).

In accordance with PD-2, the NSC was considered the “principal forum for international security issues, requiring Presidential consideration”. PD-2 reduced the number of standing NSC committees. More precisely, the Carter Administration cut back from the former seven committees to merely two¹⁰²: the Policy Review Committee (PRC) and the Special Coordination Committee (SCC).

The PRC was established to deal with department-specific issues which had repercussions for other departments or agencies. The PRC was chaired in accordance to the subject under consideration, as was the attendance of non-statutory members¹⁰³. The most pressing issues to be dealt with by the PRC were:

- foreign policy issues that contain significant military or other interagency aspects;
- defense policy issues having international implications and the coordination of the annual Defense budget with foreign policy objectives;
- the preparation of a consolidated national intelligence budget and resource allocation for the Intelligence Community (thus assuming under the chairmanship of the Director of Central Intelligence the functions and responsibilities of the Committee on Foreign Intelligence); and
- those international economic issues pertinent to US foreign policy and security, with staffing of the underlying economic issues through the Economic Policy Group. (PD-2)

Security Affairs, and other key foreign policy decision-makers as the “principals” since, according to Bolton (2008), this group has by convention become known as the NSC Principals.

¹⁰² PD-2 did consent to the use, when needed, of NSC Intradepartmental Groups and NSC Ad Hoc Groups to deal with other eventual specific issues that required policy coordination between different departments.

¹⁰³ The Assistant to the President on National Security Affairs was a permanent member of the PRC despite not having statutory recognition.

TABLE 7 – NSC MEMBERSHIP ACCORDING TO PD-2¹⁰⁴

| Statutory | |
|---|---|
| President | Jimmy Carter (1977–1981) |
| Vice President | Walter Mondale (1977–1981) |
| Secretary of State | Cyrus Vance (1977–1980) Edmund Muskie (1980–1981) |
| Secretary of Defence | Harold Brown (1977–1981) |
| Non-statutory | |
| Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs | Zbigniew Brzezinski (1977–1981) |
| Director of CIA | Stansfield Turner (1977–1981) |
| Chairman of the Joint Chiefs | General George S. Brown (1977 - 1978) General David C. Jones (1978 - 1981) |
| Secretary of the Treasury | W. Michael Blumenthal (1977–1979) G. William Miller (1979–1981) |
| Attorney General | Griffin Bell (1977–1979) Benjamin Civiletti (1979–1981) |
| US Representative to United Nations | Andrew Young (1977 –1979) Donald McHenry (1979–1981) |
| Director of the Office of Management and Budget | Thomas "Bert" Lance (1977) James T. McIntyre (1978–1981) |
| Director of U.S. Arms Control Disarmament Agency | Paul Warnke (1977–1981) |
| Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors | Charles L. Schultze (1977–1981) |
| Administrator of the Energy Research and Development Administration | Robert W. Fri (1977–1981) |

The SCC, for its part, dealt with “cross-cutting issues requiring coordination in the development of options and the implementation of Presidential Decision” (PD-2). In order to coordinate the inter-organisational decision-making process, the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs was appointed as the Chairman of the SCC. Thus, PD-2 attributed the following issues to the SCC:

- oversight of sensitive intelligence activities, for instance covert operations authorised by the President;

¹⁰⁴ While not statutory member *per se*, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the Director of Central Intelligence are the principal military and intelligence advisors to the NSC and may attend and participate in NSC meetings.

- arms control evaluation;
- crisis management.

In January 1978, Executive Order 12036 added supplementary duties and responsibilities to the NSC structure related to the national intelligence effort. As a result, the NSC also became responsible for reviewing, guiding, and directing all national foreign intelligence and counterintelligence activities. The PRC, for its part, would also assume the following duties:

- a) Establish requirements and priorities for national foreign intelligence;
- b) Review the National Foreign Intelligence Program and budget proposals and report to the President as to whether the resource allocations for intelligence capabilities are responsive to the intelligence requirements of the members of the NSC.
- c) Conduct periodic reviews of national foreign intelligence products, evaluate the quality of the intelligence product, develop policy guidance to ensure quality intelligence and to meet changing intelligence requirements; and
- d) Submit an annual report on its activities to the NSC. (Executive Order 12036)

Executive Order 12036 also attributed special activities and duties to the SCC. Particularly relevant were the consideration and submission of policy recommendations for sensitive foreign intelligence collection operations and counterintelligence activities.

This organisational arrangement was structured to allow for formal foreign policy decisions to be made in the NSC's standing committees (SCC or PRC). The PRC/SCC system allowed Cabinet heads to engage Carter directly on issues of foreign policy and national security. Carter wanted his Secretaries to participate in a team-like style in the NSC decision-making process. According to Brzezinski (1983: 60) Carter wanted to "accustom Cabinet members to working as a team under each other's chairmanship and that of the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs". Nevertheless, coordination of the NSC was centralised in the Presidency. Albeit the fact that Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs chaired one of the Commissions, the President's direct involvement in foreign affairs contributed to this phenomenon (Brzezinski, 1983).

The Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs was designated to manage the normal functioning of the NSC, namely by determining the agenda and guaranteeing that the necessary documentation was prepared and made available to the council¹⁰⁵. In principle, the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs serves as “an honest, noncontroversial broker of the system” who can guarantee that “the bureaucracy is presenting issues fairly and imaginatively, and to demand adherence to the President’s decisions” (Schoemaker, 1989: 103).

In order to carry out these provisions, the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs was assisted by the NSC staff (Table 8). Under Brzezinski, the NSC staff was substantially reduced. In keeping with Carter’s plea for a smaller and more operational decision-making apparatus, Brzezinski initially trimmed the NSC staff to fewer than thirty affiliates (Rothkopf, 2005). Brzezinski also defined very specific profiles for the NCS staff (Brzezinski, 1983): professionals from within the bureaucracy; forward-looking liberal foreign policy experts from the Washington political community; and strategic thinkers from academia. The NSC staff was quite united and very loyal to Brzezinski and shared many similar views on foreign policy issues (Rothkopf, 2005). Nevertheless, few NSC staff members had regular direct access to the President. It was Brzezinski who would synthesise the information assembled by the NSC staff and advise the President directly (Glad, 2009).

To facilitate Carter’s aspiration for a more collegial decision-making process, Brzezinski structured the NSC staff into a cluster of geographic and topical/functional offices (Best Jr., 2010). The geographic cluster was divided into two distinct regional arrangements. One organised policy by large regional groupings: Western Europe, USSR/Eastern Europe, Middle East/North Africa, and East Asia/China. The second arrangement focused on the North/South issues which the Carter Administration greatly emphasised in its international policy (Rosati, 1991) and was composed of the following groups: South Asia/UN matters, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America-Caribbean. As for the topical offices, the NSC was structured to deal with Defense Coordination, Intelligence

¹⁰⁵ PD-2 did determine that the definition of the agenda was to be directed by the President and developed in consultation with the Secretaries of State and Defense, as well as other members when appropriate.

Coordination, International Economics, Science, and Global Issues. This last office covered a wide array of policy issues, such as arms transfers, security assistance, chemical warfare, non-proliferation and nuclear cooperation, human rights, refugees. The NSC also had a group of offices which would deal with more common and wide-ranging issues (Figure 10). Despite a few modifications throughout the term, the NSC staff maintained this overarching organisational rationale.

TABLE 8 – PRINCIPAL NSC STAFF MEMBERS

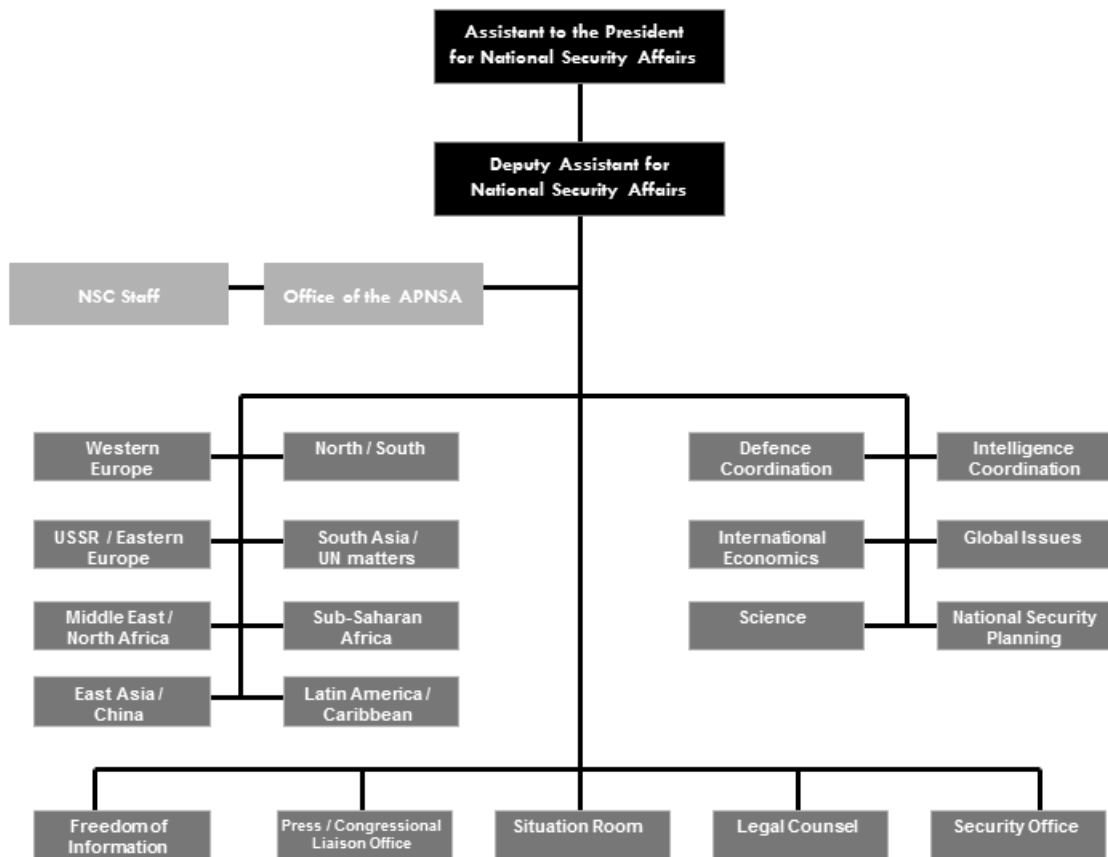
| National Security Council Staff | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs | Zbigniew Brzezinski (1977–1981) |
| Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs | David Aaron (1977-1981) |
| Military Assistant and National Security Council Crisis Coordinator | William Odom (1977-1981) |
| Special Assistant to the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs | Karl Inderfurth (1977-1979) |
| | Robert Gates (1979) |
| | Leslie Denend (1979-1981) |
| Coordinator for National Security Planning | Samuel Huntington (1977-1978) |
| Press Officer and Associate Press Secretary | Jerry Schecter (1977 – 1980) |
| | Alfred Friendly Jr. (1980-1981) |
| Congressional Relations Officer | Madeleine Albright (1978-1981) |
| Director of the Office of Global Issues | Jessica Tuchman (1977-1979) |
| Middle East and North Africa | William Quandt (1977-1979) |
| | Gary Sick (1977-1981) |
| USSR and Eastern Europe | Marshall Bremant (1979-1981) |
| East Asia and China | Michel Oksenberg (1977-1980) |
| Latin America and the Caribbean | Robert Pastor (1977-1981) |
| Legal Counsel | Robert Kimmitt (1978-1981) |

(Source: Adapted from Glad, 2009: 24 and Carter Library, available at <http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/nsc.phtml>)

To enable NSC policy-making activities, Carter also signed PD-1 on 20 January, 1977, which established the working instruments of the NSC. The Presidential Review Memorandums (PRM/NSC) were used to direct the different departments and agencies to carry out policy reviews and analyses, namely by identifying the issues to be considered by the NSC, defining the problem, setting a deadline for the analysis, and

assigning responsibility for it to one of the NSC committees. The studies carried out by the different departments and agencies would serve as the basis for the memorandum which supported a Presidential Directive (PD), i.e., “a series used to promulgate Presidential decisions on national security matters” (PD-1). Although PD-1 abolished the previous National Security Study Memorandum (NSSM) and National Security Decision Memorandum (NSDM) used by previous Administrations, the operational procedures were fairly similar to these practices.

FIGURE 10 – NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE



(Source: Adapted from the Carter Library, available at <http://www.jimycarterlibrary.gov/documents/nsc.phtml>)

8.2) The Decision-Making Process and Dynamics

As referred above, Carter came to the White House wanting an open and collegial decision-making process, in which all the relevant actors could contribute to policy-making. Carter, however, reserved for himself the final decision (Brzezinski, 1983; Carter, 1982; Vance, 1983). As every other President, Carter's personality and leadership style influenced his advisory system. Hermann and Preston (1994) have identified five leadership style variables affecting the decision-making process: 1) involvement in the process; 2) motivation for leading; 3) information management strategies; 4) toleration of conflict; and 5) conflict management strategies.

An examination of Carter's leadership style certainly helps to understand the dynamics involved in the Administration's decision-making process. First of all, Carter was highly involved in foreign policy-making (Brzezinski, 1983; Moens, 1990; Rothkopf, 2005; Vance, 1983). Carter committed himself personally to foreign policy, namely taking on a leading role on many occasions such as the Camp David Accords and the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT). Reflecting this involvement was the fact that Carter dedicated most of his time to international affairs rather than domestic issues (Glad, 2009).

Carter's involvement resulted undoubtedly from his motivation. He came to the White House clearly as a goal-driven leader, i.e., commanding, task-oriented, and focused on change (Hermann et al., 2001). Heavily influenced by his evangelical faith, Carter considered the Presidency a calling and a sacred duty, thus implying a vigorous involvement in shaping political affairs (Berggren and Rae, 2006; Greenstein, 2000). Particularly important, Carter wanted to take the lead and moralise US foreign policy and transform the relationship between the two superpowers, giving more attention to human rights and the increasingly pluralistic and independent international system (Merritt, 1986; Rosati, 1991). In accordance with the characteristics of the goal driven leader, Carter arrived with an agenda for change, especially in foreign affairs.

As for Carter's strategies for managing information, it has already been stated that he preferred a collegial system from which he could derive multiple inputs. Carter would be the hub of the communication wheel and assume the ultimate responsibility for

deciding policy. His personality and management style would, however, make his decision-making system extremely centralised (Brzezinski, 1983). Above all, Carter's cognitive style led him to become immersed in details and specificities and, consequently, micromanage the information process (Kaufman, 1993; Spiegel, 1985).

Carter's toleration for conflict also constrained his Administration's decision-making system. Carter wanted a collegial system precisely to avoid interdepartmental conflict. The President was particularly averse to internal criticism of advisors and staff members. His intention was to bring Cabinet heads together in order for them to develop policy as a problem-solving team. However, numerous disputes emerged over jurisdictional issues and policy differences. Therefore, Carter dealt with internal conflict in his advisory system by assuming greater control of the decision-making process and "curbing of Cabinet autonomy in policy development" (Warshaw, 1996: 121).

Such actions do not imply that Carter preferred circumventing Cabinet members and other advisors rather than having to manage conflict directly. On numerous occasions Carter would bring to the attention of his staff certain issues with which he was unsatisfied and even go so far as to reprimand advisors (Burke, 2000). But, in general, Carter tried to avoid internal conflict. According to Richard Moe, Chief of Staff to Vice President Walter Mondale, Carter, particularly in the initial part of his Presidency, went out of his way to avoid direct confrontation with his subordinates:

... one of the things that characterized the first two and a half years of the administration was that he didn't fire anybody. (...) The President found it very difficult to be critical to those people who were working for him. Sometimes he would do it, but it was difficult personally for him to come to terms with this or dress somebody down, let alone fire them. (Miller Center, 1982b: 67)

These personal characteristics and traits certainly contributed to the changes of foreign policy decision-making in the Carter Administration. As stated above, the decision-making structure regulates the decision-making process. Hence, changes in the structure unsurprisingly lead to changes in the processes. Gradually, throughout his Presidency, Carter altered his foreign policy decision-making structure. The initial formal

decision-making structure presented in the preceding section was short-lived. Despite his desire for a collegial decision-making model, Carter quickly came to understand that his ideal system did not satisfy his needs and objectives (Ayres, 1984). In order to solve the persistent problem of “keeping people out of the Cabinet Room”, Carter (1982: 58-59) acknowledged that he “had to intervene personally and use my full authority to hold the group down to a reasonable size”. Therefore, the original formal structure erected by Carter was soon abandoned:

By mid-1979 he had dismantled Cabinet Government and established a White House-based policy-making system. The changes in organizational structure made in mid-1979 included the appointment of a chief of staff within the White House to clear all appointments, including those with the Cabinet members; expansion of the domestic policy staff to initiate domestic policy proposals; and a personnel staff to approve departmental personnel selection. (Warshaw, 1996: 101)

As a result, the number of Cabinet Meetings was curtailed as the years went on. Carter (1982: 60) considered that “Cabinet meetings became less necessary” and, as a result, full Cabinet sessions declined from thirty six in 1977 to only six in 1980¹⁰⁶. As an alternative, Carter chose to use smaller sessions in which the topic discussed was restricted to particular policy issues involving a handful of Departments. These informal “Cabinet clusters” functioned as short-term interdepartmental task forces designated by the President for dealing with specific policy issues (Allison, 1980; Warshaw, 1996). By using this method to deal with policy matters, Carter ended up with a compartmentalised Cabinet rather than a collegial system (Burke, 2001).

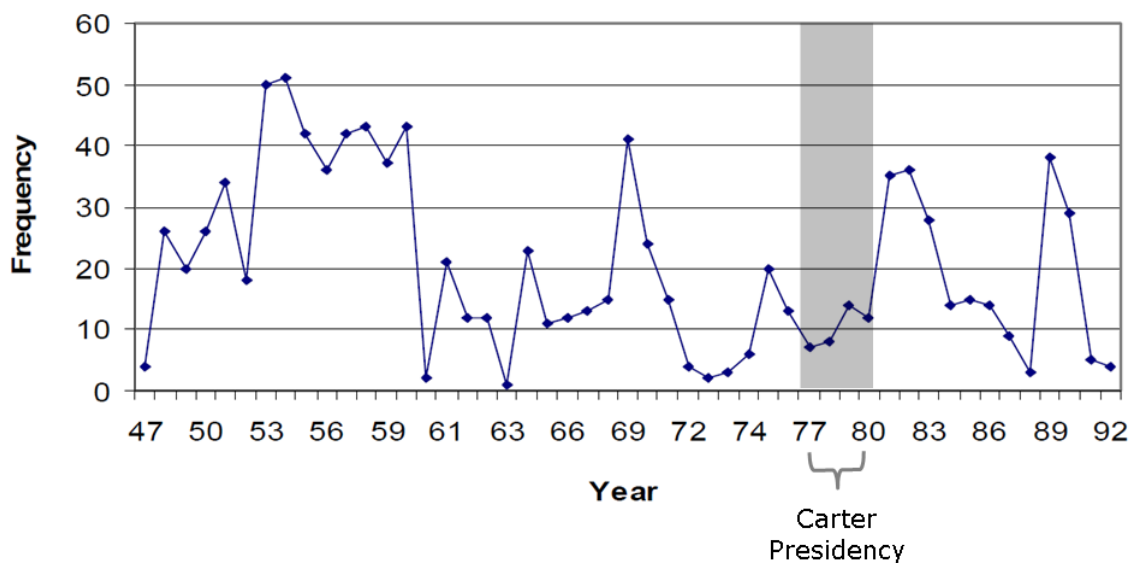
This behaviour confirms the premise established over the years that the Cabinet had revealed itself to be too large to be efficient. In fact, Allison (1980: 43-44) has acknowledged that “[l]oosely composed of a large number of departments and agencies with their own goals, constituencies, interests, and perspectives, it has become too big and too bogged down in special interests to respond effectively to the president’s

¹⁰⁶ The number of full Cabinet sessions per year during the Carter Presidency is: 1977, 36 sessions; 1978, 23 sessions; 1979, 9 sessions; 1980, 6 sessions (Carter, 1982).

organizational tasks”. Recent research on advisory systems supports the argument that Cabinets acting as a collective body seldom serve an advisory function (Hult, 1993).

The reduction of the role of Carter’s Cabinet paralleled the decline of formal NSC meetings. Although PD-2 intended to implement a collegial decision-making model in the NSC, the fact was that formal NSC meetings during the Carter Presidency were infrequent (Brzezinski, 1983). When compared to other Administrations, the Carter Administration did not exploit the NSC as a decision-making body to any great extent (Figure 11 and Table 9). While the PRC did encompass a broader range of issues, the SCC assumed greater initiative throughout the Carter Presidency due to the fact that Brzezinski’s influence increased and crisis management acquired an overwhelming importance during this period (Best Jr., 2010).

FIGURE 11 – FREQUENCY OF NSC MEETINGS PER YEAR, 1947-1992



(Source: Adapted from The Brookings Institution, available at [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Projects/nsc/Frequency_of NS_C_meetings_per_year_Graph.PDF](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Projects/nsc/Frequency_of_NS_C_meetings_per_year_Graph.PDF))

TABLE 9 – CARTER ADMINISTRATION NSC MEETINGS

| NSC ID | DATE | TITLE | SUBJECTS | | | | | | | | |
|--------|--------------|---|-----------------------|-------------|--------|------|-------------|--------------|-------|--------------|------------------------|
| | | | Internal Organization | Europe/NATO | Africa | Asia | Middle East | Soviet Union | China | Arms Control | Non-Traditional Issues |
| 001 | 22 Jan. 1977 | Vice Pres Trip, Pres use of NSC | ● | | | | | | | | ● |
| 002 | 27 Jan. 1977 | Defense Issues - FY 1978 Budget | | | | | | | | | ● |
| 003 | 23 Feb. 1977 | Middle East - Results of Sec Vance Trip | | | | | ● | | | | |
| 004 | 03 Mar. 1977 | US Policy on Southern Africa - PD 5 | | | ● | | | | | | |
| 005 | 22 Mar. 1977 | SALT | | | | | | | | ● | |
| 006 | 27 Apr. 1977 | Korea - US Troop withdrawal & PD 12 | | | | ● | | | | | |
| 007 | 06 Sep. 1977 | SALT | | | | | | | | ● | |
| 008 | 23 Feb. 1978 | Horn of Africa | | | ● | | | | | | |
| 009 | 11 Apr. 1978 | SALT - Sec Vance's trip to Moscow | | | | | | | | ● | |
| 010 | 10 May 1978 | DOD Consolidated Guidance | ● | | | | | | | | |
| 011 | 15 Aug. 1978 | US-Soviet Relations | | | | | | ● | | | |
| 012 | 01 Sep. 1978 | Middle East | | | | | ● | | | | |
| 013 | 02 Sep. 1978 | SALT | | | | | | | | ● | |
| 014 | 06 Oct. 1978 | Africa - Overall US Policy | | | ● | | | | | | |
| 015 | 18 Dec. 1978 | SALT | | | | | | | | ● | |
| 015A | 03 Jan. 1979 | Iran | | | | | ● | | | | |
| 016 | 16 Feb. 1979 | Sino-Vietnamese Conflict, Iran | | | | ● | ● | | | | |
| 017 | 19 Feb. 1979 | Middle East Issues | | | | | ● | | | | |
| 018 | 05 Mar. 1979 | Yemen | | | | | ● | | | | |
| 019 | 04 Jun. 1979 | US Strategic Arms Policy, US-USSR Relations | | | | | | ● | | ● | |
| 020 | 05 Jun. 1979 | US Strategic Arms Policy, US-USSR Relations | | | | | | ● | | ● | |
| 021 | 05 Sep. 1979 | MX Basing Issues | | | | | | | | ● | |
| 022 | 17 Sep. 1979 | Soviets in Cuba | | | | | | ● | | | |
| 022A | 19 Oct. 1979 | Iran | | | | | ● | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|--------------|---|--|---|---|--|---|--|---|---|
| 022B | 20 Nov. 1979 | Iran | | | | | ● | | | |
| 023 | 04 Dec. 1979 | Iran | | | | | ● | | | |
| 023A | 04 Dec. 1979 | Iran | | | | | ● | | | |
| 024 | 19 Dec. 1979 | Iran | | | | | ● | | | |
| 025 | 28 Dec. 1979 | Iran, Afghanistan & Pakistan | | | ● | | ● | | | |
| 026 | 02 Jan. 1980 | Iran, Christopher Mission to Afghanistan, SALT, Brown trip to China | | | ● | | ● | | ● | ● |
| 027 | 18 Mar. 1980 | Iran | | | | | ● | | | |
| 027A | 22 Mar. 1980 | Iran | | | | | ● | | | |
| 028 | 31 Mar. 1980 | Iran | | | | | ● | | | |
| 029 | 07 Apr. 1980 | Iran | | | | | ● | | | |
| 030 | 11 Apr. 1980 | Iran Rescue Mission | | | | | ● | | | |
| 030A | 15 Apr. 1980 | Iran Rescue Mission | | | | | ● | | | |
| 031 | 12 Sep. 1980 | Security Framework Issues | | | | | | | | ● |
| 032 | 24 Sep. 1980 | Iran/Iraq | | | | | ● | | | |
| 033 | 29 Sep. 1980 | Iran/Iraq, Saudi Request for military assistance | | | | | ● | | | |
| 034 | 07 Dec. 1980 | Poland | | ● | | | | | | |
| 035 | 17 Dec. 1980 | Basic Strategies | | | | | | | | ● |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|----|----|----|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|
| TOTAL | 2 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 21 | 4 | 1 | 9 | 4 |
| % of all meetings | 5% | 2% | 7% | 10% | 51% | 10% | 2% | 22% | 10% |

(Source: Adapted from The Brookings Institution, available at http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Projects/nsc/Jimmy_E_Carter.PDF)

According to research carried out by Newmann, all Presidential Administrations tend to reveal similar dynamics (Figure 12):

As a result of institutional pressures, the structure of national security decision making follows a distinct pattern of evolution over the first term of any presidential administration. Each administration begins with a standard National Security Council-based interagency process. Decision making then evolves in a predictable manner. Presidents will eventually use three concurrent structures to make decisions: a formal structure (the standard

interagency process); an informal structure, in which the senior advisers meet with and without the president on a regular basis outside the interagency process; and a confidence structure, in which the president relies on one or two select advisers. (Newmann, 2004: 273)

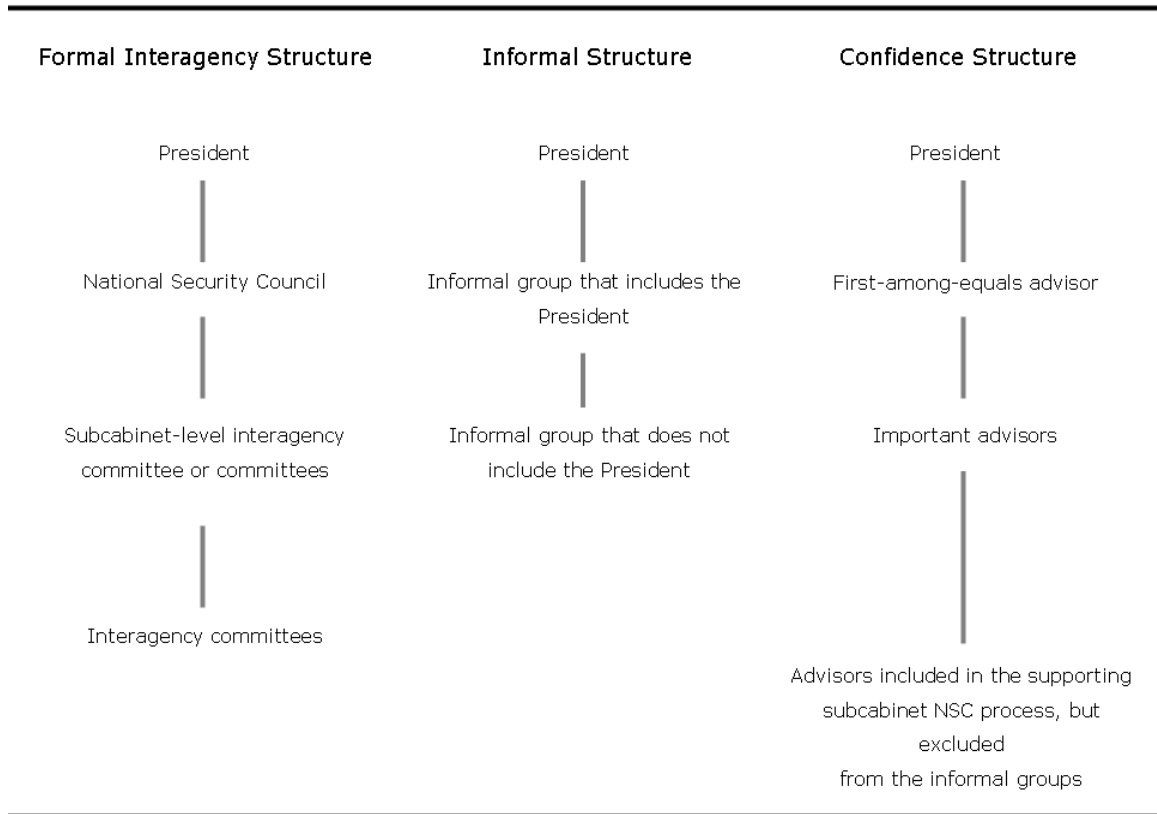
The original decision-making structure implementation corresponds to an Administrations theoretical administrative model (Newmann, 2001). However, as time move on, all Administrations tend to develop more informal decision-making structures and processes (Greenstein and Burke, 1990; Link, 2000; Newmann, 2004). These informal structures and processes can take on a range of different patterns of interaction such as specific committees, unofficial gatherings, lunches, telephone conversations, and one-on-one meetings (Newmann, 2004). They emerge largely due to the belief that the formal structures (e.g., the Cabinet, NSC) are “too large, too slow, too leaky, or too impersonal a forum for serious consideration of crucial policy issues” (Newmann, 2004: 277). Accordingly, informal processes are deemed more productive and efficient since the standard interagency process, with all its constraints and impediments, is circumvented.

In line with this reasoning, Carter also came to privilege informal decision-making structures and processes. As Link’s (2000: 250) research has demonstrated, Carter spent “more than 50 percent of his time in such forums, while spending approximately one-fourth of his time in on-on-one meetings”. As Figures 13 and 14 clearly show, there was an obvious reduction in Carter’s interaction with his closest advisors as time passed, revealing a clear preference for more informal structures:

During his first year in office (1977), Carter’s inner core was nearly twice the size on Nixon’s during his first year (22 versus 12 advisers). There were also a larger number of strong adviser-adviser linkages, reflecting Carter’s preference for meeting with these advisers in moderate to large groups. Unlike the Nixon inner core, Carter initially included a number of inner and outer Cabinet secretaries in his inner circle. Carter’s pattern of meeting with his inner circle evolved somewhat by 1979, showing greater policy-area differentiation (...) Overall, these figures document Carter’s transition from a very broad to a more narrow interaction style as well as his movement away from maintaining strong ties with his

cabinet secretaries to an emphasis on a WHO and foreign policy-based network. (Link, 2000: 247-248)

FIGURE 12 – THREE CONCURRENT STRUCTURES OF NATIONAL SECURITY DECISION MAKING

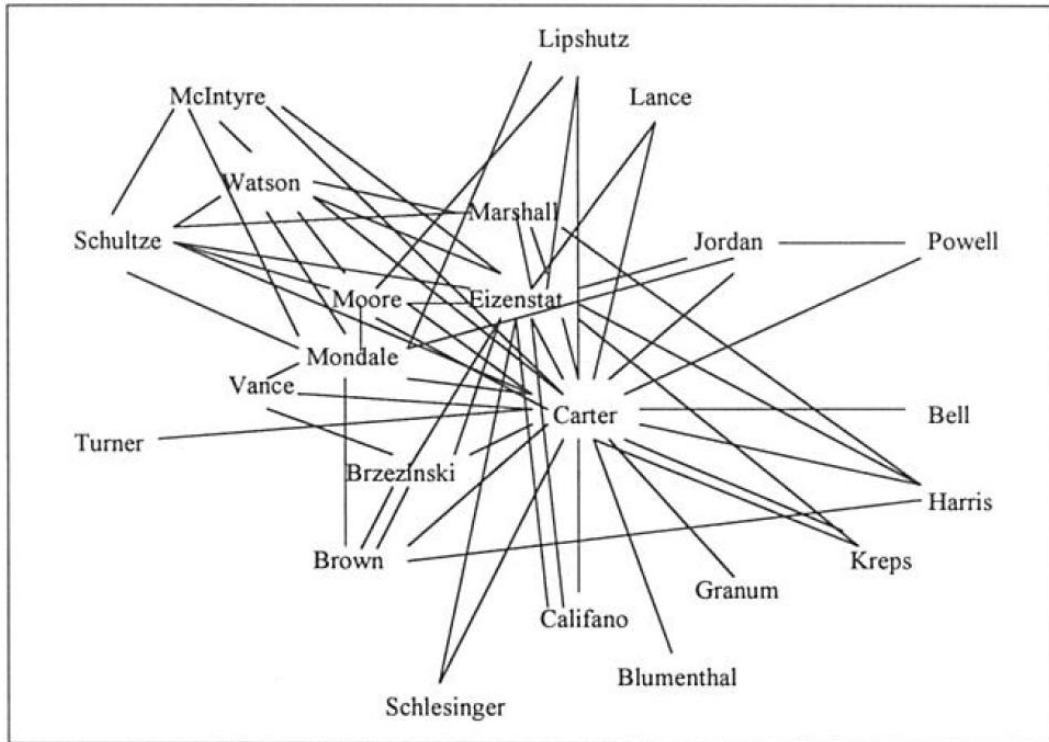


(Source: Newmann, 2004: 300)

This does not mean that formal structures are devoid of value. Rather, the informal structure complements the formal structure:

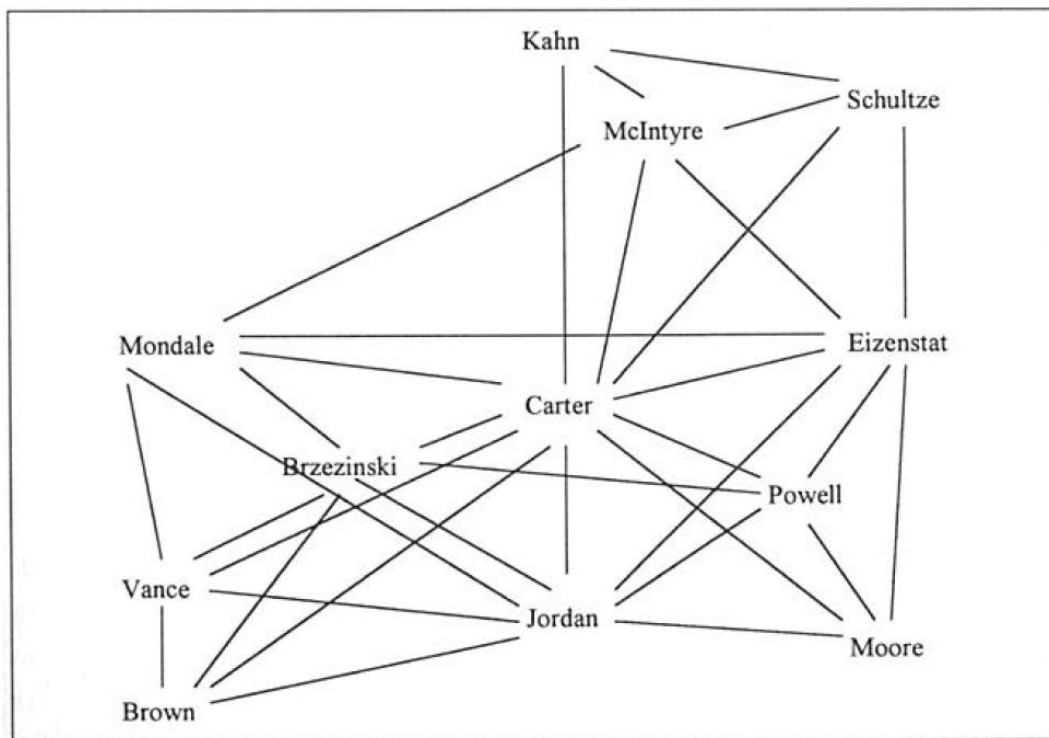
The informal structure acts as an adjunct to the formal structure. It does not replace the formal structure, but acts as a supplementary process, which helps smooth the rough edges of the formal process. It is a method for the principal decision makers to work together without staff, to build trust and teamwork, and to analyze national security issues from the broader perspective that their roles as heads of executive departments often precludes. (Newmann, 2004: 299)

FIGURE 13 – INTERACTIONS AMONG CARTER AND HIS CLOSEST ADVISORS, 1977



(Source: Link, 2000: 248)

FIGURE 14 – INTERACTIONS AMONG CARTER AND HIS CLOSEST ADVISORS, 1979



(Source: Link, 2000: 249)

In light of this, George (1980; c.f., Ayres, 1984) has suggested that Carter ended up with a hybrid model, resulting in a mix of the collegial and formalistic models. Moens (1990) diverges slightly from this opinion by considering that Carter did have an ideal open decision-making process which facilitated a productive interaction between the Administration's key-foreign policy decision-makers. Nevertheless, despite the existing structures Moens (1991: 919) contends that "the actors failed to make use of them to implement actual multiple advocacy proceedings".

Whichever conceptual model most resembled Carter's system is not fundamental to our discussion. What is important is to understand that, with time, Carter increasingly came to rely on a small group of personal advisors to help him arrive at major policy decisions¹⁰⁷ (Rothkopf, 2005) (Figure 15). The inner circle was composed of formal advisors (from the Cabinet and WHO) and was divided into two distinct groups. The first group was focused primarily on domestic policy and was composed of Carter's oldest political associates, i.e., Hamilton Jordon, Jody Powell, Stansfield Turner, Frank Moore, Stuart Eizenstadt, James McIntyre, and Michael Blumenthal. While these individuals were mainly involved in domestic policy, they did, on occasion, counsel the President on international issues and participate in the decision process¹⁰⁸. The second group was directly involved in foreign policy and was composed of by Zbigniew Brzezinski, Cyrus Vance, Harold Brown, and Walter Mondale. As the next chapter clearly illustrates, these four foreign policy advisors were at the core of the decision-making process and the interaction among them and between them and the President was crucial to the development of the Administration's geographic mental maps.

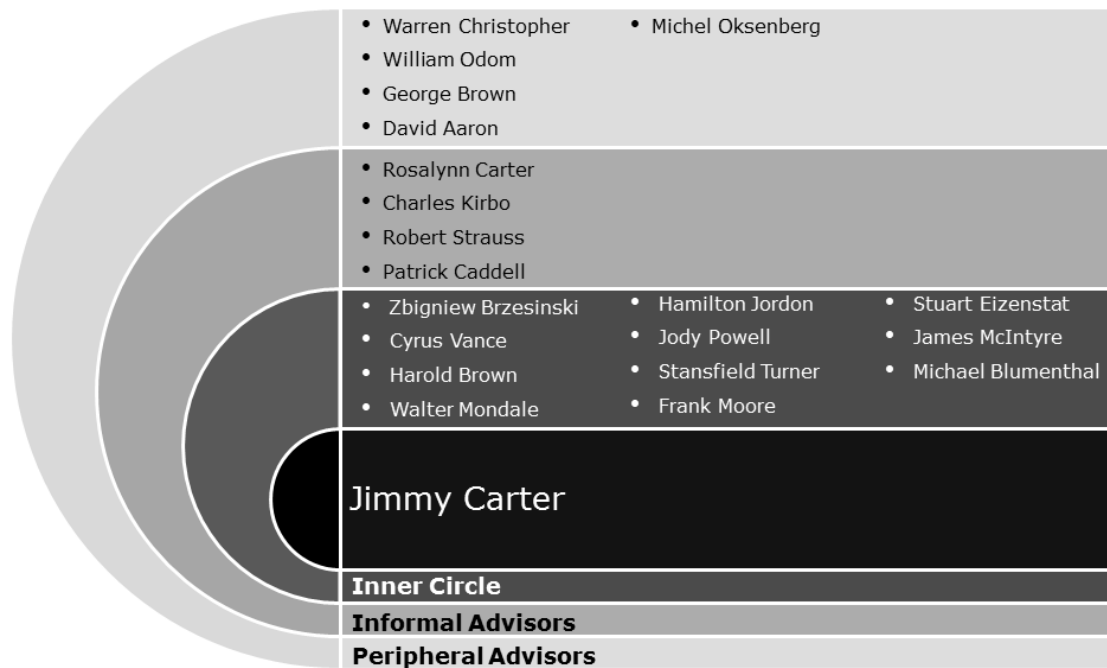
There were a host of individuals from outside the formal decision-making structure who were also particularly important in counselling Carter. Former Chair of the Democratic National Committee, Robert Strauss, was a key policy advisor. His political experience had given him a prestigious standing in Congress and transformed him into one of Carter's most valued advisors. The President's trust in Strauss was perfectly

¹⁰⁷ The advisors listed had different levels of influence throughout the Presidency. In fact, some of these individuals did not serve the full Carter term.

¹⁰⁸ Of these advisors, Hamilton Jordan was particularly relevant in counseling on international issues (Newmann, 2004).

demonstrated when he appointed him as special negotiator for the Middle East after the Camp David Accords. Patrick Caddell, the Administration’s pollster, was also an esteemed consultant to whom Carter listened unofficially (Carter, 1982; Glad, 2009).

FIGURE 15 – PRINCIPAL PRESIDENTIAL ADVISORS IN THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION¹⁰⁹



(Source: Adapted from Glad, 2009)

Carter’s closest friend, Charles Kirbo, was a particularly influential counsel (Carter, 1982). A long-time and loyal friend, Kirbo helped Carter in the selection of his Cabinet and staff, assisting his Administration in times of trouble, and in advising the President on any issue he would request. The President’s wife, Rosalynn Carter, also played a major role in advising Carter. Not since Eleanor Roosevelt had a First Lady been so involved with foreign policy (Smith, 1986). On many occasions Rosalynn’s advice and support was critical in helping Carter make a decision. For instance, after numerous opinions from senior Democrats warning against the President’s direct involvement in Middle East

¹⁰⁹ Glad’s (2009) classification of the major foreign policy players in the Carter Administration results from the 1996 PhD dissertation titled *The Presidential Kaleidoscope: Advisory Networks in the Nixon and Carter Administrations*, authored by Michael Link. The classification was established by the annual multidimensional scaling of interaction data for the main elements of Administration.

negotiations, Carter's discussion with Rosalynn led him to decide to "go all out" and convene a meeting with Sadat and Begin at Camp David in mid-1978 (Carter, 1982: 316). In fact, Rosalynn would play an indispensable role not only advising Carter, but also helping him directly in crucial moments. The Camp David meeting is, once again, a case in point:

Rosalynn had come to Camp David in time to help me greet President Sadat in the early afternoon. (...) I had particularly wanted the three wives to be with us, so they could ease some of the tension and create a more congenial atmosphere. (Carter, 1982: 327-328)

The First Lady would play such an important informal influence on many other occasions. Her position of close counsel to the President was recognised by other advisors. Brzezinski (1983: 32), for example, nurtured a very close relationship with Rosalynn, acknowledging that "my approach greatly fortified my standing with Carter".

Outside of these two inner circles of formal and informal advisors, there was a peripheral group of advisors who Carter relied on for expertise on particular policy issues. The most significant individuals in terms of foreign policy and security issues were Warren Christopher (Deputy Secretary of State), William Odom (Military Assistant and National Security Council Crisis Coordinator), George Brown (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff), David Aaron (Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs), and Michel Oksenberg (NSC aid for East Asia and China).

Link's (2000) research reveals the importance of these individuals by stressing the significant turnover rate in Carter's advisory system – over 60% per year. In other words, out of every ten advisors, only four remained in the President's advisory network from one year to the next. The turnover was particularly significant in Carter's outer advisory spheres. According to Link (2000: 252), Carter's inner circle of advisors increasingly dominated the decision-making system: "turnover tended to be lower in Carter's inner core and it declined markedly over time, ranging from 40,9% (1977-78) to 33,3% (1978-79) to 18,2% (1979-1980) – reflecting a trend for Carter toward a somewhat smaller inner core".

These different groups of advisors were essential in the informal decision-making process which came to dominate in the Carter Administration, particularly in foreign policy. As the President and his top advisors became increasingly unsatisfied with the formal interagency process, informal interactions and processes became dominant in defining policy. By mid-1977 several informal processes were developed in the Administration which became consolidated over the years as the decision forums *par excellence* (Newmann, 2004; Rothkopf, 2005). These key advisors aided Carter in multiple ways, namely analysing information, supporting him emotionally and politically, shaping policy alternatives, and making sure his decisions were carried through (Glad, 2009). The foreign policy inner group played an extremely important role in the decision-making process. Since Carter did not have much foreign policy experience he was particularly influenced by those closest to him (Spiegel, 1985).

Two informal structures were particularly important: the Friday foreign-affairs breakfast and the weekly Vance, Brown, and Brzezinski (V-B-B) luncheon. These informal meetings were endorsed by Carter and allowed for discussing and resolving many foreign policy issues without the hindrance of the Cabinet or bureaucratic apparatus. Carter found the foreign-affairs breakfast particularly efficient and productive:

Several times a week, I arranged a breakfast meeting with the leaders of Congress or other visitors, and on Friday morning at 7:30 AM, there was a regular foreign-affairs breakfast. At first I invited only three people – Fritz, Cy, and Zbig – but I soon added Harold Brown to the list. Later, Hamilton and Jody and one or two others were included, depending upon which issues were of most importance at the time¹¹⁰. For about an hour and a half, we covered the range of questions involving international and defense matters, to allow me to reach decisions and to minimize any misunderstanding among this high-level group. This became my favourite meeting of the week, even when the subjects discussed were disagreeable. (Carter, 1983: 55-56)

¹¹⁰ According to Brzezinski's memoirs, the participation in the Presidential breakfasts grew throughout the term. Besides the individuals mentioned above, Hedley Donovan and Lloyd Cutler were invited on occasion. After Vance left the State Department, Deputy Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, was a regular participant, providing "the expertise and continuity on issues that Muskie lacked" (Brzezinski, 1983: 68).

The Presidential breakfasts grew into important executive sessions of close, intimate, and confidential discussions, which provided many of the key-decision makers an opportunity to interact directly with the President (Brzezinski, 1983; Vance, 1983). Although the Presidential breakfasts were informal and Carter resisted having any official agenda, Brzezinski was able to influence the issues discussed by indirectly suggesting them during his formal morning briefing (Aronoff, 2006; Brzezinski, 1983). Due to the amount of issues discussed and following the incident concerning the UN vote on Jerusalem, in early-1980 Carter eventually authorised Brzezinski to write-up a summary of the meetings conclusions to distribute to the participants (Brzezinski, 1983).

Equally important were the V-B-B luncheons where the participants were able to freely exchange perspectives on topics of foreign policy and national security. The luncheons allowed for the top three foreign and security policy advisors to resolve issues in which they felt did not need to involve a formal PRC or SCC (Brzezinski, 1983). According to Vance, the V-B-B luncheons had the advantage of overcoming many of the constraints inherent in formal venues:

To the annoyance of nonparticipating agencies, the VBB increasingly became a place where agreement could be quickly reached on a broad range of national security issues, followed either by a direct recommendation to the president or by a common position arrived in a Policy Review Committee or SCC meeting. Obviously, if the secretaries of state and defense and the national security adviser came to an interagency meeting in agreement on a particular course of action, it would be extremely difficult for another point of view to prevail. (Vance, 1983: 39)

While the V-B-B luncheons were informal forums for policy debate, they did ensure some level of formality, namely involving the departmental staffs' provision of the agenda and necessary briefing books related to the topics under consideration. The intimate nature of the luncheons allowed for the decision-makers to have greater negotiation flexibility and political leeway. For instance, Brzezinski (1983: 70) acknowledged that as time went by and he and Brown were increasingly in sync on policy issues "the absence of staff made it easier for Vance to accommodate without loss of

face". In the manner of the Presidential breakfast, the V-B-B luncheons would result in a memorandum drafted by Brzezinski which was sent to the President and participants highlighting the decisions reached. The importance of such informal gatherings cannot be overstated. These meetings were the setting where "much of the real work – once imagined for formal NSC meetings, which were infrequent and usually done for history's sake, for major decision – was done" (Rothkopf, 2005: 172).

Many of these individuals were to become part of Carter's confidence structure. In time, Carter came to rely increasingly on a few key-advisors which he trusted more than others. This is consistent with scholarly research that argues that Presidents, implicitly or explicitly, tend to arrange their advisors hierarchically (Newmann, 2004). According to George (1980) advisory groups tend to reveal "power-prestige orderings" which develop with time. In the realm of foreign policy, Brzezinski and Vance became Carter's two most trusted advisors. Their sway over the President fluctuated at different periods of Carter's term in office, but Brzezinski's counsel and perspectives prevailed over the long-run. This is not surprising considering the importance Carter attributed to the personal dimension in policy-making (Vance, 1983).

Just like all Presidential advisors do (c.f., Hoyt and Garrison, 1997; Kessel, 1983), both Brzezinski and Vance jockeyed for influence in the decision-making process and to try to stamp their perspective on US foreign policy. In fact, at times, advisors try to manipulate the decision process in order to alter the weight of the contending positions or limit the amount of alternative information and options available in the deliberation stage (Garrison, 2002; Glad, 2009; Hoyt and Garrison, 1997). There are several means of manipulating the decision-making process which were frequently employed by several advisors in the Carter Administration:

The first strategy is to manipulate the group's structure, that is, to take actions that alter the group's physical make-up in self-serving ways. A second strategy is procedural in nature and entails efforts by the actor(s) to manipulate the group's operating procedures in ways that increase the relative strength of a favoured position. Finally, there is the strategy of interpersonal manipulation that entails efforts to alter the ways in which the group's members interact and perceive one another. (Hoyt and Garrison, 1997: 252)

The competition between Vance and Brzezinski was particularly acute. The rivalry between these two advisors has been amply discussed in the scholarly literature. However it is worth reviewing some of the dynamics involved in the current study in order to understand in the following chapter how this competition influenced the Administration's mental maps.

While Brzezinski (1983) considers that the accounts of his rivalry with Vance are highly exaggerated, both he and Vance acknowledge significant differences in perspectives throughout the term. For Brzezinski (1983), the problematic differences were particularly related with a few key-issues, such as the role of the Soviets-Cubans in the Horn of Africa, the relationship with China, and the Iranian crisis. Vance (1983: 35-36), on the other hand, is more unyielding in his view of the rivalry, particularly on its negative consequences on the Administration: "eventually, as divergences grew wider between my public statements and his policy utterances, Brzezinski's practice became a serious impediment to the conduct of our foreign policy".

Divergent perspectives between the two advisors were not the only sources of tension. Bureaucratic turf wars also played a role in catalysing policy disagreements. Brzezinski's memoirs testify to how third-parties contributed to amplifying the disagreements:

I was struck in the very early months (...) by how much pressure there is from one's own subordinates to engage in conflict with one's personal peers. More than once, David Aaron would alert me to an encroachment on NSC turf by State, urging me to assert myself strongly. One could resist such pressures up to a point, but one was also conscious that the loyalty and morale of one's own staff were at stake; and I suspect that Cy was subjected to far greater pressures from the much larger, extraordinarily turf-conscious, and more insecure State Department bureaucracy. (Brzezinski, 1983: 37-38)

The power to influence the President came, ultimately, from who had more access to Carter. As research has demonstrated, regular, direct access to the President is particularly important in determining the amount of influence advisors possess (Link,

2000). Brzezinski was quite aware that his power came from his relationship with the President:

My position in the Administration depended entirely on my relationship with Jimmy Carter (...) Carter's desire to be an active, dominant President thus automatically enhanced my role as his stand-in on national security matters. But so much depended on how enduring that relationship would be, on whether I could count on his support, on the extent to which our ideas meshed, and – terribly important in Washington – on the degree to which I was perceived as being close to him personally. (Brzezinski, 1983: 17-18)

Therefore, Brzezinski sought to maintain as much direct access to the President as possible, knowing full well that “only then could I assert my own authority in a manner consistent with his views” (Brzezinski, 1983: 64). For that reason, Brzezinski was always in close contact with Carter and was normally at his side when foreign policy issues were discussed (Glad, 2009).

Particularly significant for the current study was Brzezinski's control over the information channels and access to the President. As I have suggested in previous chapters, documental interaction was particularly important in the Carter decision-making process. As a matter of fact, Carter had a tendency to favour written memos rather than face-to-face interaction for developing policy¹¹¹ (Burke, 2000). Moreover, Carter preferred to receive questions and advice in writing and he would usually answer in short texts in the margins (or longer messages on more important issues):

Instead of holding a five- or ten-minute conversation (at least), I could read a brief memorandum and make a decision in a matter of moments; and I could do this at odd times throughout the day. (...) Most people really tried to express themselves succinctly and, when writing, succeeded. In the room with me, however, their verbal skill often deserted them, and much time would be wasted while they tried to come to the point. (Carter, 1982: 56)

¹¹¹ This contrasted greatly with other key decision-makers in the Administration. For instance, Vice President Mondale preferred oral presentations and, consequently, was more affected by those who had close, personal contact with him (Brzezinski, 1983).

Carter's domestic policy advisor David Rubenstein has attested to the President's reliance on paperwork:

Typically in a major decision such as national health insurance, welfare reform, economic policy, he would get a number of major memos going back and forth with him outlining the views of the Cabinet Secretaries and the staff people and then he would tend to want to have a meeting on it.

I think earlier in the Presidency I had the sense that he felt he could make the decision based on the paper. He could sit down, read these thirty-page memos, check off what he wanted, and send them back, and that would be the policy process. If he had a couple of questions he'd ask Stuart for some more information. (Miller Center, 1982a: 26)

As indicated above, PD-1 set up a decision-making process highly centred on documental sources and interactions. The Presidential Review Memorandums (PRM) served as the main platforms for exchanging ideas and suggestions for foreign policy-making within the NSC and the broader Presidential advisory system. The documental interaction was structured in three distinct stages (Brzezinski, 1983). The first stage involved the requisition of a PRM/NSC or a commissioned option paper prior to a PRC or SCC meeting. Depending on the committee hosting the meeting the documents would be prepared by the NSC staff (when it was a SCC meeting) or by the Department chairing the meeting (in the case of the PRC)¹¹². The second stage involved the development of a unanimous recommendation for the President to decide on or a report on alternative policy recommendations for Presidential consideration. Whichever the case, the documents were generally composed of a brief meeting summary (sometimes with the minutes of the discussion) and a proposal for approval or request for a decision. Occasionally, a PRC or SCC could give rise to option papers to be discussed in a more formal NSC meeting¹¹³. The third stage involved the communication of the President's

¹¹² Issues which did not need the immediate attention at the Cabinet-level were worked out in "mini-SCC" or "mini-PRC" headed by David Aaron or the appropriate Department Under-Secretary (Brzezinski, 1983: 61).

¹¹³ In either case, the report or option papers would be prepared by the NSC staff and submitted directly to the President by the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs.

decision to the appropriate Departments. The announcement of the decision took the form of either a PD, particularly in the cases of important issues, or a decision memo which reflected the President's response to the report prepared for him¹¹⁴.

Other important sources of informational exchange were the daily briefings and the weekly reports the President received from his closest foreign policy advisors. These interactions with the President served as a means for the different advisors to try "planting basic ideas" (Brzezinski, 1983: 65). For instance, Vance would submit a nightly report to the President which described and analysed policy issues that the Secretary of State considered important. This informal report allowed Vance to circumvent the NSC's standard "cover memos" summarising and interpreting the information and "raise policy issues directly and quickly" (Vance, 1983: 38). Vance's report was usually the first document the President read every morning "because it encapsulated in two or three pages the events and issues considered the most significant by the State Department and summarized actions being contemplated in the near future" (Carter, 1982: 50).

Brzezinski also presented his views and ideas to the President on a regular basis. To begin with, the first formal meeting Carter had every day was with Brzezinski for discussing the Presidential Daily Briefing (Carter, 1982). While these daily briefings dealt primarily with intelligence issues, Brzezinski was able to outmanoeuvre the Administration's official senior intelligence advisor¹¹⁵:

Form the very first day of the Presidency, I insisted that the morning intelligence briefings be given to the President by me and by no one else. The CIA tried to have me take a briefing officer with me, but I felt that this would inhibit candid talk. Shortly after becoming Director of Central Intelligence, Admiral Stansfield Turner showed up in my Situation Room, quizzed my staff on how the intelligence briefing for the President was prepared, and then appeared in my office "to discuss" the President's morning briefing. In doing so, he not too

¹¹⁴ According to Brzezinski (1983), the President did not personally sign all the decisions (i.e., PD and decision memos). Rather, with the exception of the decisions of strategic relevance, the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs would usually sign the decisions after the President's approval.

¹¹⁵ Indeed the Director of the CIA had very limited direct access to Carter throughout his Presidency and CIA activities were in large part controlled by the NSC. As Brzezinski (1983: 73) has noted, the Director of the CIA very rarely had one-on-one meetings with the President and "all major decisions regarding the CIA had to be vetted by the SCC or in private on-on-one meetings between Turner and me".

subtly reminded me that he was the senior intelligence officer of the US government and it was therefore odd that I should be giving the President an intelligence briefing every morning. (...) As soon as he left, I went to Carter's Appointments Secretary, Tim Kraft, and told him that as of the next morning the President's schedule (which was always published in the morning Washington paper), instead of listing me as giving the President the "intelligence briefing", should say I was giving the "national security briefing". The next day I phoned Stan and drew his attention to the President's schedule as published in the morning paper, adding that I felt the problem was now resolved. The matter was never again raised, and I continued to brief the President alone during the entire four years. (Brzezinski, 1983: 64)

Besides the daily personal meetings with the President, Brzezinski also developed a weekly NSC report in which he would provide more comprehensive reflections and considerations on the most important foreign policy issues. The NSC weekly reports allowed Brzezinski to freely present his assessments on the major challenges confronting the Administration as well as evaluating its performance. Carter would frequently comment on these reports, namely by jotting his thoughts and opinions in the margins of the respective document. Brzezinski's reports and memorandum for the President differed from many of the documents sent by his colleagues. Many advisors, such as Vance and Brown, did interact repeatedly with the President. However, their documents contained much fewer recommendations than Brzezinski, whose texts were usually replete with advice and suggestions on how to proceed and which policy to implement (Glad, 2009).

Figure 16 is an illustrative example of the communicative interaction process between Carter and his advisors. In one of Brzezinski's NSC Weekly Reports dealing with several delicate issues, Carter has written several comments to Brzezinski, mainly soliciting more precise information and proposals on the courses of action which the Administration should follow. This documental interaction contributed significantly to the development of the Administration's foreign policy. As Brzezinski (1983: 66) has acknowledged, it "made for a continuing dialogue, which kept me informed of the President's thinking and also perhaps influenced it".

FIGURE 16 – WRITTEN INTERACTION BETWEEN CARTER AND BRZEZINKI

~~SECRET~~

2

Indeed, Cy put the new definition to Dobrynin earlier this week on the assumption that this would solve all the remaining issues -- an assumption Dobrynin led us to suspect is true. The opposite has happened, and the Soviets are even reopening some old issues.

I am convinced the Soviets want a SALT agreement, and I think there is a good probability that we could have obtained one some months ago had we been prepared to establish credibly the position that we are no longer able to make further adjustments and that we can wait. *J. S. have waited 2 years*

Cuba

We told the Cubans we would not go to Havana without an expectation of concrete positive developments -- by which we clearly meant their troops in Africa. We then proposed to go to Havana if they would simply let out the four American political prisoners. When they refused to do even that, we end up sending a delegation anyway, albeit at a somewhat lower level. This does not help our credibility. *your proposal*

The Middle East

Trove { I suspect that the root cause of our current difficulty is that Begin feels he can get away with almost anything; and that Sadat and the Saudis no longer have confidence that we can deliver either on the wider peace nor on regional protection from the Soviets. Not having pressed at Camp David for some direct linkage between the accords, we have failed to respond in any concrete way to Begin's subsequent negative actions regarding the West Bank. *What have you suggested?*

South Africa

Almost all blacks The basic reason why our difficulties are mounting is that our middle-of-the-road solutions are collapsing as the situation becomes polarized. The fact of the matter is that neither the whites nor the blacks take us very seriously. There is no bite to our proposals, because we are visibly reluctant to press the Soviet-Cuban issue (and thus leave the radical blacks with an increasingly attractive militant option), or to apply sanctions to the whites (thus encouraging them to engage in dilatory tactics).

When? In brief, we should be prepared to demonstrate to all concerned that the U.S. has clout as well as patience, and that there are evident and predictable costs for disregarding U.S. interests. Instead, we have given rise to the view that the best way of dealing with us is to simply keep nibbling away, and that eventually the U.S. will simply adjust its position. Stonewalling or even breaking off negotiations is an established part of the negotiating tradition. The Soviets, the Israelis, the French and others practice it well. We should, too -- and every one of the above negotiations should be reviewed from that standpoint.

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(Source: Brzezinski to Carter, 02/12/1978)

Moreover, Brzezinski acted as a “gate-keeper” by controlling many of the documents directed to the President. Shortly after the NSC formal structure was approved, Brzezinski obtained the President’s approval for preparing the PRMs that

directed the NSC to study certain issues and recording PRC and SCC views and recommendations. Recommendations reached at these meetings would serve as the basis for a PD that the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs would author and submit to the President for approval. However, when a conclusion on a particular issue was not reached, the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs was also responsible for writing the summary report and delivering it to the President. In each instance, none of these documents were required to be previously submitted to the PRC or SCC for review. The power to write and deliver the documentation directly to the President gave Brzezinski the power to mediate the interaction process and frame the policy recommendations discussed (Glad, 2009; Vance, 1983). Vance opposed this procedure, but Carter placated the Secretary of State by noting that any head of Department could review with him the documents should they desire¹¹⁶. As a result, according to Vance

The summaries quite often did not reflect adequately the complexity of the discussion or the full range of participant's views. The reports were too terse to convey the dimensions and interrelationships of issues. Sometimes, when the summaries or PDs – with the President's marginal notes, or his initials or signature – arrived back at the State Department by White House courier (often marked for my "eyes only"), I found discrepancies, occasionally serious ones, from my own recollection of what had been said, agreed, or recommended. (Vance, 1983: 37)

As the differences between the two principal foreign policy advisors intensified, Carter "vacillated between Brzezinski and Vance", leading them to cancelling each other out on many occasions (Turner, 1991: 58). On many occasions, the foreign policy team did work harmoniously and resembled a collegial system¹¹⁷, e.g., the Panama Canal Treaty and Camp David Accords. In some cases, the Vice President and the Secretary of Defence

¹¹⁶ Carter's main argument for circumventing the NSC review of the texts was to avoid the leaks of sensitive documents and information which had plagued the White House for some time. Indeed, in retrospect, Vance (1983) has admitted he should have been more adamant in his protests.

¹¹⁷ Brzezinski, for instance, has acknowledged the importance of his relationship with the Secretary of State. According to him, the relationship with Vance was second only to the President (Brzezinski, 1983).

mediated the policy differences between Brzezinski and Vance, overcoming personal road-blocks in the decision making process (Glad, 2009).

However, over time, Brzezinski came to exert greater control over the decision-making process (Aronoff, 2006; Ayres, 1984; Glad, 2009; Rothkopf, 2005; Schoemaker, 1989). Moens (1990) has credited this phenomenon to the fact that, in the early years, Vance and other officials frequently failed to vigorously present alternatives to the President, emboldening him to subscribe to many of Brzezinski's recommendations. It was only after the fall of the Shah in Iran that the competition between Brzezinski and Vance "deteriorated into an open bureaucratic battle" (Moens, 1990: 926). As a result, Brzezinski's power grew as he increasingly assumed greater control over the interpretation of interagency meetings and denied alternative perspectives from reaching the President. As a result, the Secretary of State was side-tracked as the principal figure of foreign policy-making after the President¹¹⁸. This trend was reinforced by Brown's gradual shift in policy perspectives during the course of the Carter Presidency and which contributed to a change in the power structure in the foreign policy team. As Brown increasingly assumed a more assertive US stance on international issues he strengthened Brzezinski's position. In Brzezinski's (1983: 47) own words, "Without Brown, I would have been much more isolated in the critical issues during the more difficult phases of the Carter Presidency". After Vance resigned, Brzezinski gained even more power in the decision-making process. The new Secretary of State, Edmund Muskie, was chosen essentially to be the Administration's foreign policy spokesman. The White House and the NSC would increasingly assume the responsibility for developing policy¹¹⁹.

¹¹⁸ This is not in disagreement with the view Carter had for the Secretary of State. According to Carter (1982: 54), the Secretary's role was that of an educator "of the American public about foreign policy".

¹¹⁹ In fact, after Vance's departure, Brzezinski further reinforced his position by taunting the State Department. In a memo sent to the President on 01 May, 1980, titled "Unity and the New Foreign Policy Team", Brzezinski cautioned the President on the deceitful role of many State Department officials: "... and the people around Cy continuously conspired either to dilute your policy or to divert it into directions more to their own liking. The so-called zig-zags in our past policies have been more apparent than real and have been exaggerated by an absence of a strong public voice by the Secretary and by leaks and a lack of discipline in the State Department ranks. In this traumatic period, there will be a particular temptation by State Department bureaucracy to even the score. (...) It is essential, if we are to avoid more intensive struggles and bad press, to emphasize the need for team work and discipline".

Consequently, Brzezinski became a “first among equals” in Carter’s inner circle of foreign policy advisors (Glad, 2009: 39). Moreover, the President defended him on countless occasions and supported him in many clashes with other foreign policy advisors, particularly the Secretary of State (Brzezinski, 1983; Glad, 2009; Rothkopf, 2005). After Vance’s resignation in mid-1980, Brzezinski stood practically unchallenged in defining foreign policy. Despite his strong reputation in Washington and his close relationship with Carter, the new Secretary of State, Edmund Muskie, was ill-versed in international politics. More importantly, Carter chose Muskie to serve principally as the Administration’s spokesman on foreign policy issues rather than as a policy-maker (Kaufman, 1993).

The ascendancy of Brzezinski’s influence in foreign policy decision-making is consistent with Carter’s initial intentions and leadership style. In keeping with the tendency of all Presidents to increasingly privilege informal structures, “Carter, a hands-on administrator who desired control over his foreign policy, ultimately allowed his confidence structure, specifically his relationship with ANSA Zbigniew Brzezinski, to dominate his administration” (Newmann, 2004: 278).

Carter wanted to have the final say on foreign policy since the beginning of his Presidency. He claimed to be open to different opinions and perspectives, but the decisions would belong exclusively to him. Carter’s direct and persistent involvement in numerous foreign policy decisions attests to his commitment to this principle. The consolidation of Brzezinski’s influence over the foreign policy decision-making process is therefore understandable. By sanctioning the increased power of the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (and consequently the NSC staff) over the decision-making process, Carter could exercise greater central control over foreign policy. In the end, notwithstanding the original denunciation of previous Administrations, according to Brzezinski (1983: 74), Carter’s decision-making system developed into “perhaps formally the most centralized of all in the postwar era”.

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MAPS OF HOPE AND PEACE

“Complex diplomatic relationships rarely work out in quite the way their authors anticipate. Midcourse elections are part of the normal negotiating process. For American presidents, in particular, the intrusion of domestic political considerations is also part of the game. In light of these realities, one cannot judge results by the standard of initial designs or theoretical abstractions”

(William Quandt, *Peace Process*)

The Carter Administration arrived in Washington amid several years of détente. The Nixon and Ford Administrations had sought to improve US-Soviet relations by emphasising a constructive engagement between the two superpowers. In particular, Nixon’s acknowledgement of Soviet strategic parity led the US to develop a gradual process in which it tried to convince the Soviets to cooperate in building an international “structure of peace”. By reducing the risk of conflict between the US and the USSR, the Nixon and Ford Administrations believed détente could serve the security interests of both superpowers and consolidate a reciprocally advantageous relationship. A key-feature of détente was the acknowledgement by both parts of the limits of international behaviour. For the US détente

... related directly to linkage and to managing the assimilation of the Soviet Union into the world order, was the drive to gain Soviet acceptance of a “code of conduct” or “rules of the game” for political competition. (...) Agreed rules of the game could lead to reducing misunderstandings as to objectives, accepting constraints on kinds of political action,

abjuring military and other confrontational means, and developing means of crisis avoidance and management¹²⁰. (Garthoff, 1985: 33-34)

Upon assuming the Presidency, Carter did not deviate from this line of reasoning. For the Carter Administration, détente was understood as a combination of cooperation and competition. For instance, while recognising the limitations of its application, Vance thoroughly supported a policy that simultaneously tried to harmonise competition and collaboration. Since each superpower had expanding global interests, managing US-Soviet relations was crucial to avoid a devastating military conflict between the two states. Vance (1983) acknowledged that competition was and would continue to be the primary trait of the relationship. However, according to the Secretary of State, it was possible to regulate the rivalry, especially regarding nuclear arms control: “when cooperation could enhance our security, as in limiting the nuclear arms race, it should be pursued without attempting to link it to other issues” (Vance, 1983: 28). Brzezinski (1983) also considered the promotion of détente desirable, although emphasising the need for greater reciprocity from the USSR.

Carter shared the conviction toward improving the US-Soviet relationship. In a letter to Brezhnev in January 1977, Carter assured the Soviets that “it is my goal to improve relations with the Soviet Union on the basis of reciprocity, mutual respect and benefit” (reproduced in Brzezinski, 1983: 151-152). Carter identified several areas in which the US and the Soviets could cooperate to reduce the risk of nuclear proliferation: 1) conclusion of SALT; 2) comprehensive ban on nuclear tests; and 3) renewed effort to move forward on the Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR). In addition, the President informed Brezhnev that he believed the Soviets could contribute to promoting a peaceful settlement in the Middle Eastern and Southern African disputes (Brzezinski, 1983).

¹²⁰ Several authors have claimed that the US and the USSR had different understanding of the concept of détente (c.f., Garthoff, 1985; Vance, 1983; Westad, 1997). For the Soviets, détente was proof of Western recognition and acceptance of its global power. In particular, there was no contradiction between cooperation with the US and the global promotion of revolutionary socialism. From this perspective, détente did not hold back the revolutionary tide of history. On the contrary, revolutionary change could proceed with less risk of sparking a devastating military confrontation with the West.

However, while advancing US-Soviet relations was important for the newly elected Administration, the main focus was on improving relations with other Western powers and, in particular, with the Third World (Garthoff, 1985). According to the Administrations top foreign policy officials, the world had changed drastically during the previous two decades. Issues and regions that were once at the periphery of international politics were now at centre stage. For the Carter Administration, the world was increasingly pluralistic and interconnected and the US could not afford to evade these new international challenges. According to Vance (1983: 24), “the polarized world of the 1950s, already giving way to diversity and diffusion of power in the 1960s, became the interdependent, multipolar world of the 1970s”. Therefore, the traditional East-West geopolitical frame of reference was ill-suited for dealing with the new challenges facing the Administration.

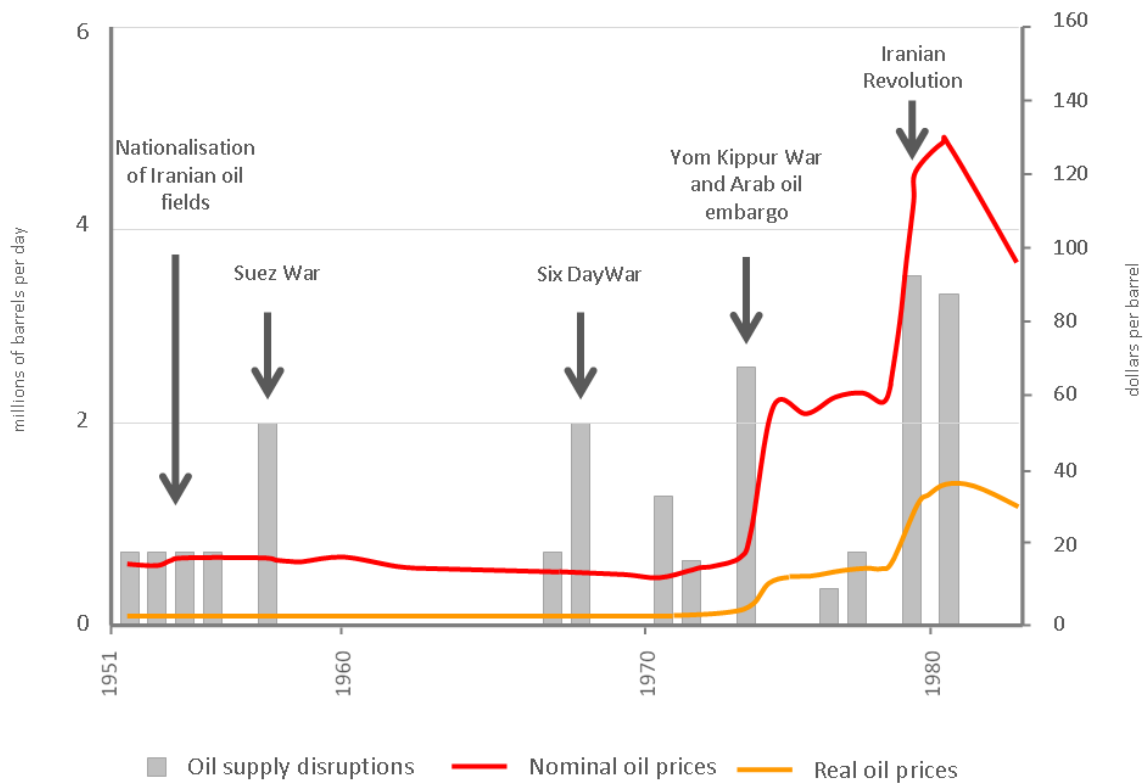
In this new worldview, the Carter Administration placed considerable importance on the Middle East. Events occurring early on in the decade revealed the need for greater American engagement with the region – e.g., 1973 Arab-Israeli War, Arab oil embargo, and escalation of OPEC oil prices. The 1973 Arab-Israeli War (a.k.a., Yom Kippur War and/or October War) marked a significant transformation in the relationship between the US and the Middle Eastern states, principally the Arab states. As a response to American military support to Israel, the Arab states decided to use oil as a political and economic weapon against the US and the West. Despite initial reluctance from the Saudis, delegates of several Arab states unilaterally decided to raise oil prices and gradually reduce production in order to pressure the Western powers¹²¹. Furthermore, after the announcement of the \$2,2 billion US military aid package to Israel, several Arab countries decided to cut-off all shipments of oil to the US. Whereas in the past the US had been able to increase its domestic oil production to counter such shortages, the US was now already producing at full capacity, leaving America in a difficult position¹²² (Yergin, 1991).

¹²¹ The countries were Abu Dhabi, Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Syria.

¹²² What has usually been termed as the "Arab oil embargo" consisted, in fact, of two distinct elements: the first involved the ongoing production restraints that affected the whole of the international market – i.e., the initial cutbacks and the supplementary cuts of five percent each month. The second element consisted in the total ban on the export of oil. This was initially limited to the US and the Netherlands, but was then extended to include Portugal, Rhodesia, and South Africa (Yergin, 1991).

As a result, oil prices escalated fourfold, i.e., from \$2,50 to \$10 a barrel (Stanislaw and Yergin, 1993). The reductions in oil supplies had a massive impact on the global economy, particularly those of the Western industrialised nations. In these countries the percentages of the gross national product (GNP) dedicated to energy supplies were largely accountable for the soaring unemployment¹²³ and inflation¹²⁴ rates verified throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Kupchan, 1987). Therefore, the Middle Eastern oil producing states had finally acquired substantial leverage over the US and the West¹²⁵ (Figure 17).

FIGURE 17 - MAJOR MIDDLE EAST OIL SUPPLY DISRUPTIONS AND PRICE IMPACT



(Source: adapted from Luciani, 2011: 4)

¹²³ Following the 1973 oil shock, the average unemployment rate among OECD members augmented from 3,5% to 5,5% (Kupchan, 1987).

¹²⁴ The average inflation rate among OECD members rose from 5% to 13% after the 1973 oil shock (Kupchan, 1987).

¹²⁵ The US was dependent on Gulf oil for only about 7-9% of its energy supply. Accordingly, the main threat was to American allies, particularly Western Europe and Japan, whose economic vitality was entirely dependent on the energy supplies from the Middle East region (Kupchan, 1997).

In fact, the 1970s were the pinnacle of oil nationalism which threatened “to be the beginning of the ‘new international order’, a zero-sum game that would see a wholesale redistribution of wealth from the North to the South and a diminution of the international stature of the United States and the other major industrial powers” (Stanislaw and Yergin, 1993:81). Official documents and statements contributed to this belief. For instance, a CIA report¹²⁶ released in April 1977 claimed that, due to the constrain of OPECs potential and the imminent peak of Soviet production, the increase in global oil demand was quickly outpacing production and oil would soon be a rare and very expensive commodity (Maugeri, 2006).

Equally important, the 1973 War also promoted greater cohesion among the Arab states. The hostilities against Israel ameliorated the differences between the more moderate and radical Arab regimes. According to Kupchan there were two complementary factors catalysing Arab unity:

First, the war served to subordinate political divisions among Arab states to a greater pan-Arab cause. Egypt was in a precarious position because of the proximity of Israeli troops in the Sinai. While the Syrians bristled over the Israeli presence in the Golan Heights, the war intensified pan-Arab anger over Israel’s occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. (...) The second source of cohesion follows from the fact that shared political objectives led to greater communication and cooperation among Arab states after the war. (...) The Arab states recognized that they had sufficient will and political power to take collective action against the West. (Kupchan, 1987: 45)

This newfound unity was particularly alarming for US decision-makers considering the fact that in the 1970s the Arab OPEC countries controlled over 50 percent of world crude oil production (Maugeri, 2006). The concern over the possibility of losing access to the regions natural resources were such that in 1974 and 1975 there was considerable speculation about a possible US military intervention to secure access to the oil producing areas. As a matter of fact, during this period, American military planners did conduct

¹²⁶ The report was titled *The International Energy Situation: Outlook to 1985*.

several preliminary studies regarding the various options in case of an Arab oil cut-off to the Western powers (Palmer, 1999).

The Yom Kippur War also highlighted the potential danger of escalating the conflict to the superpower rivalry. Some researchers have considered it to have possibly been the most serious international crisis that Nixon faced during his Presidency due to the “potential to draw the United States and the USSR into a wider war” (Dallek, 2007: 520). The commitment to supply their client states with the military means needed to triumph on the battlefield ultimately brought the two superpowers to the brink of a direct military confrontation (Brown, 1994; Khalidi, 2009).

This series of events revealed a host of potential risks to American interests and security and placed the Middle East at the centre of the Administrations’ mental maps. Above all, the use of the oil weapon altered American perceptions of its vulnerability and the threats emanating from the region. Tackling the sources of regional conflict was thus essential for securing US interests. Therefore, the US would adopt a more active role in the Middle East¹²⁷.

The Carter Administration’s goals for the Middle East were ambitious and demanding¹²⁸. Carter acknowledged this challenge in his Address to United Nations General Assembly on 04 October, 1977:

Of all the regional conflicts in the world, none holds more menace than the Middle East. War there has already carried the world to the edge of nuclear confrontation. It has already

¹²⁷ For instance, the oil embargo led the US to rely less on international oil companies as had been custom and have a more assertive role in interacting with the regimes of the region. Accordingly, in 1974 the US dispatched ambassadors to Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (Kupchan, 1987).

¹²⁸ According to Brzezinski the aims of the Administrations Middle East policy were: “To ensure the security of Israel by providing very substantial levels of military assistance and by promoting a negotiated peace settlement; To contain Soviet influence, while at the same time working to prevent situations that could lead to confrontation; To ensure a reliable supply of oil from the Middle East for ourselves and our allies, without excessively rapid price escalation”. The means to best secure these objectives were “Strengthening our bilateral security relations with key countries such as Israel, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Iran; actively promoting an Arab-Israeli peace settlement under our auspices; preventing the emergence of a cohesive pro-Soviet radical bloc by keeping lines out to Syria, Algeria, and moderate Palestinians; promoting and energy policy which would rely on high prices to expand production, reduce demand, and encourage substitute forms of energy in order to lessen our long-term dependence on Middle East oil” (Brzezinski to Carter, 24/11/1978: 1).

disrupted the world economy and imposed severe hardships on the people in the developed and the developing nations alike. (Carter, 1977)

This concern with the Middle East had been present since before Carter assumed the Presidency. As early as January 1976 Brzezinski and Richard Gardner¹²⁹ submitted a memo to candidate Carter proposing a foreign policy framework which emphasised greater cooperation with Third World countries (Brzezinski, 1983). Subsequently, Carter requested that Brzezinski, Gardner, and Henry Owen¹³⁰ develop a joint foreign policy paper for the transition period. This paper was used in the Administration's first informal discussion on international affairs on 05 January, 1977 which decided to move quickly to conclude the Panama Canal Treaties and pursue negotiations on the Middle East conflict. As Brzezinski (1983: 51) recalls, "both Panama and the Middle East emerged as our immediate tangible priorities".

On 30 April, 1977, after discussing the issues with Vance, Brzezinski worked with Samuel Huntington and reviewed the transition memo and delivered a briefing book for Carter defining the goals for a "constructive global engagement". The 43 page briefing book identified ten goals and outlined the steps to achieve them. The sixth goal focused on the Middle East and called for "a comprehensive Middle East settlement, without which the further radicalization of the Arab world and the re-entry of the Soviet Union into the Middle East could not be avoided" (Brzezinski, 1983: 54).

During the early-fall of 1976 Vance also submitted a memorandum titled *Overview of Foreign Policy Issues and Positions* to candidate Carter setting out the goals and priorities for Carter's foreign policies. Of the many regional and functional issues identified in the memo, Vance (1983: 447) stressed that the US has "a vital interest in the maintenance of peace in the Middle East". Therefore, the US should seek to ensure the independence and security of Israel, guarantee American and its ally's needs of Middle Eastern oil, maintain friendly and cooperative relations with Arab states and Iran, and reduce the risk of military confrontation with the Soviets in the region.

¹²⁹ Columbia University professor and early Carter supporter.

¹³⁰ Former Head of the State Department Policy Planning Council.

Carter (1982) shared his advisor's views on the importance of engaging the Middle East. Therefore, when planning his policies, amongst the many studies commissioned, a PRM on the Middle East (i.e., PRM-3) figured in the lot¹³¹. Above all, Carter believed it was possible to move towards a comprehensive peace settlement in the region (Princen, 1991).

9.1) In Search of a Comprehensive Peace

Despite the recommendation from many of his closest advisors to stay clear of the issues relating to the Middle East, since assuming the Presidency Carter (1982) was convinced that a stable and peaceful Middle East was advantageous to American interests. Above all, there was a general conviction within the Carter Administration that the time was appropriate for a comprehensive peace settlement in the region (Brzezinski, 1983; Carter, 1982). As Quandt (1986a: 4) has revealed, “[a]lthough Carter did not have to deal with the Arab-Israeli conflict as an actual crisis, he was aware it quickly could become one”. In fact, the prolonged stalemate that existed in the region could quickly erode, involving the US once again in the conflict, with damaging consequences for American interests at home and abroad.

While recognising US power was waning, the Administration believed it maintained an advantage over the Soviets in dealing with the Third World. In particular, the Carter Administration believed that the changes in the Third World in 1977 were not the result of Soviet initiatives. In reality, with the exception of Ethiopia, the USSR seemed to have suffered several setbacks in the Third World¹³² (Garthoff, 1985).

Nevertheless, while constructively engaging the Middle Eastern conflict was a high priority for Carter, the Administration initially lacked a clear plan for dealing with the multiple challenges. Rather, “[w]hat the President carried with him were perceptions of

¹³¹ PRM-3 was commissioned on 21 January, 1977. However, the document has not yet been reviewed for release or release has been denied in full.

¹³² e.g., the Sudanese expulsion of the Soviets, the North Yemen turn toward the West, the UNITA rebellion against Soviet and Cuban forces in Angola, Pakistan's move towards the West with General Zia, and Afghanistan and India's move toward the non-aligned camp.

the problem and a predisposition to be an activist in trying to find a solution” (Quandt, 1986a: 30). Carter’s understanding of the situation, in particular, was influenced by the 1973 War and its effects on the US and global economy (Quandt, 1986a). He was adamant in not allowing the situation to harm US interests again. As a matter of fact, Carter’s Middle East strategy was to be highly associated with his domestic energy policy (Quandt, 1986a).

However, the President’s strategy for dealing with the Middle East conflict resulted from his interaction with his key-foreign policy advisors. Both Vance and Brzezinski shared a common vision on the nature of the Middle East peace process, namely favouring an urgent comprehensive settlement which placed great emphasis on solving the Palestinian issue (Brzezinski, 1983; Quandt, 1986a; Vance 1983). Many of the assumptions underlying the Administration’s initial outlook resulted from the project on peace in the Middle East sponsored by the Brookings Institution (Brzezinski, 1983). The report recommended a constructive US role in promoting a broadly supported settlement framed by a series of consensual principles between Arabs and Israelis. This proposal resulted from the report’s five main conclusions:

1. *US interests.* The United States has a strong, moral, political, and economic interest in a stable peace in the Middle East. (...)
2. *Urgency.* Whatever the merits of the interim agreement on Sinai, it still leaves the basic elements of the Arab-Israeli dispute substantially untouched. Unless these elements are soon addressed, rising tensions in the area will generate increased risk of violence. (...)
3. *Process.* We believe that the time has come to begin a process of negotiating such a settlement among the parties, either at a general conference or at more informal multilateral meetings. (...)
4. *Settlement.* A fair and enduring settlement should contain at least these elements as an integrated package:
 - a) *Security.* All parties to the settlement commit themselves to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the others and to refrain from the threat or use of force against them.

b) *Stages*. Withdrawal to agreed boundaries and the establishment of peaceful relations carried out in stages over a period of years, each stage being undertaken only when the agreed provisions of the previous stage have been faithfully implemented.

c) *Peaceful relations*. The Arab parties undertake not only to end such hostile actions against Israel as armed incursions, blockades, boycotts, and propaganda attacks, but also to give evidence of progress toward the development of normal international and regional political and economic relations.

d) *Boundaries*. Israel undertakes to withdraw by agreed stages to the June 5, 1967, lines, with only such modifications as are mutually accepted. (...)

e) *Palestine*. There should be provision for Palestinian self-determination, subject to Palestinian acceptance of the sovereignty and integrity of Israel within agreed boundaries. This might take the form either of an independent Palestine state accepting the obligations and commitments of the peace agreements or of a Palestine entity voluntarily federated with Jordan but exercising extensive political autonomy.

f) *Jerusalem*. The report suggests no specific solution for the particularly difficult problem of Jerusalem but recommends that, whatever the solution may be, it meet as a minimum the following criteria:

- there should be unimpeded access to all of the holy places and each should be under the custodianship of its own faith;
- there should be no barriers dividing the city which would prevent free circulation throughout it; and
- each national group within the city should, if it so desires, have substantial political autonomy within the area where it predominates.

g) *Guarantees*. It would be desirable that the UN Security Council endorse the peace agreements and take whatever other actions to support them the agreements provide. (...)

5. *US role*. The governments directly concerned bear the responsibility of negotiation and agreement, but they are unlikely to be able to reach an agreement alone. Initiative, impetus, and inducement may well have to come from outside. The United States, because it enjoys a measure of confidence of parties on both sides and has the means to assist them economically and militarily, remains the great power best fitted to work actively with them in bringing about a settlement (...) In all of this, the United States should work with the

USSR to the degree that Soviet willingness to play a constructive role will permit. (reproduced in Brzezinski, 1983: 85-86)

The conclusions and recommendations of the Brookings Report coincided with many of the features of the Carter Administration's initial approach to the Middle East conflict. To begin with, the foreign policy officials in the Administration all agreed that there was a sense of urgency in re-engaging the situation in the Middle East. The peace process had been stalled since 1976. Even the outgoing Ford Administration alerted to the need to act in a series of transition papers that the State Department and NSC staff passed on to the incoming Carter Administration (Quandt, 1986a). The papers all emphasised the unstable status quo in the Middle East which could lead to a renewed confrontation at any time. The need to act promptly was also reinforced by the belief in a favourable moderate Arab coalition which could be engaged in reaching a comprehensive settlement. Moreover, the American foreign policy-making establishment was prepared to advance, meaning the new President "could expect to find a bureaucracy that would happily follow him in the activist course he had already decided on and that would be able to keep abreast of the complex twists and turns of Middle East politics" (Quandt, 1986a: 37).

In addition, the Palestinian issue was of central concern to the Carter Administration. Since the outset, Carter (1982: 276) recognised that "for the Arab world the Palestinian issue was of transcendent importance". Yet, for Carter, tackling the Palestinian problem was more than a strategy for enlisting Arab cooperation. Carter's strong moralistic fervour made him empathise with the plight of the Palestinian people: "Since I had made our nation's commitment to human rights a central tenet of our foreign policy, it was impossible for me to ignore the very serious problems on the West Bank" (Carter, 1982: 277). The Secretary of State (Vance, 1983) and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (Brzezinski, 1983) were equally attuned to the intricacies of the subject and committed to solving the Palestinian problem.

At this point in time, the Soviet Union was also considered a key-partner for dealing with the Middle East conflict. Since late-1976 Vance had advised Carter on the need to involve the Soviets in any initiatives dealing with resolving the conflict. While

acknowledging the need for the US to take the lead in the process, Vance (1983) suggested that Soviet interests in the Middle East and its leverage over several regional actors would provide an incentive for its cooperation. Brzezinski (1983: 112) agreed in involving the Soviets in a comprehensive peace settlement, but argued that it should play a more secondary role, especially in the initial stage, because it “precipitates conservative fears, particularly from the Saudis and Egyptians, and is also not popular in this country”.

Brzezinski’s evaluation had merit considering the concerns of some Arab states with increased Soviet involvement in the region. According to Odom (2006: 55-56), many American allies in the Middle East were concerned that the US would gradually disengage from the region creating an opportunity for increased Soviet involvement and activity in the region (Odom, 2006). Several events during the first half of Carter Administration contributed to augment this concern – e.g., the Ethiopian turn towards the Soviets, a Communist coup in South Yemen, and the Communist rise to power in Afghanistan. In effect, several Arab states had been active in preparing the stage for a renewed US commitment to achieving a settlement to the Middle East conflict. For example, the Saudis were particularly energetic in trying to mend relations between Egypt’s Sadat and Syria’s Al-Assad. Furthermore, the Saudi regime also informed the Carter Administration that if it the US worked constructively toward settling the Arab-Israeli conflict it would work to try to maintain oil prices from rising (Quandt, 1986a).

Accordingly, in late-January and February 1977, the Administration started formulating its approach to the Middle East conflict. After an informal meeting on 30 January, involving the President, Vance, Brzezinski, and Young, and a formal PRC meeting chaired by Vance on 04 February, it was “agreed that the peace initiative in the Middle East was of the highest importance” (Brzezinski, 1983: 86). The PRC meeting discussed three issues pertaining to the Middle East: 1) aid to Israel; 2) the Arab boycott of Israel; and 3) the general strategy for Arab-Israeli negotiations (Quandt, 1986a). The topic that dominated the session focused on the negotiations between the Arabs and Israelis. Brzezinski dominated the discussion and, echoing the recommendations from the Brookings Institution report, argued that the US should try to obtain a consensus on broad principles which could be subsequently implemented in stages (Quandt, 1986a). In

particular, Brzezinski (1983: 86) recommended that the US should seek to attain a “clear definition of the Arab commitment to peace, that we should get the parties to recognize the distinction between secure defense lines and final borders, and that our objective would be to obtain an agreed set of principles before actually convening the Geneva Conference”. Although the Palestinian question was not analysed thoroughly, all the participants agreed that it would need to be addressed in the future. While Brzezinski and Vance disagreed on the timing of the Geneva conference and the level of Soviet involvement¹³³, all present shared the idea that “1977 was a propitious year to work for Middle East peace and that the United States should aim for a comprehensive agreement on general principles rather than concentrate only on small steps as Kissinger had done” (Quandt, 1986a: 40).

At a NSC meeting held on 23 February, 1977, Brzezinski reiterated the need to achieve a substantive agreement prior to holding the Geneva Conference or face the risk of multilateral negotiations breaking down and the Soviets exploiting the situation to their advantage (Brzezinski, 1983). Additionally, Brzezinski (1983: 88) informed Carter on several occasions that the US had to politically pressure Israel in order to undo the impasse in negotiations: “Israeli internal politics were so stalemated that no Israeli politician could take the responsibility for advocating a genuine compromise unless he could make also the added argument that otherwise US-Israeli relations would suffer”.

In light of the initial discussions and interactions within the Administration’s foreign policy team, Vance was designated to travel to the Middle East in February to talk to the multiple regional actors and try to jump-start the peace process¹³⁴. Before Vance could leave, the policy review study assigned to the NSC delineating a consensus in the Administration’s objectives was hastened. The resulting study offered two alternative strategies for the Administration to consider (Vance, 1983). The first strategy called for a “damage-limiting” approach in which, due to the high risk of political failure,

¹³³ Vance believed that the Geneva Conference should be held as soon as possible and the Soviets should be brought in at an early stage. In contrast, Brzezinski believed that the conference should only be organised to complete a previously arranged agreement and the Soviets should only be brought in during a later period of the process.

¹³⁴ The decision to send Vance to the Middle East in February was made by Carter even before taking office (Vance 1983).

recommended minimal US involvement. The second strategy assumed a more activist approach where the US would carry the initiative for promptly reviving the negotiation process. However, the study alerted to the strains that the activist approach would generate with Israel and Arabs. For instance, due to domestic Israeli politics, a comprehensive settlement was likely to create significant resistance. Therefore, an incremental process which would cumulatively deal with specific operational issues could eventually lead to a change in Israeli positions while simultaneously assuring them that the process could be controlled. On the Arab side, the study warned, a full peace with Israel, involving secure and open borders and economic and political relations would also create significant opposition.

Therefore, the issue was whether the Administration should work to help achieve a partial or comprehensive settlement to the Middle East conflict. The interagency debate settled on the latter objective:

The decision to seek a comprehensive settlement dictated our first goal of getting the parties to agree to reconvene the Geneva conference on Middle East peace, which had been dormant since December 1973. This seemed within reach on the Arab side – at least in principle – since Egypt, Syria, and Jordan tended to equate a Geneva conference with negotiation of a comprehensive settlement. To the Arabs, a comprehensive settlement meant a resolution of the Palestinian question as well as the return of the occupied territories. The greatest difficulty was that Israel preferred to negotiate individually with each Arab state in order to obtain separate settlements. This was not acceptable to most of the Arabs, who saw strength in Arab unity. (Vance, 1983: 166)

Despite the establishment of a consensual objective in the Carter Administration, many issues remained undefined, any of which could potentially derail the peace initiative. On returning from his eight-day trip to the Middle East, Vance identified four fundamental issues which had to be dealt with before any settlement could be

achieved¹³⁵ (Vance, 1983: 168-171): 1) the nature of the peace; 2) boundaries; 3) Palestinian issues; and 4) procedures.

The nature of the peace varied in accordance with the parties. For Israel, peace implied more than the absence of war; it meant normalisation of relations with the Arab states, open borders, and the recognition of Israel as a legitimate state on the part of the Arabs. Arab leaders were more reserved regarding normalisation. While Sadat showed greater flexibility in admitting that normal relations would tend to develop over time, Al-Assad stated he would not accept a full peace, i.e., anything more than peaceful coexistence. King Hussein of Jordan followed suit and did not commit to any thing more than the intention to end the state of belligerency.

The issue of borders brought to the fore the different conceptions of sovereignty and security. The Arab states demanded that Israel withdraw to the 1967 lines, i.e., prior to the Six Day War (Figure 18). Sadat and Hussein were open to some minor modifications in the previous borders, particularly in the West Bank. However, Rabin informed the US that, while Israel would negotiate its borders, it would not return to the 1967 lines. The main problem regarding borders for Israel was not sovereignty, but rather security. This meant that for Israel to be secure, Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) would have to be present, since Israel did not consider US or other international security guarantees to be sufficient. In addition, for Israel, the status of Jerusalem was not negotiable.

The Palestinian issue would reveal itself to be the most complex and antagonistic. After the initial talks, Rabin informed the US that Israel would never accept an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. He argued that before 1967, when the Arabs controlled the West Bank and Gaza and had the opportunity, they had not moved toward creating any independent Palestinian state. He would, however, consider accepting negotiations with Jordan on the West Bank, without being any more specific. Most of the Arab countries acknowledged the possibility of a Palestinian entity

¹³⁵ Secretary of State Vance's eight-day trip began on 14 February, 1977, and he visited Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Syria.

without full and independent statehood¹³⁶. Nevertheless, all of them were unyielding in their commitment that a comprehensive settlement must settle the Palestinian issue.

Procedural issues involving the Geneva Conference also revealed many different interpretations. Israel was categorical in refusing formal PLO participation in the conference. Nor would it accept any formal PLO representative¹³⁷. While all the Arab states defended Palestinian participation, they differed as to how they should be represented. The Egyptian President suggested that the Palestinians could be represented either by the United Nations, an Egyptian general heading the joint-military Arab command, or included in delegation of the Arab League. For Al-Assad, it was essential that the PLO be represented in the conference in order to commit them to the final agreement. The specific form of the PLO representation was secondary to the Syrian leader. In keeping with the decisions of the 1974 Arab League Summit in Rabat which recognised the PLO as the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, Hussein argued that the Palestinians could not be part of the Jordanian delegation. As an alternative, the Palestinians should be included in a single Arab delegation composed also of representatives from Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. Meanwhile, information was received that the PLO also demanded a separate delegation for themselves. Further differences on procedural issues were related to the format of the negotiations. While Begin and Sadat held on to the idea of a bilateral approach to the negotiations, Al-Assad and Hussein insisted on a single Arab negotiating delegation.

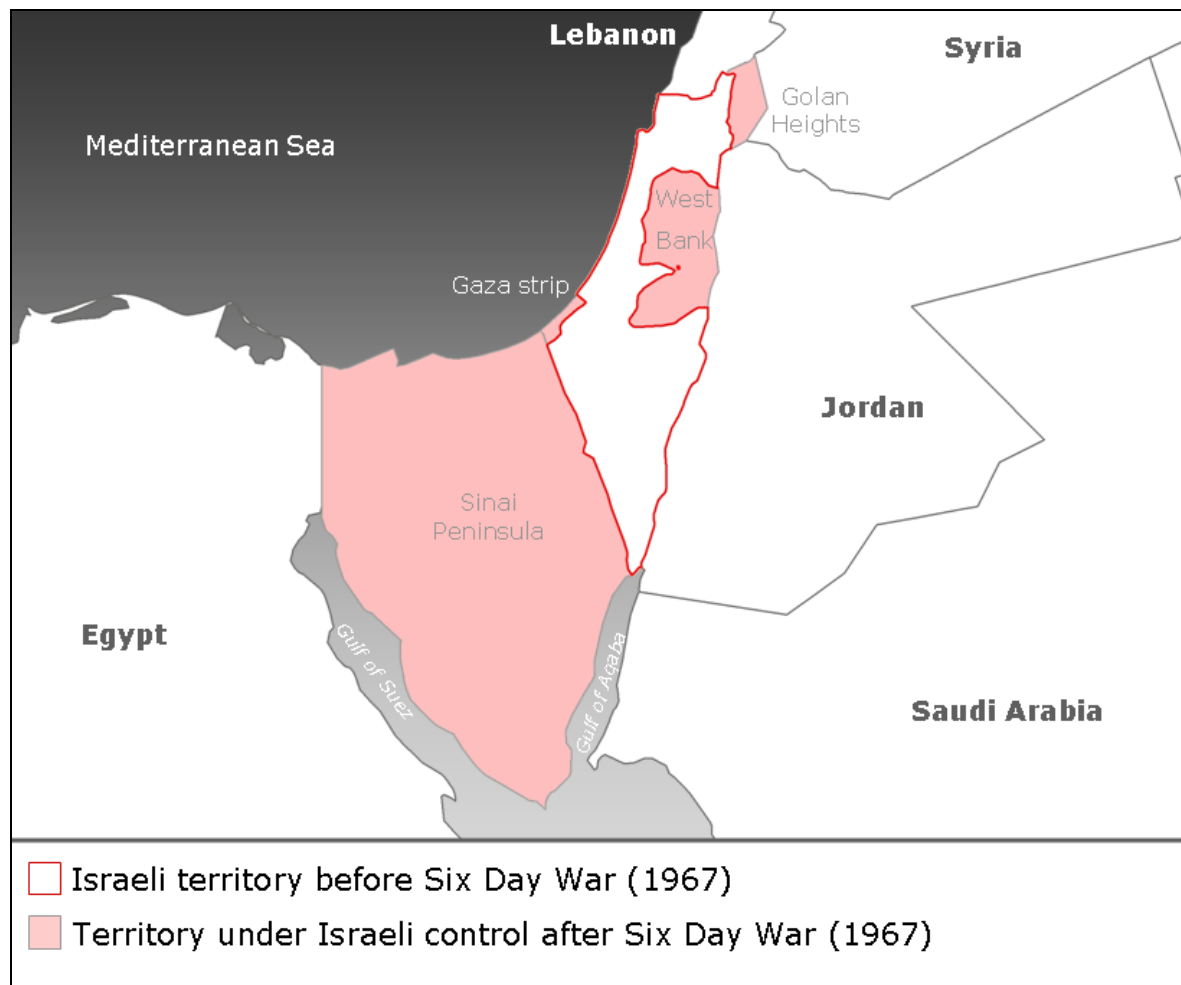
While these issues certainly attested to the challenges facing a comprehensive peace settlement, Administration officials were confident that progress was possible and the Geneva Conference could be convened before the end of the year (Vance, 1983). Therefore, in order to advance the process, the Administration started preparing for the meetings between President Carter and the Arab and Israeli leaders as planned during a

¹³⁶ According to Vance (1983), Sadat envisioned a Palestinian state constitutionally linked to Jordan. Hussein was less precise and did not present any formal solution, but Vance believed that he favoured some kind of federation or confederation between Jordan and a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. Al-Assad, for his part, was also open to consider a solution other than an independent state for the Palestinians due to Syria's clash with the PLO in Lebanon. He also did not specify the arrangement he preferred, stating that he would accept whatever the Palestinians would accept.

¹³⁷ Rabin did indicate, however, that Israel would not inspect the credentials of the Jordanian delegation, leading Vance (1983) to believe that Israel would tolerate Palestinians among the delegation from Jordan.

February PRC meeting. The meetings with Carter continued to be of an exploratory nature whereby the Administration sought to better understand the positions of the different parties on a host of different topics – e.g., Arab receptiveness to Israeli request for normalisation, Israeli willingness and conditions for withdrawing to the 1967 borders, acceptance for a solution to the Palestinian problems, and flexibility on procedural issues (Vance, 1983).

FIGURE 18 – ISRAELI TERRITORY AFTER THE SIX DAY WAR (1967)



(Source: adapted from Anderson and Anderson, 2010: 236)

In the early spring of 1977 a new round of meetings was initiated in Washington. The first such meeting was in March with Rabin. All the key-issues were covered (Quandt, 1986a). In particular, Carter pressed Rabin on peace, borders, and the Palestinian problem. Rabin informed Carter that peace could be obtained with Egypt since Israel was

willing to return most of the territories in the Sinai¹³⁸. However, Israel did not want to return the Golan Heights and was adamant in not withdrawing completely from the West Bank. While claiming the Palestinian problem was not the crucial issue, Rabin conceded that Israel acknowledged the situation and it required an honourable solution. Nonetheless, he reiterated that Israel would not accept an independent Palestinian state. Carter also discussed for the first time the Israeli settlements in occupied territory and stated that the US considered them illegal. According to most accounts, the meeting produced very little progress in relation to the previous discussion which had occurred with Vance in Israel (Brzezinski, 1983; Carter, 1982; Vance, 1983).

On 04 April, 1977, Carter received Sadat in Washington. After the disappointing meeting with Rabin, the meeting with Sadat renewed Carter's (1982) optimism that a compromise could be achieved. Sadat had already demonstrated his willingness to negotiate with Israel, using the US as an intermediary, in the past. More precisely, Egypt had celebrated the Sinai Interim Agreement (a.k.a., Sinai II Agreement) in 1975 (Safty, 1991). Once again, in his meeting with Carter, Sadat revealed significant flexibility in search of reaching a quick settlement. Sadat wanted the US to make an initial settlement proposal as it had done in the past. In order to assist the US, Sadat informed Carter of the concessions Egypt was willing to make as a means for the US to obtain concessions in the negotiations with Israel (Quandt, 1986a). Particularly important, Sadat told Carter (1982: 283) that he would accept "some minimal deviation from the 1967 borders" if Israel withdrew from the occupied territories. Additionally, accepting Israeli concerns over security arrangements for withdrawing, he stated he would not object to a US-Israeli defence pact. The only issues on which Sadat was inflexible were on the need to remove all Israeli forces on Egyptian territory after the agreement and on the complete opening of borders (Quandt, 1986a). Moreover, Sadat wanted all the negotiations to be completed before the Geneva Conference; this would simply be a forum for signing the final agreements.

¹³⁸ Regarding the Sinai, Rabin said that Israel wanted to maintain control over the outposts of Sharm al-Sheikh, though there was no need for Israeli sovereignty, in addition to a land connection (Quandt, 1986a).

The PRC convened on 19 April, 1977, to prepare the upcoming meetings with the other Arab leaders (Quandt, 1986a). Convening the Geneva Conference until the end of the year remained a high priority for the Administration. The US would continue to work to obtain as much agreement as possible on general principles between the parties before the conference. Two original ideas surfaced in the meeting regarding the Palestinian issue. The first was the possibility of organising a referendum to determine the future of the West Bank. The second idea focused on getting the PLO to accept UN Resolution 242 with the proviso that the reference to the refugee problem did not adequately deal with the Palestinian question.

In the subsequent weeks, Carter met with Hussein in Washington and Al-Assad in Geneva. Both leaders reiterated their previous positions and showed willingness to proceed with a comprehensive settlement although very little new progress was achieved (Vance, 1983). King Hussein also acknowledged the possibility of minor border modifications if Israel agreed to withdraw to the 1967 borders. Hussein stressed the importance of the Palestinian issue and discussed possible links between Jordan and a future Palestinian entity in the West Bank and Gaza. Reflecting Sadat, Hussein requested that the US put forward a framework for negotiations which would include proposals for steering negotiations. On 09 May, 1977, Al-Assad also restated the Syrian position, emphasising the need to resolve the Palestinian problem. The possibility of the PLO accepting UN Resolution 242 was also discussed and Al-Assad admitted it depended on what the PLO could receive in return (Vance, 1983).

Finally, on 24 May, 1977, Carter received the Saudi delegation headed by Crown Prince Fahd. The Saudis told Carter that the current moment was auspicious for reaching a comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict (Vance, 1983). According to Fahd, there was a deep desire in the Arab states for achieving peace. The Arabs, he argued, accepted the Israeli need for assurances of its existence and independence. Nevertheless, the Palestinians must have a home of their own in the West Bank and Gaza. Contrary to other Arab states, Fahd informed Carter that Saudi Arabia strongly supported an independent Palestinian state and was convinced that no Arab state would agree to an association between a Palestinian state and Jordan (Vance, 1983).

The initial meetings provided Carter and his Administration with a general outline of the challenges involved in achieving a settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict and a framework for action. In particular, three requirements had to be met:

First, peace should entail normal relations, such as exchange of ambassadors, trade, open borders, tourism, and regional economic cooperation. An end to the state of belligerency would not be enough in his [Carter's] view to convince the Israelis to make concessions. (...) Second on the president's agenda was the need for borders that would be recognized and arrangements for security that might go beyond the borders. (...) [Third] Carter took the lead in articulating a new position for the United States on the Palestinian question, calling for the creation of a "homeland" for the refugees. (Quandt, 1986a: 59-60)

Moreover, after his initial round of meetings, Carter (1982: 288) was optimistic: "After meeting with these key Arab leaders, I was convinced that all of them were ready for a strong move on our part to find solutions to the long-standing disputes and that with such solutions would come their recognition of Israel and the right of Israelis to live in peace".

However, the election of Menachem Begin as Israel's new Prime Minister in June 1977 compelled the Administration to reassess its Middle East strategy (Brzezinski, 1983; Quandt, 1986a). Begin's hard-line views presented a challenge to the Carter Administration's political strength and negotiating capability. Since the beginning of his political career Begin subscribed to a vision of Eretz Israel, i.e., a Greater Israel, encompassing Palestine and Transjordan (Quandt, 1986a; Shlaim, 2001). For historical and religious reasons, Begin was particularly steadfast in maintaining Israeli control over Judea and Samaria, i.e., the West Bank. This outlook was confirmed in the memorandum written by Carter's staff in early-June outlining the key ideas of the Likud coalition programme. The memo referenced the intention of the new Israeli government to increase the construction of new defensive and permanent settlements, as well as its willingness to participate in the Geneva Conference, but without preconditions and externally imposed prescriptions (Quandt, 1986a).

After Begin's election, Carter invited him to Washington to discuss the peace process. In June 1977 the PRC outlined the Administration's strategy for the upcoming

visit in the following months (Vance, 1983). In order to advance the settlement, the Secretary of State would return to the Middle East to offer an American proposal for resolving procedural issues and achieving an agreement on general principles for framing negotiations. Brzezinski stressed that the Administration should press Begin on clarifying his interpretation of Resolution 242, namely confirming the Israeli commitment to the “territory for peace” formula, and agreeing to suspend settlement activity in the occupied territories (Quandt, 1986a). Consequently, the State Department released a text on the general American view on a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East which highlighted the US pledge to an agreement based on the principles of Resolution 242, meaning “withdrawal from all the three fronts in the Middle East dispute – that is, Sinai, Golan, West Bank and Gaza” (quoted in Quandt, 1986a: 73).

In July the PRC convened again to develop the substance of the American proposal. Vance took the lead and defined a group of seven draft principles and four procedural alternatives. The issue of Israeli withdrawal was consistent with the view previously advocated by the State Department. In particular, point four proposed that “the withdrawal called for in Resolution 242 will be to mutually agreed and recognized borders which will approximate the 1967 lines, with minor modifications” (Quandt, 1986a: 74). Also, the Palestinian problem was addressed in point five stating that “Means shall be sought to permit self-determination by the Palestinians in deciding on their future status, as through a transitional international trusteeship during which their desires can be formulated and expressed”¹³⁹ (reproduced in Quandt, 1986a: 74). The procedural proposals varied essentially due to the question of Palestinian participation in the Geneva Conference (Quandt, 1986a). One scheme foresaw Palestinian representatives – including elements of the PLO – as part of a unified Arab delegation. A second proposal admitted a separate Palestinian delegation if the PLO accepted Resolution 242. The third alternative was to include Palestinian representatives in other Arab delegations. Lastly, a Palestinian delegation would previously be accepted by the parties involved and would be called in when the Palestinian issue was discussed. These

¹³⁹ In the minutes of the meeting Carter suggested a revision of this point, preferring rather a reference to a “Palestinian-Jordanian affiliation” (Quandt, 1986a: 74).

principles were revised in a ensuing PRC meeting and it was decided that the principles focusing on the 1967 borders and the Palestinian-Jordanian would not be mentioned to Begin in the upcoming meeting (Quandt, 1986a).

During Carter's first encounter with the new Israeli Prime Minister, in mid-July 1977, Begin told the President that he could agree with all the principles discussed, except for the creation of a sovereign Palestinian entity (Carter, 1982). Also, Begin declared that he was prepared to accept a single Arab delegation in the plenary session of the Geneva Conference, but wanted bilateral working committees. In Vance's (1983: 184) understanding, Begin "had, it seemed, accepted Resolutions 242 and 338 as the basis for negotiations, although he continued to insist this did not imply any prior Israeli commitment, such as withdrawal from occupied territories, in attending the conference". However, shortly after the meeting, Begin wrote to the Administration clarifying that while recognising that Resolution 242 applied to each front, this did not require withdrawal in each of them. Additionally, Begin wrote directly to Carter requesting that, in his upcoming meetings in the Middle East, Vance should not talk to Arab leaders about the issue of the 1976 borders with minor modifications (Quandt, 1986a; Vance, 1983).

The discussions throughout the summer of 1977 achieved little additional progress. In August, Vance returned to the Middle East. Of the many issues on the agenda, the Palestinian question deserved the most attention (Vance, 1983). In particular, the Carter Administration sought to urge the Arab leaders to convince the PLO to acknowledge Resolution 242. The Administration still believed it was essential that the Palestinians have some form of participation in the conference. However, Israel continued resolute in its opposition to withdrawal in the West Bank and Gaza and was very critical of US initiatives towards the PLO (Quandt, 1986a).

The Vance trip convinced the Administration to drop the idea of reaching an agreement on common principles before the Geneva conference (Brzezinski, 1983). From then on, direct negotiations would have to occur between the parties. The US would assume the role of mediator, but the different parties must begin interacting directly. Rather than a mere closing ceremony, Geneva was to become a forum for active negotiation. In view of this, all the parties committed themselves to presenting their

views so the Carter Administration could start developing “negotiating drafts”¹⁴⁰ (Quandt, 1986a).

However, several events hindered progress. The PLO’s recognition of Resolution 242 proved more complicated than the Administration initially expected. Moreover, the expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories and the Israeli military incursion into Lebanon also mired negotiations. The reports sent to Carter increasingly revealed a pessimistic outlook in reaching a comprehensive settlement (Brzezinski, 1983). Nevertheless, the Administration determinedly pushed forward on multiple fronts in the hope of capitalising on any opportunity which might arise. In the meantime, once it began receiving the treaty proposals from the different parties, the Carter Administration started developing the US compromise proposal which sought to assist in moving the negotiations toward a final arrangement (Quandt, 1986a).

In an effort to try to pressure the parties to move forward, primarily Syria and the PLO, Vance proposed bringing the Soviets into the process. After a meeting with the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andrei Gromyko, Vance (Vance to Carter, 01/10/1977) sent a telegram to Carter and Brzezinski informing that “Gromyko and I agreed during our meeting this morning on the text of a joint Soviet-US statement on the Middle East”. Carter (1982) also believed that the Soviets wanted a sustainable peace in the Middle East and therefore, on 01 October, 1977, a joint-US-Soviet statement was issued calling for the convening of the Geneva Peace Conference in order to achieve a just and lasting comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict (Vance to Carter, 01/10/1977).

The US-Soviet communiqué received mixed reactions. Arab leaders, such as Sadat, appreciated the gesture since it acknowledged the Palestinian issue and pressured the Syrians (Quandt, 1986a). However, the joint-statement was heavily criticised in the US and Israel. The language of the communiqué was immediately rejected by the Israelis and its supporters in the US. In addition, the majority of the domestic criticism condemned the Administration for restoring Soviet influence in the Middle East. As a result, Carter (1977) tried to reassure the Israelis that US policy remained unaltered by claiming that

¹⁴⁰ Israel and Egypt had agreed to present draft peace treaties to the Administration (Quandt, 1986a; Vance, 1983).

“The commitment of the United States to Israel's security is unquestionable” in his 04 October, 1977, address to the UN General Assembly. Moreover, in a series of meetings with Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan, the Carter Administration tried to overcome the confusion resulting from the US-Soviet communiqué and issued a US-Israeli joint-statement confirming that “Acceptance of the Joint US-USR Statement of 01 October, 1977, by the parties is not a prerequisite for the reconvening and conduct of the Geneva Conference” (reproduced in Quandt, 1986a: 130). Additionally, both sides committed themselves to developing a working paper¹⁴¹ resolving the procedural issues for the Geneva Conference. The result of these initiatives created suspicion among the Arabs: “Indeed, the impression was now created by these statements that we were prepared to collaborate more closely with the Israelis on matters involving Geneva, and this, in turn, generated increasing scepticism among the Arabs as to the likelihood of Geneva producing any constructive result” (Brzezinski, 1983: 109-110; c.f., Vance., 1983).

Therefore, the US-Soviet communiqué did little to advance the peace process. As a result, in mid-October Carter wrote a letter to Sadat asking him to make a bold move to unblock the impasse (Carter, 1982). Sadat responded affirmatively to Carter's request. Originally, Sadat proposed organising a meeting in East Jerusalem with all the parties (including the PLO), as well as the USSR, China, France, and Great Britain. However, after the Carter Administration dissuaded him from going forward with this proposal, Sadat publicly announced his willingness to go to Israel to discuss the peace settlement.

Sadat's initiative forced the Administration to drastically alter its strategy. As Brzezinski (1983: 111) acknowledged, Sadat's proposal “brought an end to our strategy for going to Geneva, and ushered in a new phase in which the prime mover was Sadat”¹⁴². After the initial surprise, the Administration decided to endorse the initiative. While a bilateral Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement seemed imminent and was evidently supported by the US, the Administration's top foreign policy decision-makers continued to believe a comprehensive settlement was essential and possible:

¹⁴¹ While the US would consult with the Arab parties on the content of the text, it soon became labelled as the US-Israeli Working Paper (Quandt, 1986a).

¹⁴² While Sadat's announcement took the Carter Administration by surprise, secret talks had been underway between Israel and Jordan and Israel and Egypt since the summer of 1977 (Quandt, 1986a).

...we had no real alternative but to support the Egyptian-Israeli negotiations; however, we should use our influence to keep those talks from producing only a separate peace which would be inherently unstable. While starting with Egypt and Israel, we should try to draw Jordan and the Palestinians into the talks as progress was made. (Brzezinski, 1983: 112)

Vance again travelled to the Middle East to try to seize the momentum and gain the endorsement of the other Arab states¹⁴³. Yet, before departing, the State Department reassessed the US strategy in a memo submitted to the President on 24 November. The text highlighted several key issues (Vance to Carter, 2013). To begin with, it stressed that the US would play a less central role in the negotiating process. Also, because both Egypt and Israel believed that Syria and the Soviet Union could be ignored, the reconvening of the Geneva Conference in the immediate future was considered highly improbable. The State Department also considered that the Palestinian issue continued to be a crucial part of Sadat's plan because it sheltered him from additional Arab criticism. Furthermore, while the US did acknowledge the breakdown between Sadat and Al-Assad, it remained committed to preventing Syria from joining the rejectionist camp. Accordingly, Vance's trip to the Middle East sought to help Sadat and Israel find a formula for a peace settlement which could be endorsed by the other regional parties (Vance, 1983). Brzezinski also emphasised a similar line of reasoning in his regular communications with Carter (Brzezinski to Carter, 2013).

Consequently, without prior anticipation or planning, the US was required to adjust its policy to the new political realities of the Middle East created by Sadat's initiative:

What changed as a result of Sadat's trip to Jerusalem was the American view of how to proceed with the negotiating process, not the preference to seek agreement on broad principles for a comprehensive settlement before getting down to the business of hammering out the texts of peace treaties. Egypt would now be the centrepiece for trying

¹⁴³ Sadat was invited by Begin to address the Knesset on 15 November, 1977, and the address was delivered on 20 November.

to develop an Arab position on the key issues of peace, security, borders, and Palestinian rights. (Quandt, 1986a: 151).

While the Carter Administration was concerned that Egypt and Israel might once again achieve a bilateral agreement, leaving out the other regional parties, there were numerous factors favouring an Egyptian-Israeli initiative. Above all, there was a general conviction that Egypt was pivotal to the stability of the Middle East; i.e., it was the key to war and peace in the region (Quandt, 1986a). The officials in the Administration, along with most Americans, believed that if Egypt chose peace, the majority of the other Arab states would follow. Conversely, if they did not agree, war would be highly unlikely without Egyptian involvement. Moreover, for Carter negotiations with Israel implied its acknowledgement as a state by its Arab counterparts, as well as its right to exist in peace (Carter, 1982). In fact, former Foreign Minister of Israel Abba Eban (1978: 344-345) promptly acknowledged the significance of Sadat's initiative: "For the first time, the Arab world was presented with a vision of the Middle East that did include the sovereign Jewish State of Israel".

Regardless of Sadat's grand gesture, progress towards reaching a settlement was slow and tedious. Vance's visit to the Middle East in December 1977 accomplished little (Quandt, 1986a). The Arab states reiterated their conviction that the Palestinian problem must be resolved. Some Arab leaders were distressed at the prospect of a separate Egyptian-Israeli settlement and Al-Assad criticised Sadat for shattering the unified Arab front. Israel, for its part, refused to issue a statement on withdrawal as requested by Sadat. In contrast, Begin informed Vance that he wished to travel to Washington to meet with Carter and present a proposal for "home rule" for the Palestinians.

Begin visited Carter on 16 December, 1977, and presented two peace proposals (Quandt, 1986a; Vance, 1983). The first outlined a two-stage Israeli withdrawal in the Sinai to the 1967 international border. The initial stage comprehended a three to five year transitional period in which Israel would maintain some military positions in the area. The subsequent stage would correspond to the normalisation of relations between the two countries. The second proposal foresaw the granting of home- or self-rule to the Palestinian Arabs in the West Bank and Gaza. An Administrative Council was also

envisaged to deal with daily life and Israel claimed it would interrupt its claim to sovereignty in the West Bank for a period of five years after which it would review the arrangement¹⁴⁴. At the core of Begin's proposal was a non-territorial scheme in which "autonomy was to apply not to the land but to the people who lived in it" (Shlaim, 2001: 364).

The Administration recognised that Begin's proposal was not satisfactory, but presented it to Sadat nevertheless. These issues, among others, were discussed in the Israeli and Egyptian bilateral meetings held at Ismailia in late-December 1977. The only achievement of the Ismailia Summit was the creation of two working committees – one political and one military – to press forward with negotiations. However, negotiations stalled once again and disagreements hampered additional progress in reaching a settlement (Vance, 1983). What's more, the Israeli government's authorisation of four new settlements in the Sinai further aggravated the relationship between both regional actors. The atmosphere of distrust impaired any progress at the Cairo and Jerusalem bilateral meetings. Hence, the New Year presented grim prospects. A comprehensive negotiation involving all the parties was practically dead and prospects of an Egyptian-Israeli agreement started to look equally sombre (Quandt, 1986a). As the proceedings between the political committees were suspended in January 1978 any serious attempt for further bilateral negotiations were ended, implying that the "Americans subsequently had to step in to prevent the collapse of Sadat's peace initiative" (Shlaim, 2001: 368).

This impasse led Brzezinski to write to Carter appealing for a more assertive American approach:

We have reached a point where we may soon lose our ability to shape developments in the Middle East and the chance for peace may slip away. We can slow the process, we can play for time, and we can avoid hard decisions for a while, but the price could be substantial. Alternatively, we can begin to lay the groundwork for a concerted strategy of reaffirming that the basis for negotiations must be resolution 242 in all its parts, which means that

¹⁴⁴ What is more, Begin informed the Carter Administration that, in his interpretation, Resolution 242 did not require withdrawal on all fronts, namely in the West Bank and Gaza (Quandt, 1986a; Vance, 1983).

Israel must explicitly accept the principle of withdrawal on all fronts as the counterpart to Arab commitments to peace and security. (Reproduced in Brzezinski, 1983: 240)

Brzezinski's overture was backed by the Administration's key-foreign policy decision-makers. In the 20 January, 1978, high-level meeting on the Administration's Middle East policy, Carter's senior advisors convinced him to meet with Sadat and develop a secret strategy to pressure Begin to concede on several key-issues, particularly his interpretation of Resolution 242 and the development of settlements in the West Bank (Brzezinski, 1983). The stratagem called for Sadat to publicly present a proposal containing one or two radical demands which the Administration could publicly reject. Egypt would then "compromise" on these demands and the US would then exploit them to pressure Israel for concessions of its own¹⁴⁵ (Brzezinski, 1983; Quandt, 1986a).

In the meantime, the Carter Administration began trying to transform Begin's self-rule proposal into a feasible transitional arrangement for the West Bank and Gaza (Vance, 1983). The development of an interim agreement resulted from the fact that the foreign policy officials in the Administration all shared the conviction that the West Bank and Gaza had to be approached using a different temporal horizon than the one for the Sinai¹⁴⁶ (Quandt, 1986a). As Vance (1983: 211) acknowledged "we had concluded that the

¹⁴⁵ The details of this strategy were developed during Sadat's trip to Camp David in early-February 1978. However, the progression of political events hindered carrying out this strategy towards a successful conclusion (Quandt, 1986a).

¹⁴⁶ The Administration's interim agreement was based on a nine-point proposal developed in February 1978 and considered the following steps (reproduced in Quandt, 1986a: 171-172): "1) A self-rule arrangement would be established for a transitional five-year period. 2) Authority for this interim arrangement will derive from agreement among Israel, Jordan, and Egypt. The agreement will be negotiated among representatives of these states and of the Palestinians (from the West Bank and Gaza). 3) The agreement will provide for self-rule by an authority freely elected by the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza. The agreement would define the responsibilities of that authority. 4) Neither Israel nor Jordan will assert their claims to sovereignty over the West Bank and Gaza during the five-year period. 5) Israeli forces would withdraw to limited and specified encampments. 6) During the five-year period, in order to implement UN Resolution 242 negotiations will be conducted and agreement will be reached among the West Bank-Gaza authority, Israel, Jordan, and Egypt on Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied in 1967, on secure and recognized final boundaries, including possible modifications in the 1967 lines, on the security arrangements which will accompany Israel's final withdrawal, and on the long-term relationship of the West Bank and Gaza to Israel and Jordan. 7) The agreement negotiated by the parties would come into effect by expressed consent of the governed to the substance of the agreement. 8) During the interim period the negotiating parties will constitute a continuing committee to reach agreements on: a) Issues arising under the agreement regarding the conduct of the interim regime, not resolvable by the West Bank/Gaza authority; b) The introduction of

gap between Israel and the Arabs on this problem [Palestinian issue] was so great that no final settlement could be negotiated as part of the current peace effort". Though it was clearly imperfect, a transition scheme seemed to be the best possible solution since the Administration now felt that any settlement would be better than none (Quandt, 1986a). Moreover, no one in the Carter Administration truly believed that Sadat would celebrate a separate peace settlement without Israeli concessions on the Palestinian issue (Quandt, 1986a).

Negotiations between the parties continued during the following months. The US tried to mediate the process but progress was slow and painstaking. In particular, Begin did not accept any formal detailed linkage between an Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty and the Palestinian issue. In other words, "Egypt and Israel might agree to some general principles, or to a variation of Begin's self-rule proposal, but these were separate matters from a treaty between the two states" (Quandt, 1986a: 178). Sadat's erratic approach reinforced Israeli intransigence. For instance, after Dayan inquired about Egypt's obligation to the other Arab parties, Sadat responded by admitting to proceed alone with negotiations if Israel presented a strong declaration of principles calling for a withdrawal from the occupied territories (Quandt, 1986a). What's more, following Mondale's trip to the Middle East in early-July 1978, Sadat informed the Administration that he no longer insisted on Palestinian self-determination. In order to move the process forward, Sadat suggested that, for the time being, Gaza should be reintegrated into Egypt and the West Bank into Jordan. The Palestinian issue could then be resolved at a later period (Quandt, 1986a). Moreover, the Administration's approval of weapons sales to Egypt, Israel, and Saudi Arabia¹⁴⁷, as well as the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in March, also contributed to straining the negotiation process (Vance, 1983). The President recapped the divergent views still existing between the regional stakeholders in mid-1978:

UN or Jordanian military presence on the West Bank and Gaza; c) Provision for an economically practicable level of resettlement in the West Bank and Gaza of Palestinian refugees; d) Reciprocal rights of residence in Israel and the territories for Palestinian Arabs and Israelis, and for land purchases with Israeli citizens and West bank/Gaza residents entitled to buy land either in the West Bank/Gaza or in Israel. 9) A regional economic development plan would be launched, including Jordan, the West Bank/Gaza authority, Israel and Egypt".

¹⁴⁷ President Carter approved the sale of 50 F-5Es to Egypt, 75 F16s and 15 F-15s to Israel, and 60 F-15s to Saudi Arabia. Israel contested the sale to the Arabs and was especially opposed to the sale being presented to Congress as a joint-package (Vance, 1983).

In the meeting with Begin and Dayan I described the presumptions that Sadat and I had worked out for a possible peace settlement, namely: no complete withdrawal by Israel from the West Bank; no independent Palestinian nation; self-rule in the West Bank–Gaza Strip; withdrawal of Israeli forces to negotiated outposts; some modifications of the western boundaries of the West Bank; devolution of power to the local authorities from both Israel and Jordan; no claim of sovereignty by either nation for a five-year period; at the end of the five-year period the Palestinian Arabs who live in the occupied territory will have the right to vote either on affiliation with Israel or Jordan or continuation of the so-called “interim government” if they find it to be attractive; the ceasing of new or expanded settlements during time of active negotiation.

...I then read to Begin and his group my understanding of their position: not willing to withdraw politically or militarily from any part of the West Bank; not willing to stop the construction of new settlements or the expansion of existing settlements; not willing to withdraw the Israeli settlers from the Sinai, or leave them under UN or Egyptian protection; not willing to acknowledge that Resolution 242 applies to the West Bank-Gaza area; not willing to grant the Palestinian Arabs real authority, or a voice in the determination of their own future to the extent that they can choose between the alternatives outlined above. Although Begin said this was a negative way to express their position, he did not deny the accuracy of any of it. (Carter, 1982: 311-312)

In light of this situation, the PRC convened on several occasions in the summer of 1978 to review the situation and assess the Administration’s policy options. Israel continued to avoid any commitment to withdraw from the West Bank or to Palestinian self-determination at the end of the five-year interim period (Vance, 1983). Administration officials discussed whether to continue with the intention of developing and presenting an American proposal or to adopt a more conservative strategy considering the unenthusiastic prospect of reaching a settlement. Despite some initial reservations from Mondale and Hamilton Jordan, the Administration decided to press forward (Quandt, 1986a). Furthermore, Israel and Egypt were invited to a foreign ministers meeting in England to try to achieve some sort of breakthrough. The Leeds Castle meetings held on 18 and 19 July, 1978, presented some new ideas for the bilateral

negotiations, but left the main issues unanswered, i.e., Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and self-determination for the Palestinians. As a result, on July 26, 1978, Sadat wrote Carter expressing his disappointment with the situation and informing that further meetings with Israel were no longer justified (Quandt, 1986a; Vance, 1983).

Carter was keenly aware of the need to arrive at some kind of agreement. In a July 30 meeting with his top foreign policy advisors, Carter informed them that he had decided to invite Sadat and Begin to a summit at Camp David¹⁴⁸ (Brzezinski, 1983; Carter, 1982; Vance, 1983). This idea had already been discussed as early as January 1978 and received support from some officials (Brzezinski, 1983). At that time, Carter opted only to invite Sadat to meet with him. However, as progress did not occur and the President's public image became increasingly blemished, "the temptation arose to aim for the attainable, not necessarily the preferred" (Quandt, 1986a: 204).

Before the Camp David Summit could be convened, the Administration had to develop a new strategy. Several of the Administration's key foreign policy decision-makers worked on studies and reports to help Carter achieve a successful outcome at Camp David¹⁴⁹ (Quandt, 1986a). Brzezinski defined the basic issues for the President in his weekly memos and emphasised the need for Carter to control the proceedings in order to make the parties change their initial positions. According to the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, the basic requirements from both parties were:

Sadat should agree to an Israeli security presence during the five-year interim period and for an indefinite time beyond; he should agree to defer decisions on the precise location of borders and on sovereignty until the end of the transitional period. In return he should be able to claim credit for ending the military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and for establishing that the principle of withdrawal will be applied in the final peace settlement dealing with these areas.

Begin should agree that the principle of withdrawal does apply on all fronts, including the West Bank and Gaza, provided that its application takes into account Israel's long-term

¹⁴⁸ The official announcement of the summit was made on 08 August, 1978 (Brzezinski, 1983).

¹⁴⁹ In fact, Carter (1982: 317) requested separate studies from his main foreign policy advisors: "I instructed both Vance and Brzezinski not to consult with each other but independently to devise briefing notebooks for me, envisioning an ultimate agreement".

security needs in the area; sovereignty will remain in abeyance until a final peace agreement is reached at the end of the five-year period. This will allow Begin to take credit for protecting Israel's fundamental security interests, while not requiring that he explicitly abandon Israel's claim to sovereignty over these areas. (Reproduced in Brzezinski, 1983: 253-254)

Vance (1978) also helped prepare Carter for the summit by developing a briefing book which he delivered on 31 August, 1978. According to the briefing book, the general aim of the summit was to provide a basis for negotiations on the West Bank and Gaza which would ultimately guarantee Palestinian self-determination, create a serious effort to bring Jordan into the negotiations on the West Bank and Gaza, and proceed with the Sinai negotiations. Ultimately, the most pressing objective for the Camp David Summit was to establish an understanding on a draft Egyptian-Israeli agreement which would serve a basis for a comprehensive settlement which could be recommended to all the regional parties (Vance, 1983). Carter considered his advisor's goals too modest. He told Brzezinski (1983) that he intended to go for a comprehensive settlement¹⁵⁰.

However, the Camp David Summit revealed the difficulties in conciliating the Israeli and Egyptian positions and revealed the limits of US influence. The American objectives coming into the summit were constantly revised and transformed throughout the thirteen days of tough negotiations¹⁵¹. In the end, the Camp David Summit forged the framework for negotiating an interim arrangement for the West Bank, as well as a detailed blueprint for reaching an Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty within a specific deadline¹⁵² (Brzezinski, 1983; Quandt, 1986a). In other words, Camp David provided the outline for the upcoming stages of negotiations.

¹⁵⁰ However, as the summit drew nearer, Carter's initial enthusiasm became more moderate (Brzezinski, 1983).

¹⁵¹ I do not put forward a detailed narrative of the negotiation process at Camp David for other authors have already presented exceedingly thorough accounts of the proceedings (c.f., Carter, 1982; Quandt, 1986a; Vance, 1983). It suffices for the purpose of the current study to underscore the final outcome of the summit and to identify the change in the Administration's policy.

¹⁵² The Camp David Summit produced the Camp David Accords which were signed on 17 September, 1978, and were essentially composed of two main documents: 1) *A Framework for Peace in the Middle East* and 2)

While certainly a milestone for Arab-Israeli relations, the Administration's initial expectations were not entirely satisfied (Brzezinski, 1983). Egypt obtained an Israeli pledge to a full withdrawal from the Sinai, including from the oil fields, settlements, and airbases, within a three year period. In return, Sadat promised to normalise relations with Israel after it completed the first stage of withdrawal. Despite conceding the entire Sinai to Egypt, Begin was able to preserve his prerogative concerning the Palestinian issue. Sadat was unable to insure an Israeli commitment to a final withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza. In addition, the issues pertaining to Jerusalem were not addressed, nor were the settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. Israel did vow to "full autonomy" for the West Bank and Gaza, but the final status of the occupied territories was absent from the framework agreement. In addition, Israel pledged only to withdraw the military government, never to abolish it.

Thus, Begin's hardened negotiating strategy assured him an open road to peace with Egypt, while leaving a great amount of discretion in dealing with the Palestinian issue:

Central to Begin's sense of success was the fact that he had not been forced to accept language on the "inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war," the applicability of the principles of 242 UN Resolution "to all fronts of the conflict," and the need for eventual Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza. Nor had any dilution of Israel's claim to sovereignty over all of Jerusalem been insinuated into the agreement. Finally, Begin had gone no further than to promise a three-month freeze on settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. (Quandt, 1986a: 256)

Framework for the Conclusion of a Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel (c.f., Quandt, 1986a, see Appendix G; Vance, 1983, see Appendix II).

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BEYOND WISHFUL THINKING

“Early in its tenure, the Carter administration produced the PRM-10 study, which grappled with the problem of strengthening the armed services at a time of tight budget constraints. While the Carter review was criticized for allegedly leaving the military inadequately prepared, its lasting legacy was to focus US defense strategy on better ways to defend Central Europe and the Persian Gulf.”

(Binnendijk and Kugler, *Sound Vision, Unfinished Business*)

While Camp David significantly altered the political, military, and strategic situation in the Middle East, the Carter Administration did not relegate its national interests to the status of mere wishful thinking. Despite the Administration’s optimistic outlook towards the Arab-Israeli conflict, regional security concerns endured. The Camp David Summit epitomised the Administration’s original emphasis on preventive diplomacy and non-military solutions to sources of conflict. It sought to defuse the sources of the Middle East conflict by engaging the regional stakeholders in celebrating a comprehensive settlement. Ultimately, it removed Egypt from the Arab equation, significantly reducing the likelihood a new Arab-Israeli war. However, several challenges and threats to US national interests remained.

Many of these threats were identified during the early months of the Carter Administration. In his early review of US national strategy, Carter signed PRM-10 on 18 February, 1977, with the purpose of initiating a comprehensive assessment of the overall American national strategy and US capabilities. The review was to consist of two distinct studies. The first, to be conducted by the PRC and chaired by the Secretary of Defence, was a *Military Force Posture Review* which would delineate a broad assortment of alternative military strategies and develop the alternative military force postures and

programs that best sustained each of the military strategies. Among other issues, this review was to consider:

military force levels; technological developments with regard to new weaponry; alternatives to our reliance on foreign bases; deterrence at reciprocally lowered strategic levels; viability and desirability of the “triad” posture. This portion should also evaluate the relative ability of the US and its allies to achieve US objectives in specified military contingencies. It will identify the key issues for Presidential decisions, including the budgetary implications of each of these postures. (PRM-10: 1)

The second study commissioned was a *Comprehensive Net Assessment* (CNA) to be conducted by the SCC under the chairmanship of the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. This study would consist of a review and comparison of the overarching developments in capabilities – i.e., political, diplomatic, economic, technological, and military – between the US, its allies, and its adversaries, particularly the USSR.

In June 1977 the Secretary of Defence submitted the Final Report of the *Military Force Posture Review*. The review was designed to solicit Presidential policy guidance on issues dealing with US military strategy essentially by developing an assortment of substrategies (Table 10) for creating Alternative Integrated Military Strategies (AIMS). In order to identify the possible policy options available to the Administration, the substrategies were divided into five analytical areas or conflict categories (PRM-10, Annex):

1. NATO-Warsaw Pact (WP) conflict in Europe (including the NATO flanks and the North Atlantic);
2. Operations outside Europe during a NATO- Warsaw Pact war;
3. East Asia;
4. Peacekeeping activities and potential local wars;
5. US-USSR nuclear conflict.

In order to develop the various substrategies for guiding US strategy towards the multiple potential threats, the major issues in each analytical area were isolated and an assortment of building blocks were posited. Subsequently, after excluding the unworkable combinations of substrategies, a group of eight AIMS was devised assessing the major military issues facing the US (Table 11):

AIMS E – based on the premise that the US objectives can be achieved with somewhat reduced reliance on military force, but the US still would retain the capability to wage a major conventional war of short duration with the USSR. US strategic nuclear capabilities would be somewhat reduced; not all US advantages would be maintained, nor would an extensive, efficient hard-target kill capability be pursued. The nuclear threshold would be about the same as it is currently. In conjunction with NATO allies, the US would plan to have the conventional capability to hold a determined Warsaw Pact conventional attack at the Weser-Lech River line for about 30 days. (A defense which stabilizes along the Weser-Lech line yields to Pact forces about a quarter to a third of the FGR territory east of the Rhine River). In addition, the US would maintain a limited capability to confront the Soviets worldwide in the event of a European War. A reduced presence in East Asia (no US forces in Korea or the Philippines) would reduce the potential for certain regional involvements and would reduce, but not negate, the US ability to influence great power relationships there. Other global interests would be advanced primarily by diplomatic and economic efforts, and any limited military intervention would require drawing down forces dedicated to other purposes.

AIMS F – based on the premise that US objectives can be met through a strategy achievable by approximately the current US military forces, but with a capability for sustained combat comparable to that of our NATO Allies. US nuclear capabilities would be somewhat enhanced; all present US advantages in strategic nuclear force balance indices would be retained, with the expectation of a hard-target kill capability against all Soviet silos. The nuclear threshold would be about the same as it is currently. As in AIMS E, the US, in conjunction with NATO Allies, would plan to have the conventional capability to hold a determined Warsaw Pact conventional attack at the Weser-Lech River line for about 30 days, thus involving loss of NATO territory. In addition, the US would maintain a limited capability to confront the Soviets worldwide in the event of a European war. In contrast to AIMS E, the current programmed military deployments in East Asia, less land forces in

Korea, would be retained. Other global interests would be advanced by a moderate capability for unilateral military action without drawing on forces dedicated to other purposes.

AIMS F Variant – is based on the premise that US objectives can be met by a modest increase in US military capability and a substantial increase in sustainability in our NATO allies. This strategy is identical to AIMS F except that in a European war, sustainability is commensurate with that currently programmed for US forces, with a requisite increase in sustainability by our NATO allies. In conjunction with the NATO Allies, the US would plan to have the conventional capability to hold a determined Warsaw Pact conventional attack at the Weser-Lech River line for about 90 days, still involving loss of NATO territory. Both sides are assumed to have the capability to employ additional forces in Central Europe beyond the first months of the conflict, so this AIMS requires more forces than AIMS F. AIMS F Variant requires forces at least comparable to those in the current US Five Year Defense Program, but in excess of those currently programmed by the NATO Allies.

AIMS G – based on the premise that achievement of US objectives both inside and outside Europe would be enhanced by a stronger conventional military capability outside Europe. US strategic nuclear capabilities would be somewhat reduced; not all US advantages would be maintained, nor would an extensive, efficient hard-target kill capability be pursued. The nuclear threshold in Europe, however, might be raised because of the enhanced conventional capabilities outside Europe. As in AIMS E and F, the US, in conjunction with NATO Allies, would have the conventional capability to hold a determined Warsaw PACT conventional attack at the Weser-Lech River line for about 30 days, thus involving loss of NATO territory. Contrary to previous AIMS, however, the US would maintain naval and air forces capable of taking conventional initiatives outside of Europe against the USSR. In East Asia, approximately the current programmed military deployments – less land forces in Korea – would be retained. Other global interests would be secured by a significant capability for unilateral military action without drawing down on forces dedicated to other purposes. This intervention capability would be capable of direct confrontation with Soviet forces if necessary.

AIMS H – is based on the premise that support of US objectives requires a raising of the NATO nuclear threshold through a stronger conventional defense, while reduced reliance on military force is possible elsewhere. This raised threshold is assumed to permit a slight reduction of US nuclear capabilities; not all US advantages would be maintained, nor would

an extensive, efficient hard-target kill capability be pursued. In Europe, in conjunction with NATO Allies, the US would have the conventional capability to absorb a determined Warsaw Pact conventional attack and restore the pre-war borders within about 90 days. In addition, the US would maintain a limited capability to confront the Soviets worldwide in the event of a European war. A reduced presence in East Asia (no US forces in Korea or the Philippines) would reduce the potential for certain regional involvements and would reduce, but not negate, the US ability to influence great power relationships there. Other global interests would be advanced primarily by diplomatic and economic efforts, and any limited military intervention would require drawing down forces dedicated to other purposes.

AIMS I – based on the premise that support of US objectives requires a raising of the NATO nuclear threshold through a stronger conventional defense, while maintaining approximately current capabilities outside Europe. The raised nuclear threshold would be accompanied by a slight increase in the current strategic nuclear levels. All present US strategic advantages would be retained, with assurance of a hard-target kill capability against all Soviet silos. As in AIMS H, the US, in conjunction with NATO Allies, would have the conventional capability to absorb a determined Warsaw Pact conventional attack in Europe and restore the pre-war borders within about 90 days. (Two excursions, to size US war reserve stocks for 180 days and for an indefinite time, but without change to combat forces during those periods, were evaluated). In addition, the US would maintain limited air and naval capability to confront the Soviets worldwide in the event of a European war. In contrast to AIMS H, essentially the current programmed military deployments in East Asia – less land forces in Korea – would be retained. Other global interests would be advanced by a moderate capability for unilateral military action without drawing down on forces dedicated to other purposes.

AIMS J – is based on the premise that decreased levels of strategic nuclear forces are desirable. A significant and sustainable conventional military capability permits such decreased nuclear dependence. Thus, US nuclear capabilities would be reduced to the level of assured retaliation only – the capability to substantially destroy Soviet economic and leadership resources – and minimal counter-military capability would be provided, with no attempt made to match or offset strategic force asymmetries in the Soviets' favour. As in AIMS H and I, the US, in conjunction with NATO Allies, would have the conventional capability to absorb a determined Warsaw Pact conventional attack in Europe and restore

the pre-war borders within about 90 days. US war reserve stocks, however, would be sized to provide for indefinite combat to avoid NATO's having to resort to nuclear weapons should the Pact be able to sustain the conflict beyond 90 days. Contrary to AIMS H and I, the US would maintain naval and air forces capable of taking conventional initiatives outside Europe against the USSR which would further enhance deterrence in Europe. In East Asia, approximately the current programmed military deployments – less land forces in Korea – would be retained. Other global interests would be advanced by a significant capability for unilateral military action without drawing down on forces dedicated to other purposes. This intervention capability would be capable of direct confrontation with Soviet forces if necessary.

AIMS M – is based on the premise that significant, sustainable conventional power capable of responding to any Soviet conventional attack combined with clear US nuclear superiority is required to support achievement of US objectives. US nuclear capabilities and threshold would be raised to near maximum levels; US strategic capabilities would exceed that of the Soviets and in all significant indices – forces, modernization, and options for major active defenses. Such a nuclear posture would be designed to deter Soviet first use and provide political leverage. Should Warsaw Pact aggression occur in Europe, the US, in conjunction with NATO Allies, would defend in Central Europe while the US would initiate and attack against less heavily defended Warsaw Pact territory on the flanks to secure negotiating leverage. Major conventional capability is also maintained elsewhere to assure fulfilment of US global interests with a high probability of success. This would call for an increased military presence in East Asia and major intervention capability in other regions. (PRM-10: 3-5)

The study was founded on an assortment of deep-seated assumptions (PRM-10). To begin with, it was believed that the Soviets would continue to pose the main threat to US interests and American security at home and abroad. The second major postulate was that European security would continue to be vital to the US and America would maintain its commitment to actively defend NATO against aggression by the Warsaw Pact. Equally, aggression against Japan was also deemed a threat to US vital interests. A further assumption was that any conciliation between the Soviets and Chinese would not be sufficient to warrant a significant decline in the military forces facing each other.

Therefore, continued Sino-Soviet hostility implied that the US would not need to secure specific conventional forces in order to counter a potential Chinese military threat. Finally, the study assumed that due to the interdependent international environment, the US would continue to have major interests world-wide.

TABLE 10 – SUMMARY OF SUBSTRATEGIES ACCORDING TO PRM-10

| NATO–WP in Europe | Non-European Operations during a NATO-WP War | East Asia | Peacekeeping activities and potential local wars | US–USSR nuclear conflict |
|--------------------|--|---------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| Counteroffensive | | | | |
| Offsetting attacks | | | | |
| Direct Defence | Initiatives | Increased presence | Heavy intervention | Clear superiority |
| Limit loss | Limited action | Current presence | Light intervention | Retain US force advantages |
| Elastic tripwire | Minimal effort | Reduced presence | Limited action | Maintain overall force balance |
| Tripwire | | Modified withdrawal | Proxy reliance | Assured retaliation only |
| | | Withdrawal | | |

(Source: PRM-10, Annex: 1)

The *Military Force Posture Review* also assessed the capabilities of the American force structure (PRM-10, Annex). Consequently, it concluded that if war with the Soviets erupted at that time there was only a remote chance that NATO could stop a Warsaw Pact attack to Central Europe. While defeat of NATO forces in Central Europe and penetration towards the French border and North Sea Coast was deemed unlikely, the study considered implausible that NATO forces could quickly recover the lost territory. It was also assumed that NATO could defend its flanks, particularly in the North Atlantic and Mediterranean. A US-Soviet confrontation outside Europe revealed uncertainty as to an Allied victory. Moreover, a nuclear confrontation between the US and the Soviets would result in a high degree of devastation to both parties and would not bring victory to either.

TABLE 11 – ALTERNATIVE INTEGRATED MILITARY STRATEGIES (AIMS)

| AIMS | NATO–WP conflict in Europe | Operations outside Europe during a NATO–WP war | East Asia | Peacekeeping activities and potential local wars | US–USSR nuclear conflict |
|-------------|--|--|--------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| A | Limit loss: | Limited action | Reduced presence | Limited action | Maintain overall force balance |
| F | Hold 86-92 division threat at Weser-Lech with 30-day sustainability | Limited action | Current presence | Light intervention | Retain US force advantages |
| G | | Initiatives | Current presence | Heavy intervention | Maintain overall force balance |
| F (variant) | Limit loss: Hold 130 division threat at Weser-Lech with 90-day sustainability | Limited action | Current presence | Light intervention | Retain US force advantages |
| H | Direct defence: Restore pre-war line | Limited action | Reduced presence | Limited action | Maintain overall force balance |
| I | against 130 division threat with 90-day sustainability | Limited action | Current presence | Light intervention | Retain US force advantages |
| J | Direct defence: With indefinite sustainability | Initiatives | Current presence | Heavy intervention | Assured retaliation only |
| M | Offsetting attacks: Flank attack on Pact while holding in central region against 130 division threat with indefinite sustainability | Initiatives | Increased presence | Heavy intervention | Clear superiority |

(Source: PRM-10, Annex: 2)

While analysing lower level contingencies, the study found that the US would prevail against the Soviets in a one-on-one confrontation in the Middle East. Furthermore, the US would have considerable advantage over the Soviets in deploying combat forces in sub-Saharan Africa. In the Korean peninsula it was presumed that a North Korean surprise attack could temporarily lead to the capture of Seoul. However, with US assistance, it was judged that the Republic of Korea would eventually prevail against its Northern neighbour.

Additionally, the study presented six interrelated key-questions for the President to consider before rendering a final judgement on US strategy (PRM-10):

1. How should the US deal with the threat of Soviet aggression? In particular, what should be the relationship between nuclear and conventional forces for deterrence and defence? If deterrence fails, to what extent should the US rely on the early use of nuclear weapons?
2. To what extent should the US, for political or military purposes, state objectives or fund programs for security in Europe which are inconsistent with the interpretation or implementation of NATO strategy by other members of the Alliance?
3. To what extent should the US acquire military capabilities, above those required for the European theatre, to undertake military operations (either offensive or defensive) against the Soviets in a US-USSR war?
4. To what extent should the US plan to have military forces (or supplies) available for crisis management or intervention in local wars? To what extent should these forces (or supplies) be available without drawing from those required for a major US-USSR war?
5. What should be the US military strategy in East Asia? Should the US maintain the current military presence or include additional adjustments in US forces in Korea and the Philippines?
6. What constitutes an adequate strategic force posture?

The study put forward a broad array of considerations in relation to each specific question – it did not, however, provide answers. The answer to these questions would determine the appropriate strategy for the new Administration to apply and would ultimately result from a political decision.

Nevertheless, the PRM-10 study did divulge several interesting assumptions about US-Soviet competition and US military capabilities, particularly regarding the Middle East. To begin with, it emphasised the strategic importance of the region for the US and its

Allies. The need to safeguard access to the regions' natural resources created the potential need for American intervention:

The continued flow of Persian Gulf and North African oil is crucial to the war capability of the NATO Alliance. Consequently neither the Soviets nor ourselves could ignore the importance of these resources, and US forces could be called on to counter Soviet attempts to interdict oil SLOC's or take over the oil fields themselves. (PRM-10, Annex: 22)

Moreover, while competition with the Soviets was considered the highest threat and priority for developing US strategy, the study foresaw the importance of local conflicts, namely in the Third World. Continued international crises and local wars warranting US involvement were judged very likely over the coming decade. US action could vary from crisis management or peacekeeping activities to direct military intervention. The response varied according to each particular circumstance, allowing for a large measure of flexibility in choosing the appropriate course of action. Nevertheless, the study upheld that the "significance of interests in some regions, such as the Middle East, may justify a degree of military involvement under any circumstances" (PRM-10, Annex: 24).

The main problem with this contingency was US force projection into the region. While the US currently had the capability to respond to these situations, planning was necessary in order to guarantee their appropriate application, namely guaranteeing their deterrent function:

A de facto capability to deal with crises and local wars would exist even if forces were acquired only to deal with a major US-USSR war. However, in the absence of an independent decision establishing planning guidance for local wars, drawing on these sizable forces might not provide a satisfactory capability for crisis management or intervention. For example, to make sure that these major war forces were in Europe when needed, significant portions of the force and its equipment might be forward deployed with the remainder tied to strict, time-phased mobilization and deployment schedules. If it were subsequently decided to employ these forces in a crisis or local war, the capability to make

initial, forcible entry, such as that possessed by airborne and amphibious forces, might be lacking. Appropriate basing and rights of passage might be unavailable. Additionally, the strategic lift available might be inappropriate to deploy the “European” forces and equipment in a timely manner. Their training and equipment might be unsuitable for a non-European environment, and they might have inadequate logistic support to accomplish the local war mission. (PRM-10, Annex: 24-25)

To meet operational demands¹⁵³, the study indicated that decision-makers could choose between two main options: procure additional resources or draw down from existing capabilities. In the case the US did not want to draw down on existing forces, the study recommended securing additional land combat forces and tactical air forces. Supplementary naval forces and strategic mobility forces, along with airborne and amphibious forces, depended on the level of intervention selected in each particular moment. If, however, the option was to draw down, a certain number of caveats were presented, namely concerning the mix of forces, deployments, and operational requirements. In particular, PRM-10 argued that the chronological relationship between local and global conflicts would highly influence the operational availability and effectiveness of the forces:

If US intervention in a local war occurred prior to an outbreak of a war with the USSR, some intervention forces would not be available rapidly for employment against the Soviets in Europe or elsewhere. If the intervention forces are additive, no adverse impact would occur in the US-USSR war. If the intervention forces are inclusive, there would be a reduction in US forces available for the US-USSR war. The effect might be to limit US capability in the critical early days of the major war. On the other hand, if the US-USSR war started before

¹⁵³ PRM-10 presented three different levels of effort which steered the forces and supplies the US needed to effectively face international crises or local wars: 1) Limited action – the US would plan to have the capability to provide logistical support and limited naval and air forces to uphold American interests in any region for a period of 90 days. Land combat forces are not foreseen in this option. (AIMS E and H incorporate this planning concept); 2) Light intervention – the US would plan to have the capability to supply logistical support and moderate naval and air forces, along with limited land combat forces anywhere in the world. These forces would have to be supplied for up to 180 days. (AIMS F, F Variant, and I incorporate this planning concept); 3) Heavy intervention – the US would have the capability to supply logistical support and considerable naval, air, and land power anywhere in the world. These forces would have to be supplied for up to 360 days. (AIMS G, J, and M incorporate this planning concept).

the local war, the US would have already committed inclusive forces to the US-USSR conflict and presumably would not want to take an intervention. In this situation, any additive intervention forces would be available as a central reserve to be employed in Europe or elsewhere to influence the war outcome. (PRM-10, Annex: 27)

PRM-10 reflected the general belief, principally within the Administration, that the US lacked the military capability necessary to deal with the multiple potential security threats in the Middle East. Several events contributed to this shared outlook (Palmer, 1999). The first was the British decision to retract from the Middle East. Traditionally the US had relied on Great Britain to guarantee regional security. For instance, Great Britain intervened to impede an Iraqi invasion of the newly independent Kuwait in 1961 and British military forces stemmed radical insurrection in Aden and the Yemens. However, in January 1968 Great Britain announced it would pull out from east of the Suez – a retraction completed in 1971¹⁵⁴. Besides losing access to vital military intelligence due to the British pull out, the US faced a political and military void in the region which could be exploited by the Soviets. In fact, as the British pulled out the Soviet Navy began consolidating its presence in the Indian Ocean. According to Palmer (1999: 86), “by the end of the year [1971], Soviet men-of-war had spent more time in the Indian Ocean than those of the US Navy”.

Moreover, as American involvement in Vietnam intensified under the Johnson Administration, the Middle East was increasingly ignored. While previous Administrations had attributed a more vital role to Middle Eastern security, Johnson’s concentration on East Asia, particularly Indochina, “led him to reverse the trend of the late-1950s and early 1960s toward a deeper American political *and* military involvement in the Middle East” (Palmer, 1999: 85). In addition, the Vietnam War also diminished domestic tolerance for foreign interventions. As a result, the Nixon Administration adopted a policy which emphasised a greater role for local actors in resolving endogenous problems, i.e., the Nixon Doctrine. In the Middle East, the Nixon Administration favoured a twin pillar

¹⁵⁴ Particularly important withdrawal of British military forces occurred in the states of the Persian Gulf, Yemen, Malaysia, and Singapore (Bliddal, 2011).

strategy structured around Iran and Saudi Arabia¹⁵⁵. With time, the Administration increasingly came to rely on Iran to safeguard its regional interests and uphold regional stability. As a result, the Nixon Administration increased US support and aid to Iran and boosted its military capabilities (Alvandi, 2012; Kupchan, 1987; Palmer, 1999).

While Iran was entrusted with regional stability, the Nixon Administration still sought to maintain military assets in the region. Taking into consideration the domestic anathema to the commitment of troops on the ground, the Administration increasingly relied on naval forces (Palmer, 1999). As a result, in 1970 the NSC recommended and the President approved the maintenance of the US Navy's Middle East Force in Bahrain¹⁵⁶. Additionally, the US continued to develop its base on Diego Garcia, guaranteeing continued US naval presence in the Indian Ocean.

However, the Yom Kippur War (1973) jeopardised American military capabilities in the Middle East. Active American support of the Israelis led Bahrain to unilaterally terminate the lease agreement. While the US was able to renegotiate the agreement by amending several provisions, the US could no longer officially base the Middle East Force in Bahrain – although it did retain access to the base facilities. Several other regional ports were also closed-off to American warships. In all, by mid-1974, 28 ports in eleven countries denied access to the US navy: “Only Manama (Bahrain), Port Louis (Mauritius), Karachi (Pakistan), Colombo (Sri Lanka), and the ‘dependable’ Iranian ports of Bandar Abbas and Bandar Shahpur continued to supply US navy ships” (Palmer, 1999: 99).

Moreover, as previously mentioned the political consequences of the Yom Kippur War – i.e., the oil embargo – placed a newfound relevance on the Middle East region. The possibility of the US being denied access to the region's natural resources led American officials to assess the possible military options – ranging from increased naval presence in the Indian Ocean to direct amphibious assault (Palmer, 1999). Hence, guaranteeing US military access and force projection into the Middle East region acquired a renewed relevance.

¹⁵⁵ In a recent study on the Nixon Administration's Middle East policy, Alvandi (2012: 359) argues that “If there were two states that constituted the ‘twin pillars’ of the Nixon Doctrine in the Middle East, they were Iran and Israel, not Saudi Arabia”.

¹⁵⁶ The leasing agreement between the two countries was signed on 23 December, 1971.

In truth, in this period, the US already had the capacity to guard the Gulf. The Middle East Force was on hand and if strengthened it could patrol the regional waterways and take action regarding minor contingencies in the region. While the US had the capabilities to intervene in the Middle East with sea-based and airborne forces, it had serious difficulties in rapidly deploying land combat forces. Consequently, for more demanding military initiatives, such as fighting Iranian¹⁵⁷ or Soviet forces in the Middle East, the US was seriously ill-equipped. As Kupchan (1987: 50) has clarified, “it was only the Soviets, because of their proximity to the region, that could credibly threaten to introduce substantial ground forces”. Besides the enormous effort required in transporting men and equipment over large distances, the Middle East presented additional operational constraints for the US. The lack of an adequate military infrastructure, coupled with a harsh physical environment further deteriorated US military power. Furthermore, due to the several of the previously mentioned constraints, American military operations would always be dependent on the willingness of the local regimes to cooperate with the US. These multiple constraints limited rapid American intervention in the region and hampered US chances of success:

Whether it was a Soviet invasion or a local coup, the earlier that US forces could arrive, the better the chance of achieving their objectives. A long and slow logistic line such as that used to support operations in East Asia would be useful only in a protracted war. The United States needed air transport and sealift to follow – precisely those assets which had suffered most through the post-Vietnam cutbacks. (Kupchan, 1987: 99)

Among other findings, PRM-10 emphasised the need to face up to America’s strategic limitations in the Middle East. It highlighted the vital importance of the region to the US and its allies. It also cautioned decision-makers about the limits of US power to enforce its national interests in more critical scenarios. For that reason, it provided several different options for guaranteeing the security of American interests.

¹⁵⁷ According to most assessments, the main threat for US in the Middle East during the 1970s was domestic instability, therefore potential conflict involving regional actors (Kupchan, 1987).

However, the interagency debate over PRM-10 revealed different perspectives within the Administration on how to deal with the multiple challenges presented to American security. The PRC discussed PRM-10 during two sessions held during the first two weeks of July 1977. The first meeting took place on 8 July and dealt with the initial five questions presented in the *Military Force Posture Review*. The second meeting was held on 13 July and sought to deal with the last question, i.e., the issue concerning strategic forces.

During the 8 July PRC meeting Brzezinski argued that, taking into consideration the current political environment in the US and Europe, it would be impossible to muster support for the procurement of the conventional forces essential to preserve European territorial integrity in case of a Warsaw Pact attack (PRC, 08/07/1977). In order to deter the Soviets, Brzezinski proposed the adoption of a “stalemate” strategy in which NATO would fall back, tying down the Soviets and leaving them with the political burdens of their aggression. General George Brown of the Joints Chiefs of Staff countered, arguing that territorial loss could be avoided if NATO maintained the 3% per year growth in defence spending agreed on at the NATO Defence Ministerial meeting held in May 1977.

Regardless of these differences, all the participants agreed that while NATO must rely on a combination of means to deter the Warsaw Pact – i.e., strategic nuclear, theatre nuclear, and conventional forces – the primary concern was in improving conventional forces. What’s more, the group also shared the conviction that a distinction between declaratory strategy and actual capability was indispensable.

On the issue of operations outside Europe during a NATO–Warsaw Pact war, there was a general consensus that there were important positive consequences in taking initiatives against the USSR, specifically against Soviet territory. However, Secretary Brown argued that there were few opportunities which would trouble the Soviets enough to affect the war effort in Europe. Likewise, David Aaron recommended that, rather than try to take initiatives against the Soviets, the US should secure access to the Persian Gulf.

As for East Asia, there was agreement that, for the present time, the US should not make any additional changes to its military posture in the Far East beyond the withdrawal of the ground forces in Korea. Some members did defend a small increase in

US presence in the region in order to reinforce the image of American commitment to the Far East.

When evaluating the strategy related to crisis management and local wars there was broad agreement that “forces procured for this purpose should be added to those required for a NATO/Warsaw Pact war” (PRC, 08/07/1977: 2). The group considered the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, and Korea to be the most critical areas. Moreover, forces procured for this rationale could be used elsewhere if necessary. In order to secure this objective, Brzezinski proposed that creation of a highly responsive global strike force. The eventual use of the Second Division after its withdrawal from Korea was suggested.

In fact, the NSC staff had previously alerted Brzezinski to the possible necessity of supplementary forces for potential interventions in the Middle East. In a memo submitted to the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, NSC staff members James Thomson and Victor Utgoff emphasised the critical need to address US strategy and capabilities in the region:

...the US is more likely to see a need to employ forces outside the NATO/Pact context than in it. The most obvious possibility is the Middle East: US interests there continue to grow as Western access to oil becomes more important; the possibility of conflict, potentially involving the USSR, remains higher there than in other parts of the world. The contingency assessment revealed that US capability to project power considerably exceeds that of the USSR in most areas of the world, including the Middle East, but that the US would face the greatest difficulty projecting power into the Middle East. (Thomson and Utgoff to Brzezinski, 06/07/1977: 9)

Hence, the analysis highlighted the limitations inherent in drawing forces from Europe for other theatres. While it stipulated that current capabilities were adequate for most contingencies, it stressed the need for the US to maintain “an independent land-force capability for forcible entry” (Thomson and Utgoff to Brzezinski, 06/07/1977: 10).

The debate over PRM-10 attests to the centrality of the Middle East in the Carter Administration’s geographic mental maps. The top foreign policy decision-makers all shared the conviction of the regions increasingly critical value. Yet, the interagency

debate equally exposed the discrepancies within the Administration regarding overall policy orientation. In other words, while the Middle East was acknowledged by all as a vital region for US national interests, members diverged on how best to achieve the nation's political objectives in the region. In accordance with Brzezinski (1983), two main groups with divergent perspectives emerged during the discussions. One group, composed of Secretary of State Vance and Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency Paul Warnke, favoured a policy which limited US strategic forces to an assured destruction capability, while concurrently reducing American forces in Europe and Korea. This group sought to address the challenges pertaining to the Indian Ocean-Persian Gulf region through arms control initiatives negotiated with the Soviets – e.g., upcoming Indian Ocean demilitarisation talks. The other group, which included Brzezinski and Secretary of Defence Brown, emphasised the growing momentum of the Soviet military and the vulnerability of the Persian Gulf region. They argued that the increased capability of the Soviets to project power into the Third World threatened US interests in these regions and required a more robust response.

Some of these disputes were settled with Carter's signing of PD-18 on 24 August, 1977. PD-18 codified the Carter Administration's US National Strategy and originated in the interagency debate involving the assessment and evaluation provided by PRM-10. The directive focused essentially on the US-USSR relationship and acknowledged that the US continued to have several critical advantages over the Soviets. As a result, the US would harness its economic, technological, and political assets in order to (PD-18):

- Counterbalance, together with our allies and friends, by a combination of military forces, political efforts, and economic programs, Soviet military power and adverse influence in key areas, particularly Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia;
- Compete politically with the Soviet Union by pursuing the basic American commitment to human rights and national independence;
- Seek Soviet cooperation in resolving regional conflicts and reducing areas of tension that could lead to confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union;

- Advance American security interests through negotiations with the Soviet Union of adequately verifiable arms control and disarmament agreements that enhance stability and curb arms competition;
- Seek to involve the Soviet Union in global activities, such as economic and social developments and peaceful non-strategic trade.

On the whole, PD-18 emphasised the Carter Administration's notion of maintaining a relationship with the Soviets based on competition and cooperation. While the US would seek to contend with the Soviets for global political and military primacy, PD-18 also put emphasis on cooperating with the USSR in managing and resolving many pressing international issues. Therefore, the directive was aligned with the concept of détente that the Administration had fashioned coming into office (Westad, 1997).

As Njølstad (2004) has accurately recognised, PD-18 stressed two major and demanding priorities for US global strategy. The first was the reassertion of the US commitment to a forward defence strategy for NATO, emphasising the continued priority of European defence and security¹⁵⁸. The second was the need to create the necessary conditions for the US to be able to act in urgent situations outside Europe, particularly in the Middle East. For that reason, PD-18 called for the creation of a Rapid Deployment Force with the purpose of responding quickly to out-of-area crises and threats:

...the United States will maintain a deployment force of light divisions with strategic mobility independent of overseas bases and logistical support, which includes moderate naval and tactical air forces, and limited land combat forces. These forces will be designed for use against both local forces and forces projected by the USSR based on analyses of requirements in the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, or Korea, taking into account the contribution of our friends and allies in these regions. US planning should provide that these requirements may be met by a combination of the light deployment forces,

¹⁵⁸ Succinctly, forward defence implied a strategy in which NATO would meet and challenge a Warsaw Pact attack against Western Europe at the inter-German border. The general objective was to prevent Warsaw Pact forces from making further progress westward. Accordingly, the bulk of NATO forces were deployed along the 800-km central front with the intent of creating an environment of attrition warfare that would wear down the enemy's forces (Mearsheimer, 1982).

supplemented by forces in the United States, primarily oriented toward NATO defense. (PD-18: 4-5)

The idea of a rapidly deployed force was not new to American strategic planning. During the 1950s the US created organisational arrangements to deal with geographically peripheral operation needs. More specifically, in 1958 the Army established the Strategic Army Corps (STRAC) with the purpose of providing a force with flexible strike capability that could be deployed globally on short notice (Olinger, 2005; Palmer, 1999). Other services, such as the Navy, also began analysing the expansion of their presence in the Indian Ocean. In addition, the Joint Chiefs of Staff studied the appropriate command structures for missions outside the existing unified commands. Moreover, with the arrival of the Kennedy Administration the concept of flexible response acquired additional prominence. As a result, the Joint Chiefs were instructed to establish STRIKCOM in 1962, which would manage the Middle East Force during periods of crisis, and strategic air and sealift assets were increased (Palmer, 1999). Growing US involvement in Vietnam hindered further developments. In fact, in 1971 the Nixon Administration dissolved STRIKOM and did not include the Middle East within the newly created Readiness Command. The responsibility for contingency operations was subsequently attributed to the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR).

The RDF also fit well with the Administration's perception of the Middle Eastern tolerance to the presence of American forces. Secretary Brown contrasted the circumstances in the region to that of Europe and East Asia:

Many in the [Middle East] region object to westernization and the role of the United States as Israel's guarantor. (...) Consequently, even if the resources were available for US military deployments or other military actions clearly sufficient to prevent Soviet political domination or military conquest, they would probably have to be scaled down and stretched out to avoid counterproductive political effects that would outweigh the direct and indirect benefits. (Brown, 1983a: 150)

However, as described in Chapter 3, the implementation of the RDF became mired within the bureaucratic apparatus (Blidall, 2011; Kupchan, 1987; Odom, 2006). Several reasons contributed to the sluggish implementation of the RDF. First of all, additional financial resources were not allocated to this undertaking and existing resources were already committed to other missions and operational requirements. Turf wars also emerged among the services hindering organisational details and preparations. Moreover, some agencies, for instance in the State Department, believed the creation of the RDF to be counterproductive to improved cooperation with the Soviets and to local Arab regimes. However, the continued preponderance of Europe in American strategic considerations stalled additional progress. As Njølstad (2004: 19) has pointed out, “[w]ith such a demanding European agenda it was hardly surprising that, after the issuing of PD-18 in August 1977, very little was being done to transform the recommended Rapid Deployment Force from a nice planning concept to a real-life military force”.

Some authors tend to highlight the lack of political pressure in favour of the prompt implementation of the RDF (Blidall, 2011; Odom, 2006). However, the top officials in the Administration asserted, privately and publicly, the pressing need for the RDF on numerous occasions. For example, President Carter reiterated his commitment to the RDF in his address at Wake Forest University on 17 March, 1978. While restating the American pledge to support peace and stability in the Middle East and acknowledging that the responsibility for achieving that aim depended primarily on the local regimes, Carter (1983d: 23) did assert that the US would maintain forces of its own to support shared defence initiatives: “The Secretary of Defense, at my direction, is improving and will maintain quickly deployable forces – air, land, and sea – to defend our interests throughout the world.”

This phenomenon effectively illustrates the discrepancies between the decision-making and policy implementation processes. PRM-10 had undoubtedly contributed to centring the Administration’s top foreign policy decision-makers mental maps on the Middle East. It helped define and characterise the problems facing the American security abroad. As Brzezinski (1983: 177) acknowledged, PRM-10 “provided the intellectual underpinnings for my own predisposition in favor of an activist, assertive, and historically

optimistic policy of detente". However, since the different agencies and services were still very much focused on other issues and regions they were more reluctant to press on with the RDFs implementation. Nevertheless, events in the vicinity of the Middle East reinforced many Administration officials' conviction of the need to strengthen US engagement in the region.

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HIC SUNT DRACONES: DANGERS ON THE EDGE OF THE MAP

“SALT lies buried in the sands of the Ogaden.”

(Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*)

While the Carter Administration was hopeful it could forge a comprehensive peace settlement in the Middle East and strengthen its capabilities in the region, progress seemed to elude the Administration. In particular, many agencies and services revealed resistance to implementing new strategies and policies. However, events in proximity of the Middle East contributed to reinforce the conviction of many key officials regarding the need to assume a more assertive US policy in the region. The emerging crises in Africa were especially persuasive of the need for a more active policy towards the Indian Ocean region, principally the Middle East.

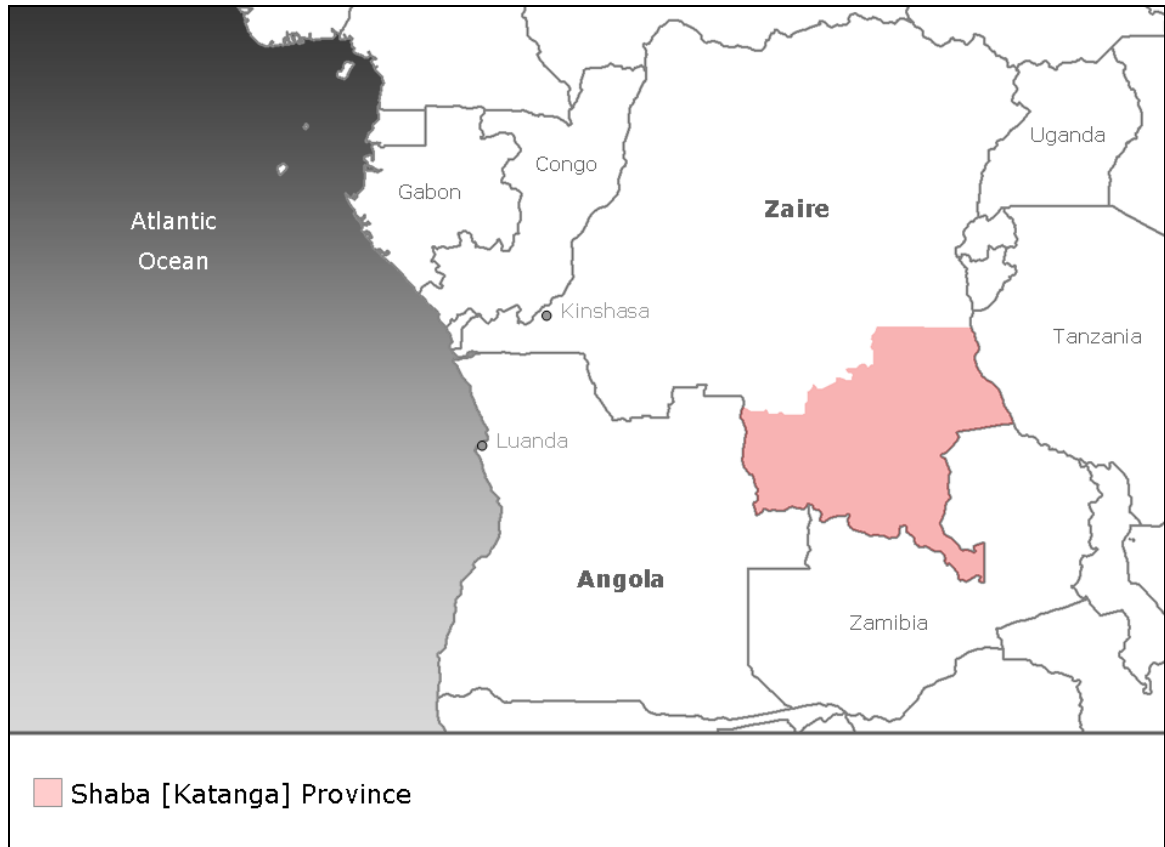
Initial signs of concern began in the early months of the Carter Presidency. In March 1977, approximately 2000 men of the Front for the National Liberation of the Congo (FNLC) invaded Zaire's Shaba province from Angola setting off the Shaba I crisis (Figure 19). The source of crisis can be traced to the troubled decolonisation process which resulted in Zaire's (i.e., Democratic Republic of the Congo) independence from Belgium in 30 June, 1960¹⁵⁹ (Odom, 1992). Conflict quickly erupted as the Belgian-sponsored Katangan forces tried to secede the mineral-rich province of Katanga¹⁶⁰ (i.e., Shaba). With the defeat of the secession initiative in 1963, the Katangan Gendarmerie was exiled in Angola. However, the country was ravaged with internal strife throughout the decade as Joseph Mobutu consolidated his power as head of the regime. As Mobutu

¹⁵⁹ Zaire was formerly the Belgian Congo. After the country's independence in 1960 it became the Democratic Republic of the Congo until 1971 when it officially became known as the Republic of Zaire. Since 1997 the name of the country reverted again to Democratic Republic of the Congo.

¹⁶⁰ Between 1971 and 1997 it was officially known as the Shaba province.

strengthened his domestic power base, relations with Western countries, particularly Belgium, deteriorated as he nationalised several foreign-owned enterprises and the economy plummeted.

FIGURE 19 – THE SHABA CONFLICT



Mobutu also tried to influence the politics of recently independent Angola. Looking to deny power to the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) led by Agostinho Neto, in the summer of 1975 Mobutu sent his *Forces Armees Zairoise* (FAZ) into Angola to try to neutralise the MPLA. However, support from the former Katangan Gendarmerie – now FNLC – helped the MPLA hold off the Zairian offensive until the Cubans could bring in troops, armour, and aircraft and repel the FAZ. As a result, the MPLA was able to consolidate its power in Angola.

After its successful rally round the MPLA, the FNLC mounted its own attack on Zaire seeking to retake the Shaba province¹⁶¹ (Odom, 1992). FNLC forces were able to quickly seize their initial objectives, winning most military confrontations with the Zairian forces. FAZ forces revealed numerous difficulties in holding back the incursion until the arrival of 1500 Moroccan troops supported by the French and Belgian helped push back the FNLC. In mid-April 1977, one month after the raid began, the FNLC retreated to Angola accompanied by about 50,000 to 70,000 Zairian refugees (Garthoff, 1985).

Throughout the conflict Mobutu tried to rouse international support by denouncing the incursion as a Communist invasion (Garthoff, 1985; Odom, 1992). Cuban aid to FNLC allowed Mobutu to establish this association. After the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) revealed itself unresponsive to this potential menace Mobutu turned to the US for assistance. Since the 1960s the US had supported Mobutu's regime on numerous occasions, providing military aid and international diplomatic support.

Contrary to Mobutu's expectation the Carter Administration exhibited an unenthusiastic response to the Zairian leader's request. To begin with, the Administration cast the conflict within a regional framework which consequently required a regionally-based solution. Secretary Vance (1983: 70) insisted that the crisis be resolved quickly "before it provided an opportunity for Soviet or Cuban meddling in Zaire, which could turn the affair into an East-West 'test of strength'". At the outset Carter (1977c) also played down the situation by claiming at a press conference that "Zaire was involved, I think at least indirectly, in the Angolan conflict, and there are some remaining hard feelings between Angola and Zaire on that part". As a result of this situation, Carter (1977c) argued that "Some of the Katangans who lived in the southern part of Zaire are now involved in trying to go back into the area where they formerly lived".

Congress subscribed to the Administration's strategy since it was equally wary of US involvement in another Third World conflict. What's more, American reluctance to further commitments to Zaire was also due to the fact that the Administration was seeking to normalise relations with Angola. In fact, before the Shaba crisis began, the US

¹⁶¹ The FNLC counted on Agostinho Neto's support since Mobutu kept aiding Angolan opposition groups such as UNITA and FLEC.

and Angola had agreed to meet in April to commence discussions¹⁶² (Vance, 1983). The US did agree to expedite some non-lethal military supplies to Zaire. However, with the continuation of the conflict, Congress ultimately reduced credits for military assistance from \$30 to \$15 million (Odom, 1992). Ultimately, the Carter Administration was satisfied in backing America's European allies in their endeavours to uphold the Mobutu regime.

The Shaba I crisis did, however, spark a debate within the Carter Administration on Cuban (and Soviet) involvement in Africa (Njølstad, 1995). The debate would intensify in the following months as events in Africa flared. Brzezinski alerted Carter of the growing nuisance of Cuban involvement in African politics in the early months of the Presidency. In a memo submitted to the President on 11 March, 1977, Brzezinski (Brzezinski to Carter, 11/03/1977: 1) pointed out that "Cuban leaders intend to make Africa a major focus of Cuba's foreign policy, since they view that continent as a fertile field for revolutionary activity, unlike Latin America". In addition, though recognising the potential strain on relations with Somalia, Brzezinski notified the President that the Cubans had recently begun providing military assistance to Ethiopia.

Brzezinski's notice was preceded by an assortment of events which had stirred politics in the Horn of Africa since the beginning of the year (Garthoff, 1985). The first incident occurred in early-February when Lieutenant Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam seized power in Ethiopia. Mengistu's ascension to power put end to several years of internal struggle for power within the Dergue¹⁶³. After taking hold of power, Mengistu's radical faction imposed a sweeping reformulation of Ethiopia's international orientation, namely declaring itself a Marxist-Leninist state (LeoGrande, 1980). The Carter Administration's singling out of Ethiopia for human rights abuses and withdrawal of further military grant aid in February certainly did not improve the situation. In fact, Ethiopia had been America's main ally in the Horn of Africa. The two countries had a mutual defence agreement since 1953 and between 1953 and 1973 Ethiopia had received half of all US military aid to Africa (Njølstad, 1995). Consequently, beleaguered by American pressure and enticed by Soviet overtures, Ethiopia accepted Soviet military aid

¹⁶² The talks between the two parties were delayed due to the Shaba conflict.

¹⁶³ The Dergue was the name given to the Provisional Military Administrative Council set up in Ethiopia after the 1974 Revolution which deposed Emperor Haile Selassie.

and severed military relation with the US in April 1977 by expelling the American military mission¹⁶⁴ (LeoGrande, 1980).

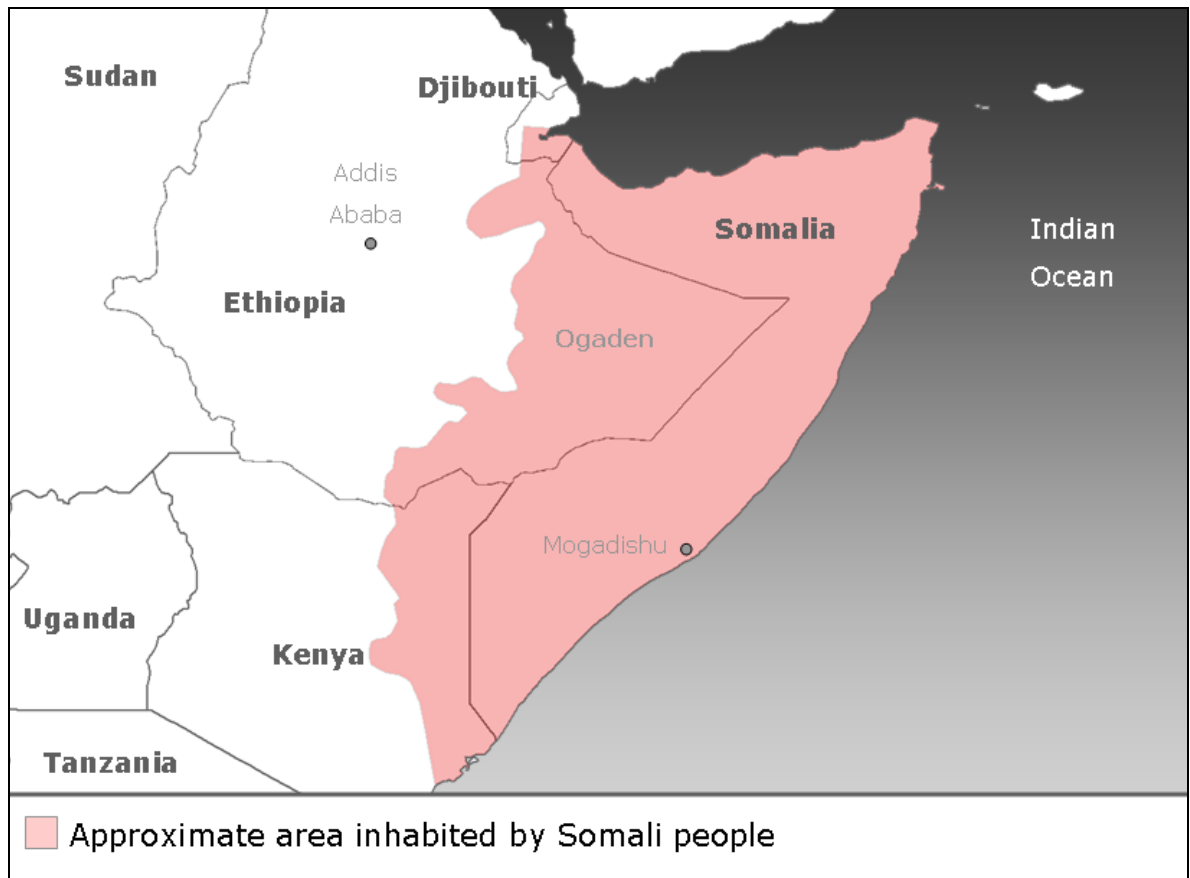
Around the same time, Somali forces mounted a series of armed incursions into the Ogaden province in southern Ethiopia (Figure 20). Somalia sought to achieve its long-standing ambition of recovering the province it claimed was legitimately theirs. Since its establishment in 1960, Somalia had repeatedly tried to wrest the Ogaden province from Ethiopia, claiming that the area was culturally and ethnically Somali. This claim was part of a larger design for a Greater Somalia which would also include parts of Djibouti in northern Ethiopia and parts of Kenya. Economic interests may have equally fuelled Somali expansionist ambitions, since the region also had some of the richest agricultural lands in the region (Tareke, 2000). Regardless of the justification, Somalia had consistently trained and organised dissident groups within Ethiopia with the intent of promoting the liberation of the province from the Ethiopian state¹⁶⁵. Devoid of success hitherto, in 1976 Somalia supported a guerrilla war which had begun in northern and southern Ethiopia. By early-1977 the guerrillas had gained control of a large portion of the Ogaden (Tareke, 2000). Hostility between the rebels and the Ethiopian army continued throughout the following months, increasing the tension between the governments in Addis Ababa and Mogadishu.

Additionally, Cuba's Fidel Castro congratulated Mengistu for his rise to power and sponsored a summit between Ethiopia and Somalia in South Yemen in March 1977 to try to calm hostilities (Garthoff, 1985; LeoGrande, 1980). Castro proposed that the two countries cooperation in the creation of an anti-imperialist federation which would also include Yemen, autonomous Ogaden, and autonomous Eritrea. While Mengistu rejected the proposal on such terms, Fidel travelled to Moscow and reaffirmed Cuban commitment to aid southern African guerrillas (LeoGrande, 1980).

¹⁶⁴ The eviction of the US military from the country was particularly significant due to the loss of the Asmara base, which was the largest strategic US international airbase. As Makinda (1982: 101) has recalled, the Asmara airbase was the "centre of all American air and space operations from the Korean war to the Vietnam war and Apollo flights, and everything went through the great air observation and tracking instruments of the 2,500 metre high site".

¹⁶⁵ President Barre was also aware that only by force could Somalia acquire its territorial ambitions since the 1964 Cairo Resolution passed by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) declared that the existing borders in Africa would be maintained and honoured (Jackson, 2007; 2010).

FIGURE 20 – THE HORN OF AFRICA



(Source: adapted from the Horn of Africa Map 1980 at the Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, University of Austin at Texas. Available at http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/horn_ethnic_80.jpg)

This succession of events led Carter to request a review of US policy towards the Horn of Africa on 17 March, 1977. Although the review was undertaken with specific reference to Kenya and Sudan, it did request that numerous other regional issues be specifically addressed, such as (PRM-21):

- Whether to continue, reduce or suspend US military and economic aid programs in Ethiopia and the likely consequences of such actions;
- The implications of the independence of TFAI¹⁶⁶ and steps that might be taken to avert a Somali-Ethiopian clash;
- Prospects for loosening Somalia's ties with the Soviet Union.

¹⁶⁶ TFAI refers to the French Territory of Afars and Issas which was the name given to present-day Djibouti between 1967 and 1977.

In addition, the Review Memorandum (PRM-21: 2) also called for a general assessment of “US interests in the whole Horn-Red Sea area, examining the impact of our actions in each country as they affect the others”. Provisions were also made for the policy recommendations, namely those best suited for dealing with the Soviets in the Horn of Africa.

The resulting report was submitted on 01 April, 1977. The report analysed the situation, framing it in its broader Cold War context. It stressed that while the Soviets were trying to displace the US as the dominant foreign power in Ethiopia it also provided the US with an opportunity to promote American influence in the region as a whole by exploiting Soviet involvement (Njølstad, 1995). Overall, the study was optimistic in its appraisal of the recent events. Although in the immediate future there were few prospects for improved US-Ethiopian relations, the study anticipated that an eventual fall of Mengistu could bring a regime which would be more favourable to American interests. In effect, the report resulting from PRM-21 suggested that

...any improvement in our relations with Somalia and Sudan should stop short of activities perceived as hostile towards Ethiopia as a nation. The same consideration suggests that, while we have no present interest in obstructing Eritrean autonomy or independence, or in opposing dissidents within Ethiopia proper, we equally have no interest in becoming involved with groups in Eritrea or with opposition elements in Ethiopia in ways which would compromise our ability to have a cooperative relationship with a successor regime in Addis Ababa. (Quoted in Njølstad, 1995: 169)

The PRC convened on 11 April, 1977, to discuss the report and the situation in the Horn of Africa, namely the issues pertaining to US arm supplies for Ethiopia and policy towards Somalia, Kenya, Djibouti, and Sudan (PRC, 11/04/1977: 2). The general conclusion was that the regime in Addis Ababa was beleaguered by multiple problems, particularly due to insurrections and raids, but had the capacity to maintain power in the near future. The group also shared the conviction that the US should not withdraw completely from Ethiopia on the ground that it should be in a position to reassert its influence in case a new government ascended to power. Nevertheless, the group

concluded that additional support to the Mengistu government could no longer be justified. The pending military aid (ordered and paid for) would also be delayed until the situation improved.

PRC members also decided to instruct the US Ambassador in Mogadishu to talk with President Siad Barre of Somalia to ascertain his overall intentions and what he expected from the US if Somalia was to disengage from the Soviets. The possibility of sending economic aid was also considered. Conversely, the discussion highlighted the risks of committing too quickly to Somalia since “Siad may be trying to play both us and the Soviets at the same time” (PRC, 11/04/1977: 2). Moreover, extending the relationship with Somalia could lead to alarming Kenya and encouraging Barre’s territorial aspirations in Ethiopia and Djibouti. The group also assessed the situation in Kenya, emphasising the apprehension in the country towards Somalia and the growing Soviet involvement in Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Uganda, as well as the need to request Saudi aid in supporting friendly regimes in the region.

The situation in the Horn of Africa deteriorated in July 1977 as about 5,000 Somali regular forces crossed the border into the Ogaden for a concerted attack on selected Ethiopian targets (Tareke, 2000). The Barre regime tried to justify the fighting by claiming that the only Somalis involved in the fighting were those living in Ethiopia and wishing to attain self-determination (Jackson, 2007). However, information acquired by the superpowers attested to the contrary (Jackson, 2007; LeoGrande, 1980; Njølstad, 1995). In fact, by mid-summer there were almost 40,000 Somali troops in Ethiopia (Garthoff, 1985).

The timing of the invasion certainly took into consideration the Somali advantages (Tareke, 2000). To begin with, in 1977 the political situation in Ethiopia was hectic. Mengistu was still consolidating his power as head of government and many of the experienced military officers had been purged or dismissed after the 1975 revolution. Moreover, numerous revolts erupted around the country creating mayhem in the provinces of Eritrea, Afar, Oromo, and Tigray. In addition, while the Ethiopians had a numerical advantage in combatants, they were technically and tactically at a disadvantage in relation to the Somalis who had the advantage in armoured and air

forces. What's more, Ethiopian forces were spread throughout the country trying to quell the revolts, leaving the border with Somalia with insufficient forces to hold off the attack. As a result, the precarious political and military situation in Ethiopia allowed the Somali forces to achieve rapid victories throughout the Ogaden province. It is estimated that by the end of July 1977, Somali forces had dominated most of the Ogaden (Garthoff, 1985; Jackson, 2010).

Hence, the Ogaden War presented the Carter Administration with its first foreign policy crisis. In this sense, it provided the first "major test of the suitability and credibility of Carter's vision for American foreign policy" (Jackson, 2010: 28). It would ultimately highlight the Administration's new relationship with the Soviets, particularly regarding the Third World. In fact, at the outset and in accordance with the previous policy debates pertaining to the region¹⁶⁷, Carter did not want to involve the US too deeply in the conflict. Rather, Carter wanted a regionally negotiated settlement to the conflict, preferably framed within the OAU¹⁶⁸. This was attuned to the Administration's initial emphasis on peaceful resolution of conflicts and regionalist outlook.

For that reason, the Carter Administration did not overly emphasise Somalia's initial requests for military aid. In fact, during the first half of 1977, the State Department was reluctant even to supply defensive military equipment or to authorise allies and friends to supply Barre's regime with US weapons (Vance, 1983). However, Carter also wanted to avoid the Soviets and its allies from taking advantage of local conflicts. In particular, Carter believed that "outside powers should not be 'fuelling' African territorial disputes" (quoted in Jackson, 2010: 28). The Administration's top foreign policy decision-makers shared a similar conviction. For instance, on 25 August, 1977, the PRC convened to review the Somali and Eritrean insurgent advances in Ethiopia (Brzezinski to Carter, 26/08/1977). The PRC recommended and Carter signed-off on several decisions, such as stepping up US support to Sudan and Kenya and mobilising African leaders to demand

¹⁶⁷ For a general outlook on Carter's ideas for Africa since his early Presidential campaign see Njølstad (1995: 168).

¹⁶⁸ The OAU officially involved itself in the conflict after Ethiopia requested an emergency meeting to discuss the Somali invasion. Representatives of eight African nations met in August 1977, in Gabon, but talks failed as Somalia withdrew from the negotiations (Jackson, 2010).

that outside powers refrain from supplying arms to the parties in conflict in order to implement a mediated cease-fire. Once again, the PRC avoided siding with any one of the belligerents. Rather, the US sought to try to accommodate both parties while placing the burden for the continuation of the conflict on the Soviets: "Since we do not want to supply arms to either Ethiopia or Somalia now but the Soviets are supplying them to both, an appeal for an arms embargo will dramatize the destructive role the Soviets are playing in the area" (Brzezinski to Carter, 26/08/1977: 1).

American regional allies were equally concerned with the increasing Soviet involvement in the region. Many states feared that the Soviet Union was encroaching in on the region and endangering their regimes. Officials from Egypt, Iranian, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan approached the Administration cautioning the US to "what they saw as a new and dangerous Soviet plot to undermine the security of their regimes and the entire Gulf-Read Sea region" (Njølstad, 1995: 172). The Sudanese President had personally written Carter warning that the Soviets were "pursuing a sinister grand strategy in Africa" and hoped that the US "would respond favourably to requests of help from those countries ready and eager to defend themselves against the Soviet threat" (quoted in Brzezinski, 1983: 179). As a matter of fact, several countries had endeavoured in the recent past to try to sway Somalia away from Soviet influence (Garthoff, 1985). In 1975 Iran and Saudi Arabia both offered to provide military assistance to Somalia in return for it distancing itself from the USSR. With the exacerbation of the conflict in the Horn of Africa, America's regional allies wanted the US to assume a more active role in containing Soviet activity.

American reluctance to become directly involved in the conflict led its regional allies to request consent to provide Somalia with military aid, including "cannibalised" Soviet weapons which they had in their possession, in order to compensate for the loss of Soviet assistance (Njølstad, 1995). Additional incentives were also used by American allies to limit the conflict and Soviet influence in the region. The Saudis had offered Somalia financial aid as an enticement for breaking with the Soviets. Egypt allegedly offered its own "fire brigade" to try to quiet the situation and maintain regional order. The Shah offered his services by supplying weapons to Somalia and also took on some of Somalia's financial burdens (Njølstad, 1995).

In mid-June 1977, the continued requests for aid from the Somali regime and the insistence of US allies led Carter to inform the Somali Ambassador that the US would ascertain the possibility of its regional allies helping Somalia sustain its defensive capabilities. Interpreting the President's words as a "forthcoming attitude", the Somalis made a specific request to the US for weapons on 09 July, 1977 (Vance, 1983). While causing some discussion within the Administration, it was "concluded that 'in principle' we would help other countries to meet Somalia's needs for defensive equipment" (Vance, 1983: 73).

The reliance on regional allies was completely in accordance with the policy recommendations resulting from the interagency debate carried out thus far. There is speculation as to the amount of encouragement that regional allies actually received from the US for bolstering the Barre regime. The PRC meeting of April (PRC, 11/04/1977) had suggested that the US encourage regional allies, particularly Saudi Arabia, in assisting in the management of the conflict. While the level of responsibility the US had in persuading allies to act is debatable, there is no doubt that "there existed an explicit *interest* for such options on the US side several months before it was actually approved as US policy in July" (Njølstad, 1995: 173).

Moreover, the Soviets were in fact particularly active in the Somali-Ethiopian War. When the hostilities began the Soviets continued to provide military assistance to both parts of the conflict. However, by the end of the summer, the Soviets had undeniably chosen one of the parties over the other. Moscow began publicly condemning the Somali incursion and in October 1977 the Soviets announced the termination of all military supplies to Somalia (Jackson, 2010). Subsequently, Soviet military advisors to Ethiopia were increased, numbering over a thousand, and played an important role in planning and commanding operations in the Ogaden (LeoGrande, 1980).

The Soviets also coordinated their activities closely with Havana (Gleijeses, 2006). Cuba was directly involved in the conflict since it flared up in 1977. Initially, it dispatched military advisors to Ethiopia in May 1977. Subsequently, after Somalia broke off diplomatic relations with Cuba later that year, Cuban regular combat troops were

deployed in the war. By early-1978, Cuba had dispatched nearly 17,000 regular soldiers to fight alongside Ethiopian troops in the Ogaden¹⁶⁹ (LeoGrande, 1980).

With the active assistance of the Soviets and the Cubans, Barre's initial military triumphs were jeopardised. In an effort to try to attract Western aid, Barre renounced the Treaty of Friendship between Somalia and the Soviet Union in November 1977. In addition, all Soviet military and civilian advisors in Somalia were evicted and the Soviet naval bases on the Indian Ocean, including at Berbera, were closed. Cuban diplomats and advisors were equally expelled and diplomatic relations were also severed with Cuba (Jackson, 2007; 2010).

Notwithstanding Barre's numerous requests and initiatives, Carter sought to maintain the US secluded from direct involvement in the conflict. After the ejection of the Soviets, the Administration announced that it would maintain its official policy of refusing to supply arms to Somalia and continued to insist that regional problems should be resolved endogenously (Garthoff, 1985; Jackson, 2010). Moreover, the Administration could never agree to openly endorse a state that was violating international law by invading another sovereign nation.

Rather than providing military aid to Somalia, the Carter Administration was primarily concerned with the increasing Soviet involvement in the region. The Carter Administration was particularly worried that increasing Soviet (or one of its proxies) involvement in the Ogaden would prolong and exacerbate the war and destabilise the entire region (Jackson, 2007; 2010). Therefore, on 12 September, 1977, the Cabinet sanctioned the OAU's position that "outside powers should not be 'fuelling' African territorial disputes" (quoted in Jackson, 2007: 708). Furthermore, the Carter Administration restated its conviction on the need to impose an arms embargo on both warring parties for the duration of the conflict.

As Soviet and Cuban support for Ethiopia continued to increase in the fall of 1977, the Carter Administration continued to protest and warn the different parties of the potential adverse outcomes such behaviour could generate. For instance, in December,

¹⁶⁹ According to recent research, Cuban soldiers were used exclusively on the Eastern Front against Somalia's and were not involved in fighting in the north against Eritrea (Gleijeses, 2006).

Vance informed Andrei Gromyko that it would be useful for the USSR to disengage from the Ogaden conflict and in early-1978 the State Department also formally requested that the Cubans discontinue their involvement in the conflict and respect the OAU's policy of non-interference (Jackson, 2010). Carter (Carter to Brezhnev, 21/12/1977) also wrote a letter to Brezhnev on 21 December, 1977, expressing "hope that the United States and the Soviet Union could collaborate in making certain that regional African disputes do not escalate into major international conflicts". The President informed his Soviet counterpart that the US was refraining from supplying arms to both parties and requested that the USSR adopt a similar policy in order to uphold the atmosphere of cooperation between the two superpowers:

I mention these concerns because I deeply believe that it is important for us, to the extent that it is possible, to avoid becoming involved in regional conflicts either as direct protagonists or through proxies. We know from recent history that such involvement stimulates tensions and tends to paralyze progress towards wider cooperation, which we both desire. (Carter to Brezhnev, 21/12/1977)

Meanwhile, the SCC convened on 26 January, 1978, to reassess the developments in the Horn of Africa. While acknowledging several problems relating to the conflict, the members of the SCC continued trying to downplay the confrontation with the Soviets in the region: "It was the consensus of the group that the US Government should be cautious about taking actions that would in themselves encourage a sense of crisis or confrontation with the Soviets or that would commit us prematurely to positions that could limit our flexibility" (SCC, 27/01/1978: 1). The principals decided that the US should continue to remind the Soviets of the seriousness of their involvement in the Horn of Africa and the political problems which it could generate. They also reiterated their conviction of not directly committing the US to any side of the conflict. In this sense, the SCC members recommended a series of measures which sought to give the Administration a high level of flexibility in dealing with both parties, without being liable for obstructing a resolution of the conflict, namely:

- We will continue to seek advice from our allies and other friendly governments to enlist their aid in impressing upon the Soviets (and Cubans) [handwritten insertion by Carter] our serious concern, but we will be cautious about encouraging those who are inclined to help the Somalis to make commitments that they would expect us to back up;
- We will accelerate study of our own capabilities and those of other governments to intervene in the situation in ways that could complicate or make more costly the Soviet/Cuba intervention, but we will underwrite no action at this time; (...)
- Through military ----[blacked-out]---- the Iranian, Saudi, Egyptian and Sudanese governments will be sounded out on their capabilities and intentions for providing support to Somalia. We will not go beyond these discussions until we again talk to Sadat. (SCC, 27/01/1978: 2)

As the US weighed its options, the Soviet and Cuban commitment to the Mengistu regime allowed Ethiopia to launch a counter-offensive in early-1978 (Tareke, 2000). The lack of external support hindered Somalia's capability to fend off the attack and Somali troops quickly found themselves in retreat. Reports began reaching the Administration's top decision-makers that the communist bloc's continued military support of Ethiopia would eventually drive the Somalis out of the Ogaden (Jackson, 2010). This drive raised the possibility that Ethiopian and Cuban forces could potentially pursue Somali forces and launch an assault of their own against Somalia.

These events alarmed the Administration and the internal debate intensified. The American policy of non-intervention was increasingly coming under question outside and inside the Administration. Congress was particularly vocal about the shortcomings of the Carter Administration's policy for the Horn of Africa:

As early as October 1977, Representative Robert Sikes (D-FI) described the refusal of the United States to aid the Somalis as "ineptness" (...); and on November 29, he argued that "the United States will be derelict if we do not move quickly to take advantage of the potential" for replacing the Soviet Union in Somalia, particularly in the strategic naval base at Berbera (...). On January 19, 1978, Sikes told the House that "I find it exceedingly hard to

comprehend an action of the US Government which virtually gives the green light for the conquest of Somalia and Eritrea by Cuban forces under Russian control... Arms for Somalia could have forced a negotiated settlement and kept the strategic Horn of Africa out of communist hands" (...). On February 8, Senator Thomas Eagleton (D-Mo) also expressed his concern about Soviet advances in the Horn, claiming that without US help, "Somalia's relatively small and now-depleted military forces could not meet the military might of Ethiopia's Soviet backed forces, thus assuring a Soviet takeover in the Horn of Africa". (Jackson, 2010: 32)

In a report for the Committee on International Relations, submitted on 03 February, 1978, the crisis in the Ogaden was considered the potentially most unstable and violent conflict in Africa. For the Committee the most disturbing issue was the potential domino effect that could be set off due to the conflict: "By undermining the fragile governments that exist in the Horn, Soviet influence could rapidly spread throughout the region and along the entire East Coast of Africa" (Committee on International Relations, 1978: 1). According to the report, America's policy for Africa was in need of revision for a "laissez fair approach is simply untenable when our adversaries are involved so heavily in the internal and external conflicts of the area" (Committee on International Relations, 1978: 4). While the report did recommend that the US should make clear its position of complete neutrality between the warring parties and continue to not provide, directly or indirectly, military aid to Somalia, it did reinforce the need for the Administration to do more to educate the American people and particularly Congress on the political situation in the region:

Our foreign policies are influenced greatly by public opinion, which is molded primarily through the media. (...) Vietnam is still too fresh and the desire to not become involved in another conflict too convenient, the comparisons between civil wars in these two continents too obvious for our Government to act assertively. But there are distinct political and strategic issues that should be emphasized. (Committee on International Relations, 1978: 51)

President Carter had already raised the issue of public perception regarding the Administration's policy during the previous year. For instance, in the first NSC meeting on Africa, convened on 06 October, 1977, Carter stated he was worried that Soviet and Cuban involvement in Africa was creating the image domestically that he was not firm enough with the Russians (Vance, 1983). This idea was also pressed many times by Brzezinski. For example, in a Weekly Report to the President in late-1977, the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs cautioned Carter that, despite the appropriateness of his initiatives, he felt that "we are confronting a growing domestic problem involving public perception of the general character of that policy", which was ultimately "seen as 'soft'" (Brzezinski to Carter, 18/11/1977). For Brzezinski, Soviet involvement called for a more robust response from the US. The failure to respond would allow the Soviet Union to further strengthen its influence in Africa. In a memo to Carter in 18 January, 1978, Brzezinski cautioned the President once again of the possible consequences of increasing Soviet behaviour:

Soviet leaders may be acting merely in response to an apparent opportunity, or the Soviet action may be part of a wider strategic design. In either case, the Soviets probably calculate, as previously in Angola, they can later adopt a more conciliatory attitude and that the US will simply again adjust to the consolidation of Soviet presence in yet another African country. (Reproduced in Brzezinski, 1983: 181)

More disconcerting still was the threat this situation created for US interests in the entire Middle East region. The situation was becoming equally disturbing across the Red Sea in the Yemens. Since the late-1960s, South Yemen (i.e., the People's Republic of Yemen) had established friendly relations with the USSR, becoming the first Marxist Arab regime (Garthoff, 1985). During 1978 internal strife led to Abd al-Fattah Isma'il to seize power in a coup and subsequently increase South Yemen-Soviet cooperation. In fact, South Yemen actively supported Soviet and Cuban involvement in the Horn of Africa. The prospect of another Soviet proxy in the region led Brzezinski (1983: 181) to warn the SCC that "if Ethiopia and South Yemen become Soviet associates, not only will the access to the Suez be threatened, and this involves the oil pipeline from Saudi Arabia and Iran, but

there will be a serious and direct political threat to Saudi Arabia". This prospective threat led the Administration to send a delegation to North Yemen and Saudi Arabia to outline a new military aid programme to counter growing Soviet influence in the Arabian Peninsula (Garthoff, 1985). Eventually, the US would supply North Yemen with a \$390 million military aid package which included F-5 fighter aircraft, heavy artillery, and anti-tank weapons (Brzezinski, 1983; Smith, 1986).

Accordingly, in early-1978 the first serious disagreements within the Administration over the policy for the Horn of Africa came to the forefront. The real issue was not the importance of the Horn of Africa. With the key foreign policy decision-makers' mental maps already fixed on the Middle East, the most pressing differences were on how best to safeguard US interests in the region. The main contention within the Carter Administration was whether to link US-USSR relations involving other issues to Soviet behaviour in Africa. Brzezinski and the NSC favoured linkage because it was a central principle of *détente*. As Brzezinski made clear to Carter in a memo in early-March 1978:

The Soviets must be made to realize that *detente*, to be enduring, has to be both comprehensive and reciprocal. If the Soviets are allowed to feel that they can use military force in one part of the world – and yet maintain cooperative relations in other areas – then they have no incentive to exercise any restraint. (Reproduced in Brzezinski, 1983: 186)

However, Brzezinski was offset by the other foreign policy decision-makers. In particular, Vance rejected any idea that their actions in Africa were part of any Soviet grand design. On the contrary, Vance viewed Soviet behaviour simply as the exploitation of emerging opportunities. In view of that, Vance rejected linking Soviet actions in the Horn of Africa on the ground that it would harm larger American interests, such as SALT negotiations, and have little or no effect on Soviet behaviour in Africa (Vance, 1983).

The interagency debate confirmed this contrast. For instance, in a SCC meeting held on 22 February, 1978, the future role of the Soviets in the Horn of Africa and the US response was discussed. In opening the proceedings, Deputy Assistant to the President

for National Security Affairs, David Aaron, reviewed his recent visit to Addis Ababa to talk to the Ethiopian Government and concluded that:

The Soviets are in Ethiopia deeply and pervasively and that we face a long term problem. If we can help settle the Ogaden problem and dampen the Eritrean insurgency, we will help create conditions for diminution of the Soviet role. But we should be aware that the Soviets will be there as long as it takes the Ethiopians to learn how to use modern military equipment. (SCC, 22/02/1978: 2)

Subsequently, the discussion laid bare the internal differences on several key-issues regarding the conflict in the Horn of Africa. Besides the possibility of a resolution demanding Soviet and Cuban withdrawal from the conflict, the group discussed the illicit transfer of US weapons to Somalia by the Saudi Arabia. While the group was in favour of US allies providing non-US military equipment, Secretary Brown questioned whether the any such transfers should be supported without the prior withdrawal of Somali forces from the Ogaden. Secretary Vance argued that the US should not support the allies' arms transfers until Somalia had withdrawn. Nevertheless, Brzezinski was reluctant to counter Saudi policy in the Horn of Africa. Moreover, he believed Saudi support was essential to offset Soviet and Cuban advances.

The group then discussed the possibility of sending a US carrier task force to the region. Brzezinski defended the stationing of the task force in the Red Sea as a confidence-building measure and a deterrent to further Soviet involvement. For Brzezinski, the task force would serve several purposes of which the most important would be for America to encourage "countries in the region that the US is present, stands with them, will protect the flow of arms, and will provide protection from the Russians" (SCC, 22/02/1978: 10). This argument met considerable opposition, particularly from Vance and Brown. For Vance, the initiative was a bluff which the US could not enforce since the "he would not put any US troops in Africa" (SCC, 22/02/1978: 15). Brown was also in opposition to sending a task force to the region for similar reasons.

Unable to secure the placing of the task force in the region, Brzezinski inquired as to possible US actions which might influence Soviet behaviour in the Horn of Africa. The

possibility of linking other US-Soviet bilateral issues, such as the Indian Ocean talks, science and technology transfers, SALT II, or relations with China, to the Soviets' African policy were also discussed. However, the differences in orientation were evident in the meetings final recommendations:

- We should rely on the OAU to press for some sort negotiated settlement but not exclude the United Nations;
- We should approach the Saudis, Iranians, and Pakistanis to point out that arms transfers of US origin are illegal, that such illegal assistance could have a serious impact on future US arms sales, that we do not object to their providing non-US origin equipment to Somalia and that we would consider authorizing third country arms transfers if Somalia is threatened with invasion after withdrawing from the Ogaden;
- We are disagreed whether to recommend deployment of a US carrier task force but agree that we should proceed with consultations with regional powers; and
- With respect to other actions against the USSR and Cuba we see no direct linkage with other bilateral matters but are willing to consider further steps with respect to space cooperation and technology transfers to the Chinese. (Secretary Vance reserved his position on the latter). (SCC, 22/02/1978: 15)

A few days later, President Carter issued PD-32 setting the guidelines for US policy towards the Horn of Africa. The directive seemed to validate the existing policies and the more accommodating attitude advocated by Vance and the State Department. In effect, it confirmed a regionally-oriented resolution to the conflict in the Horn of Africa, namely through the initiatives of the OAU. It also reiterated the American policy of not authorising allies to supply weapons of US-origin to third parties, particularly to Somalia. Providing Somalia with defensive non-US weapons was not disapproved, but PD-32 emphasised that Somalia should be pressed to withdraw from the Ogaden. If Somalia did vacate the Ogaden the US was prepared to initiate procedures to assure Congressional approval for the transfer of defensive US-origin weapons to assist in the defence of

Somali territory. Furthermore, President Carter did not approve the deployment of a US carrier task force in the Red Sea.

However, PD-32 also endorsed considerable leeway in implementing a more assertive policy in case the need arose. For instance, while the carrier was not authorised in the Red Sea, the President did indicate willingness to move a carrier into the vicinity, namely to Diego Garcia¹⁷⁰. What's more, the directive established that in the case of a Soviet and Cuban aided invasion of Somalia the US would consider authorising its allies to transfer weapons to Somalia even in the absence of its commitment to withdraw from the Ogaden. More significantly, "in the event of an invasion of Somalia, should the countries of the region decide to deliver military equipment to Somalia, or to provide air cover or other units to counter Ethiopian or Cuban air capability, the United States would be prepared to offset Soviet threats or actions directed at such assistance measures" (PD-32: 2). The precise measures used to counterbalance prospective Soviet actions were not identified, but the directive clearly indicated US resolve to act more assertively in the Horn of Africa if circumstances so required.

Moreover, notwithstanding the recommendation resulting from the interagency debates against binding wider US-USSR relations to the Soviets' actions in the Horn of Africa, the President implicitly ended up linking them. One day after Brzezinski had stated to the press that Soviet military involvement in the Ogaden War could complicate efforts to achieve a new strategic-arms accord¹⁷¹, the President declared at his 02 March, 1978, News Conference that while SALT talks were currently in progress with the Soviets they would have to be backed by the American people in order to be ratified by Congress. The Soviet infringement of US principles regarding the conflict would, according to Carter (1978a), "lessen the confidence of the American people in the word and peaceful intentions of the Soviet Union, would make it more difficult to ratify a SALT agreement or

¹⁷⁰ The carrier was never actually moved to Diego Garcia in accordance with the directive. Njølstad (1995) suggests that the proposal may have been put forward by the President simply to satisfy Brzezinski's more assertive demands.

¹⁷¹ In a breakfast for reporters hosted by Vice-President Mondale on 01 March, 1978, Brzezinski stated specifically that the "unwarranted intrusion of Soviet power into a purely local conflict ... will inevitably complicate the context not only of the (SALT) negotiating process itself but of any ratification that would follow the successful conclusion of the negotiations" (quoted in Murphy, 1978: 4).

comprehensive test ban agreement if concluded, and therefore, the two are linked because of actions by the Soviets”.

The President’s affirmation reopened the debate within the Administration regarding the appropriate policy for dealing with the situation in the Horn of Africa. On same day the President spoke to the press, the SCC gathered to discuss the Horn of Africa (SCC, 02/03/1978). Secretaries Brown and Vance observed that it was wrong for the President to establish linkage. Vance was particularly critical because “We will end up losing SALT and that will be the worst thing that could happen” (SCC, 02/03/1978: 3). Brown acknowledged that linkage existed, but should not be encouraged. In fact, when Brzezinski declared that claiming there would be linkage was a statement of fact, Brown countered by asserting that “Not all statements of fact should be made” (SCC, 02/03/1978: 4).

The discussion continued covering a wide array of issues. However, considerable disagreements continued within the group. Brzezinski persisted in pushing the idea that the “Soviets are demonstrating a predisposition to exploit a local conflict for larger purposes” (SCC, 02/03/1978: 8). The US needed to act more assertively in order impress on the Soviets the cost of their actions, otherwise “this is going to be a continuation of our pattern of behavior of the last few months: noise but no follow-through” (SCC, 02/03/1978: 9). While Vance remained adamant in not jeopardising US-Soviet relations any further, Brown suggested an overture to the Chinese to try to pressure Moscow. The majority of the group favoured a closer relationship with China and Vance ultimately agreed that conversations on science and technology could proceed. However, Vance continued to caution that “we are on the brink of ending up with a real souring of relations between ourselves and the Soviet Union and it may take a helluva long while to change and may not be changed for years and I think that is a very important step to take” (SCC, 02/03/1978: 8).

The announcement of the end of the Ogaden War on 08 March, 1978, settled the issue of how to deal with Sarre, namely how to convince to withdraw his forces from Ethiopia. However, it did not resolve the discussion within the Administration over Soviet and Cuban involvement in Africa. In fact, in May 1978 the situation in the Shaba

province erupted once again. The FNLC invaded the Shaba province and was again able to achieve rapid advances into Zaire and conquer several strategic points in the area (Odom, 1992). This time around the Carter Administration hastily denounced the situation. At news conference on 25 May, Carter castigated the Neto regime and his Cuban associates:

The Government of Angola must bear a heavy responsibility for the deadly attack which was launched from its territory, and it's a burden and a responsibility shared by Cuba. We believe that Cuba had known of the Katangan plans to invade and obviously did nothing to restrain them from crossing the border. We also know that the Cubans have played a key role in training and equipping the Katangans who attacked. (Carter, 1978b)

Brzezinski corroborated the President's claims a few days later on the NBC programme *Meet the Press*. According to Brzezinski, the invasion "could not have taken place without the invading parties having been armed and trained by the Cubans and, indeed, perhaps also the East Germans, and we have sufficient evidence to be quite confident in our conclusion that Cuba shares the political and the moral responsibility for the invasion" (quoted in Department of State, 1978a: 26). The public denunciation of Cuban involvement continued throughout the weeks and eventually the Administration began implicating the Soviets for their responsibility in the crisis. More precisely, on 14 June, Carter (1978c) assailed both the Cubans and the Soviets for their responsibility in the Shaba conflict: "I think it's accurate to say that they [Cuba and the Soviet Union] take advantage of local disturbances and move in with massive intrusions, both of military weapons, which contribute to further bloodshed among Africans themselves, and when they are permitted by the local government, they send in large quantities of troops".

Regardless of the actual facts concerning Cuban and Soviet involvement in the Shaba II crisis, the Carter Administration had transformed a Third World conflict into an East-West conflict¹⁷². The issue died down as direct European involvement – i.e., French and Belgian troops – and US air support helped to quickly defeat the FNLC forces (Odom, 1992). Nevertheless, by mid-1978, US policy was increasingly exhibiting a more assertive

¹⁷² For an account on the Cuban involvement in the Shaba conflict see Gleijeses (2006).

character. To begin with, the Ogaden and the Shaba II crises marked the end of the tentative rapprochement between the US and Cuba (Glejjeses, 2006). These conflicts also hardened the Administration's attitude towards the Soviet Union, impairing the already strained relationship between the two superpowers. In particular, this toughened stance hindered increased cooperation with the USSR for, as Brzezinski (1983: 178) admitted, "it represented a serious setback to our attempts to develop with the Soviets some rules of the game in dealing with turbulence in the Third World". Ultimately, for the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, the Horn of Africa marked the beginning of the end of détente and the deterioration of US-USSR relations (Brzezinski, 1983).

The espousal of a more assertive policy towards the Soviets was not, however, shared by all the Administration's key foreign policy decision-makers. In fact, during the crises in Africa several different mental maps of the Middle East region coexisted within the Carter Administration. While some were still optimistic about the possibility of cooperating with Soviets in managing Third World conflicts, others were increasingly pessimistic about the efficacy of the current US foreign policy, particularly regarding the relationship with the USSR in the Middle East region.

In particular, Brzezinski gradually became more unreceptive to Soviet behaviour in the Third World. He repeatedly alerted the President to the detrimental effects of not standing up to Soviet expansionism. According to Brzezinski, the US could no longer afford to acquiesce to the Soviets. As he would incessantly remind Carter, "both for international reasons as well as domestic political reasons you ought to deliberately toughen both the tone and the substance of our foreign policy" (Brzezinski to Carter, 13/09/1979: 2). In contrast, Secretaries Vance and Brown were concerned that a more assertive approach could prove counterproductive to US interests. For Brown an excessive response could produce very few tangible results and possibly discredit future US initiatives. Vance, for his part, was apprehensive that a more robust approach could ultimately undermine détente and create further problems for US interests in the region.

In the end, it was the President who had the final word on US policy. Carter's judgment mirrored his advisors different problem representations. Throughout the events in Africa, Carter maintained his principle of emphasising non-intervention and

non-military solutions to the crises. Despite Brzezinski's continued insistence for a more aggressive policy towards the Soviets, Carter rejected his advisor's more belligerent recommendations. PD-32 certainly seems to vindicate the opposing views, particularly those of Vance. All the same, Carter did modify his attitude towards the US-Soviet relationship. Not only did he come to link SALT to Soviet actions in Africa, he also made decisions which sought to get the USSR to appreciate the consequences of their actions. For instance, Carter suspended the Indian Ocean demilitarization talks¹⁷³ in October 1978 and by the end of the year he relinquished the Conventional Arms Transfer (CAT) talks (Moens, 1990; Powaski, 1998).

In this sense, Carter reflected the dynamic nature of his Administration's geographic mental maps. While still rather confident in the capability of regional actors to manage their local problems and in the ability of the US to cooperate with the USSR, Carter was increasingly apprehensive of the long-term implications of Soviet involvement in the Third World, particularly in the Middle East. His decisions merely embodied the greater concurrence within the Administration's foreign policy decision-making group at that moment regarding the strategic importance of the Horn of Africa and the greater Middle East region. As he stated in a speech on US foreign and security policy in mid-March 1978:

There also has been an ominous inclination on the part of the Soviet Union to use its military power – to intervene in local conflicts, with advisers, with equipment, and with full logistical support and encouragement for mercenaries from other Communist countries, as we can observe today in Africa. (...) We will match, together with our allies and friends, any threatening power through a combination of military forces, political efforts, and economic programs. We will not allow any other nation to gain military superiority over us. (...) We shall implement this policy that I've outlined so briefly in three different ways: by maintaining strategic nuclear balance; by working closely with our NATO allies to strengthen and modernize our defenses in Europe; and by maintaining and developing

¹⁷³ The Indian Ocean demilitarization talks began in June 1977. The American proposal called for the US and the USSR to renounce increasing the existing level of their naval deployments, changing the general pattern of deployment, or attaining new bases in the Indian Ocean region (Powaski, 1998).

forces to counter any threats to our allies and friends in our vital interests in Asia, the Middle East, and other regions of the world. (Carter, 1983d: 21-22)

As Carter later acknowledged in an interview with Njølstad, the Ogaden was not worthy of American military intervention. Rather, he admitted that he “always thought that the place for us to confront the Soviet Union, if necessary, was in the Middle East area” (quoted in Njølstad, 1995: 177). This belief would grow as events in the region would once again concentrate the Administration’s attention.

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IRAN AND THE ARC OF CRISIS

“For the most part, the Soviet-American battle took the form of gaining preeminent influence in third states and denying influence to the other. Europe being quickly polarized, the United States and the Soviet Union turned their attention to the Third World, in particular the part of the Third World adjacent to or near the Soviet Union. Since this was an area in which Western influence had been preeminent before World War II, the Americans quickly found themselves in the position of defending a status quo that reflected the success of Western European states in the imperial era. The Soviets meanwhile found themselves the natural ally of those forces seeking to overturn that status quo. For American policymakers, the danger was seen as Soviet subversion. The beneficiaries of the status quo, usually traditional authoritarian regimes, were described as ‘pro-West’. Opponents of the status quo, often liberal and almost always anti-imperialist, were described as ‘anti-West’. The presumption of this terminology was that the pro-Western elements accepted the values of the ‘free world’ and the anti-Western elements were Marxists.”

(Richard Cottam, *Iran and the United States: A Cold War Case Study*)

Iran had been at the centre of US Middle Eastern policy for decades. Its size, population, and position bordering the Soviet Union and the Strait of Hormuz gave it an extraordinary geopolitical importance for US decision-makers. Maintaining Iran within the Western sphere of influence was thus a crucial objective. However, it was a generalised belief that following the 2nd World War Turkey and Iran posed the greatest risk of succumbing to Soviet territorial expansion and political subversion (Lenczowski, 1979). Thus, in order to secure its political goals, the US had long been involved in Iranian politics. It had been particularly active in trying to secure a regime which would be favourable to US interests. As a result, in 1953 the US was involved in the *coup d'etat* that

deposed the government of Prime Minister Mohammad Musaddiq, replacing him with the Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi¹⁷⁴ (Bill, 1988; Gasiorowski, 1987; Kinzer, 2003). Despite the evident aim of preventing Musaddiq from nationalising British property, particularly oil companies, the coup was framed as an enterprise to thwart the Communist threat to Iran (Kinzer, 2003).

The result of the US involvement in the coup was the consolidation of an enduring relationship with the Shah. The relationship flourished as a result of the high level of economic and military assistance provided by the Americans throughout the following two decades. According to Bill (1988: 113), US economic and military aid “was designed to strengthen the shah’s government both against internal threats and against any threats that may have emanated from outside Iran’s borders”. The Shah emphatically encouraged US aid since it satisfied his ambitions of regional hegemony. In fact, since the British announced their withdrawal from the region in 1968, the Shah had been planning to fill the void left in their absence (Bill, 1988). In the Shah’s view, Iran would be the dominant power in the Middle East.

Several US Administrations had come to rely on Iran for safeguarding US interests in the Middle East (Little, 2008). For instance, while Kennedy was initially hesitant, his unwillingness to rely exclusively on an unpredictable Saudi Arabia for guaranteeing regional order led him to increasingly support the Shah. Moreover, Johnson’s mounting focus on Vietnam also reinforced the regional role Iran could play on behalf of the US security interests. However, both Kennedy and Johnson were apprehensive of the Shah’s ambitions for regional dominance (Alvandi, 2012). Accordingly, they sought to continue the British tradition of balancing Iranian and Saudi power in order to secure regional stability.

It was with the Nixon Administration however that Iran assumed a role of *primus inter pares*. As the British withdrew from the Persian Gulf, the Shah endeavoured unremittingly to convince the Nixon Administration that it could replace Great Britain as the guarantor of regional stability. In particular, the Shah emphasised Saudi inadequacy in

¹⁷⁴ The 1953 *coup d’etat* – i.e., Operation Ajax – was the first peacetime use of covert action by the US to overthrow a foreign government (Gasiorowski, 1987).

protecting US interests. More precisely, the Shah “warned the Americans against continuing with the balancing policy of the past, arguing that although King Faisal was a wise leader, Saudi domestic instability and the absence of a strong successor meant that in the long run the United States could not rely on Saudi Arabia to protect the Gulf” (Alvandi, 2012: 354).

Iran’s aspiration for regional dominance was in harmony with the Nixon Administration’s foreign policy outlook. As previously mentioned, the Nixon Doctrine sought to encourage local allies to assume the responsibility for regional security. Iran was a natural choice for US decision-makers, for as Kissinger told the Senate Subcommittee on Foreign Assistance in 1976, “On all major international issues, the policies of the United States and the policies of Iran have been parallel and therefore mutually reinforcing” (quoted in Bill, 1988: 203). As a matter of fact, in 1970 there was a consensus within the Administration that the US could rely on Iran to singlehandedly contain Soviet influence in the region (Alvandi, 2012).

The Shah readily demonstrated his usefulness on several occasions. For instance, in 1971 during the South Asian crisis, Iran played a decisive role in aiding Pakistan against India. Since the US could not legally transfer weapons to Pakistan, the Nixon Administration used Iran to transfer arms to its Pakistani ally (Alvandi, 2012). Once again, the Shah upheld Western interests in the region in early-1973 by sending over one thousand Iranian commandos to the aid of the Sultan of Oman. The use of Iranian forces impeded the Soviet-backed uprising in the Dhofar province from escalating further and destabilising the regime (Little, 2008).

As a result, by the time Carter arrived in Washington, the idea of entrusting Iran with the security of the Middle East was completely entrenched in the American bureaucracy (Sick, 1985). This presumption was also espoused by several officials in the Carter Administration. For Brzezinski (1983: 356), Iran was the “strategic pivot of a protected tier shielding the crucial oil-rich region of the Persian Gulf from possible Soviet intrusion”. Acknowledging this fact led the incoming Carter Administration to continue the standing policy of advancing the Shah’s regional responsibility (Brzezinski, 1983). The confidence in the Iranian policy was so tenacious that the Carter Administration did not

subject existing policy to any major interagency review during the initial six months in Office. In fact, official documents and reports emphasised the need to strengthen the relationship. For example, a Department of State briefing paper on Iran issued in early-1977 stressed the mutual interest between the US and Iran in containing Soviet expansion and highlighted the Shahs “willingness to play ‘a moderate supportive role in regional affairs’ and to provide the United States ‘the sites for valuable and not easily replaceable intelligence and communications facilities’” (Njølstad, 1995: 156).

Not even Carter’s human rights policy obstructed the continued American strengthening of the Pahlavi regime. Carter had initially set forward an ambitious goal of promoting human rights as a central tenet of US foreign policy. Carter initially wanted to balance military support and human rights promotion in his dealings with Iran (Carter, 1982). In May 1977, Carter had sent Vance to Iran to explain to the Shah the Administration’s new policy. While the US would honour previous commitments to Iran, Vance explained that the US wanted to reduce US arms sales and tie their approval to how states dealt with human rights issues domestically (Vance, 1983). What’s more, in his initial meeting with the Shah in November 1977, Carter stressed the need for the Shah to alleviate the hostile treatment towards dissident groups and other opposition figures.

The Presidential Directive on Conventional Arms Transfer Policy (i.e., PD-13) codified the President’s concern with upholding basic standards of human rights in America’s international relationships. While confirming US resolve in using arms transfers to promote US security, the directive accentuated that the US “will give continued emphasis to formulating our security assistance programs in a manner which will promote and advance respect for human rights in recipient countries” (PD-13: 1).

However, from the outset, despite their agreement on the importance of the subject (Carter, 1982), many key decision-makers in the Administration were conscious of the limits of institutionalising human rights in foreign policy. Secretary Vance was particularly sensitive to the repercussions of pursuing a global human rights agenda. While agreeing on the need for a more moral approach to foreign policy, from the beginning Vance (1983) advised Carter of the need to maintain flexibility and pragmatism in dealing with particular cases that might affect US security interests. In order to balance

human rights with other issues of national interest and develop a reasoned and functional foreign policy, the Administration set up the Interagency Group on Human Rights and Foreign Assistance to develop the framework for the proper policy options.

In the meantime, Administration officials began showcasing the primary focus of the future policy. A preliminary outline of the Carter Administration's human rights policy was presented by Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher, to the Senate Subcommittee on Foreign Assistance, on 07 March, 1977¹⁷⁵. Though Christopher confirmed the Administration's commitment to human rights as an integral part of its foreign policy, he also recognised that policy would many times be the result of difficult trade-offs:

...conflicts in policy may arise when the security of the United States is linked to that of a country whose human rights priorities are deficient. It should be uppermost in our minds that security assistance is rendered to maintain or enhance our own security, not to strengthen the hand of a repressive regime, although we must face up to that as an undesired and unintended consequence in certain cases. (Christopher, 1983b: 408)

According to Christopher, the best way to balance this situation was by carefully and systematically weighing human rights concerns against economic and security goals on a country-by-country basis (Christopher, 1983b). Secretary Vance restated this point in his Law Day ceremonies speech at the University of Georgia on 23 May. At the same time as he announced that human rights were an essential part of America's progressive values, Vance reaffirmed the limits of US power. Accordingly, Vance appealed to a realistic foreign policy which measured the real prospect of achieving US interests and objectives. Without this contemplation "a sure formula for defeat of our goals would be a rigid, hubristic attempt to impose our values on others" (Vance, 1977: 506).

This outlook was concurrent with the official assessments coming from Tehran. An American Embassy assessment of the US-Iranian relationship reinforced the conviction that the US should adopt a more subtle approach to its human rights policy in Iran (Njølstad, 1995). The report claimed that the current American opinion on human rights

¹⁷⁵ i.e., Presidential Review Memorandum on Human Rights (PRM-28).

abuses was based on a misunderstanding of Iranian cultural, ethical, and historical milieu. In reality, the abuses and excesses of the regime had to be framed within the particular Muslim and Iranian cultural context and the mounting terrorist activities of the Marxist inspired opposition. Therefore, the view from the American Embassy was averse to a more assertive human rights policy in Iran. Rather than condemning a friendly regime, it was suggested that the Administration should “continue the sale of conventional arms to Iran” (quoted in Njølstad, 1995: 157).

As a result, despite the ambition to curb some of the Shah’s most renowned abuses, the Carter Administration promptly continued the existing policy of satisfying Iran’s insatiable arms requests. While military contracts were reviewed and the Shah assured American officials that he intended to reduce the amount of weapons purchased, the Administration continued to supply the regime with state-of-the-art weapons systems. An illustrative example was the President’s announcement in July 1977 to go forward with a \$1,2 billion deal involving the sale of seven AWACS to Iran. Due to the reservations in the Senate and Congress, Carter had to apply his full political weight to guarantee the approval of the deal demonstrating his commitment to upholding the US-Iran relationship (Vance, 1983). In addition, Carter approved the majority of the Iranian requests for advanced aircraft, tanks, and other military equipment, making Iran the largest customer of US weapons sales¹⁷⁶ (Bill, 1988; Moens, 1991).

The underlying rationale for such behaviour was the shared belief within the Administration that the Shah was a valuable asset in helping the US face many of its regional and global challenges. As Vance argued:

We decided early on that it was in our national interest to support the Shah so he could continue to play a constructive role in regional affairs. The shah had provided important economic assistance to countries in the area and had been helpful in reducing tensions in Southwest Asia. (...) Furthermore, Iran was a reliable supplier of oil to the West, and its exports were critical to our NATO allies and Japan. The shah had refused to join the 1973 embargo or to use oil as a political weapon. He was also Israel’s primary external source of oil. At the same time, however, the shah was a strong advocate of higher OPEC oil prices

¹⁷⁶ In fact, Iran accounted for half of all of America’s arms sales (Bill, 1988).

since he needed the revenues to finance Iran's purchase of military equipment and industrial modernization. Otherwise, there was considerable harmony between the shah's policies and our regional interests. (Vance, 1983: 317)

The Shah contributed to this rapport by exploiting many of the Administration's uncertainties and concerns. For instance, during his visit to Washington in November 1977, the Shah accentuated the threat of the increasing Soviet involvement in the Third World, principally in the Middle East. According to Vance (1983: 322), the Shah "was a disciple of the 'grand design' school of interpretation of Soviet actions in Africa, the Middle East, and elsewhere". In his conversations with Carter he was particularly emphatic in stressing that the Soviets, due to prospective energy shortages, might try to control the Middle East's oil resources. It was precisely the growing communist menace that, according to the Shah, compelled him to maintain such a forceful domestic policy (Carter, 1982). Implicit in the Shah's assessment was the importance in maintaining this strategic country between the Soviet border and the Persian Gulf away from communist domination by any means necessary. Therefore, the Carter Administration's interests in Iran continued in the same vein as that of its predecessors, i.e., "to maintain 'a stable, independent, non-communist and cooperative Iran which has the strength and will to resist potential Soviet aggressiveness, whether direct or indirect, and to continue its role for stability in the Persian Gulf, Middle East, and South Asia'" (Njølstad, 2004: 25).

Despite the Shah's admonition about the mounting Soviet threat, it was the increasing internal problems that ultimately led to the fall of the Pahlavi regime. Domestic opposition to the regime had been increasing over the years. In the early-1960s the regime trembled as political instability reigned over Iran (Bill, 1988). Violent demonstrations and riots broke out in 1961, predominantly as the National Front tried to make a political comeback. However, the religious establishment headed by Ayatollah Muhammad Burujirdi backed the regime and contributed to stabilising national politics. When demonstrations erupted once more in 1963 the Shah brutally suppressed them using lethal military force.

While the Shah sought to implement an array of reforms – i.e., the White Revolution – resentment towards his regime grew during the following years. The reform

programmes brought little improvement to the majority of the Iranians and in the early-1970s the Shah cracked down even harder on internal dissidents and political opposition groups. The regime also adopted a more antagonistic policy towards the Shi'i religious establishment, disenfranchising Iranian society even more. Thus, the Shah's repressive policies "helped establish a vicious circle of violence as the opposition moved in desperation to increasing activities of greater extremism" (Bill, 1988: 190).

The opposition to the Shah was essentially composed of four main groups (Lenczowski, 1979). The first group was composed of the Shi'i religious leaders who sought to maintain their power and influence in the midst of the Shah's modernisation and secularisation policies. The second group was a loose coalition of bazaar leaders, comprising traditional merchants and small entrepreneurs, who were bypassed by Iran's recent economic development. The third group comprised the country's disenfranchised secular intellectual class. The last major opposition group was composed fundamentally of organised Marxist-inspired groups, namely the Tudeh Party, the Fedayan-e Khalq, and other organised radical groups. Despite their different origins and objectives, all of the groups converged on their hostility towards the Pahlavi regime.

As economic and social conditions worsened in Iran, protests broke out throughout the country in early-1978 (Bill, 1988). The demonstrations erupted into violence as the regime tried to impose order. The first major demonstrations took place in Qum on 08 January, 1978. The police fired on the crowd killing about two dozen demonstrators, including religious leaders. A series of riots followed, beginning in Tabriz in mid-February and again in March which quickly spread to Tehran, Mashhad, Khomein, Isfahan, Miyana, Rizaiyah, and Zarand. By May riots had also occurred in Shiraz and Qum. The confrontations continued during the summer months, as violence escalated. For example, on 19 August, 1978, there were over 400 casualties in Abadan.

The intensification of the protests led Vance (1983: 324) to send a memo to Carter on 10 May, 1978, alerting him to "the most serious anti-Shah activities in Iran since 1963". Likewise, in an early June review on Iran, NSC staff member Gary Sick (1985) informed the President that three major riots had occurred since the beginning of the year and there were prospects that they would continue. Moreover, the Shah seemed to

be unable to control the uprisings and there was increasing concern in Iran and in the international community about how the situation would evolve. The NSC official provided several theories to explain the events emphasising. However, despite the uncertainty surrounding Iranian politics, Sick (1985: 43) was certain that “after three major incidents of massive civil violence, no one was willing to dismiss it as a passing phenomenon, and concern about Iranian stability was becoming a routine topic of discussion for the first time in many years”.

Nevertheless, the protests were at first met with scepticism within the Administration. Official reports and intelligence estimates had consistently underlined the stability of the Pahlavi regime (Bill, 1988; Brzezinski, 1983; Carter, 1982; Moens, 1991; Njølstad, 1995; Vance, 1983). In fact, the intelligence community kept providing the Administration with reassuring analyses regarding the Shah’s ability to deal with the protests. As Carter (1982: 438) notes, in August 1978, a CIA assessment concluded that Iran “is not in a revolutionary or even a prerevolutionary situation”. As late as 27 October, 1978, Ambassador Sullivan reported that “the shah is the unique element which can, on the one hand, restrain the military and on the other hand lead the controlled transition” (reproduced in Brzezinski, 1983: 359). Although there was some concern over the long-term repercussions of the unrest, the majority of the decision-makers in the Carter Administration were “reassured by the judgement of the ambassador, the experts in the State Department, the CIA and other agencies and foreign governments that even though he might be required to make political compromises that would dilute his power, the shah was not in serious danger” (Vance, 1983: 325-326).

Several reasons have been presented to explain this phenomenon. Above all, no one believed that the Shah was incapable of handling the situation (Moens, 1991). Over the decades the Shah had been able to overcome numerous protests by resorting to a wide array of solutions, from economic reform to military coercion. The trust that US officials and agencies placed in the Shah’s capacity to adequately resolve these situations hindered any alternative judgments. As Sick has confirmed:

No one in the bureaucracy, from the ambassador to the Washington analyst, wished to be the first to “make the call” that the shah was on his way out. As a consequence, each

individual and each organizational element procrastinated, waiting for incontrovertible evidence before pronouncing such a fateful judgement. (...) However, what became known as the “intelligence failure” was not so much a failure of sources or observation or data as a structural inadequacy of the system itself to make the conceptual leap from chessboard to hurricane. (Sick, 1985: 42)

All the same, there was some growing apprehension within the NSC. Throughout 1978 Gary Sick warned Brzezinski that tensions were mounting in Iran and that they would not be easy to mollify. Brzezinski revealed some concern due to his staff members’ admonition and met with the Iranian Ambassador, Ardeshir Zahedi, in August to try to evaluate the situation in Iran. Zahedi acknowledged that the regime did face several problems, particularly its disconnection with the Iranian people. In the Ambassador’s opinion, the Shah needed to make major changes in his policies and demonstrate greater leadership. Zahedi’s appraisal fully convinced Brzezinski (1983: 360) that “The Shah was in trouble”. As a result, the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs began requesting intelligence analyses from his NSC staff in order to ponder the available options. However, despite Brzezinski’s prodding of the NSC, the Administration as a whole did not initiate a comprehensive analysis of the situation (Moens, 1991).

In September the situation in Iran deteriorated significantly. In early-September 1978, two major demonstrations were held in Tehran. In trying to neutralise the situation the Shah declared martial law in 12 cities, including Tehran, on 08 September, 1978. Confrontations between the military and demonstrators soon erupted, particularly in Tehran's Jaleh Square, resulting in numerous civilian casualties. Whilst the number of dead and wounded varies according to the different sources, Sick (1985: 51) highlights the significance of the Jaleh Square massacre lies in the fact that it signalled a “turning point from sporadic acts of popular rebellion to genuine revolution”.

Reports began arriving in Washington that the Shah was afflicted by the ineffectiveness of his actions and was uncertain as to how to restore order to the country (Vance, 1983). As Bill (1988) has argued, by the fall of 1978, the Shah was fully aware of the futility of trying to resolve the unrest through coercion alone. According to his account the Shah “repeatedly told American ambassador William Sullivan that the events

of 1953 and 1963 could not be repeated and that it was impossible this time to quell the massive rebellion by military force alone” (Bill, 1988: 237). While this may have been the case, the fact was that the alternatives exercised by the Shah were equally futile in calming the situation. In fact, the Shah’s promise of open Parliamentary elections in the following year and the easing on press censorship and restrictions on the freedom of speech failed to persuade the regime’s adversaries. In light of such a predicament, the President called the Shah on 10 September, following the urgent appeals from Vance and Christopher, and reassured him of America’s support. While momentarily emboldened by Carter’s message, the Shah promptly began vacillating in the face of the continued riots and violence¹⁷⁷ (Brzezinski, 1983; Vance, 1983).

There has been much speculation as to the reasons for the Shah’s ineptitude in dealing with the situation. The most common justification for the Shah’s behaviour has been his clinical situation. The Shah had been diagnosed with cancer and according to many sources his illness seriously affected his judgment (Freedman, 2009; Jervis, 2010; Sick, 1985). Jervis has also contested the accepted notion that prior to the crisis the Shah was a strong and decisive leader. According to the author, the truth is that throughout the Shah’s reign “he was more often vacillating and hesitant” (Jervis, 2010: 31). Regardless of the veracity of these accounts, the truth is that the Carter Administration increasingly viewed the Shah as being unable to cope with events. This outlook was explicitly depicted at the time in Bill’s (1978: 329) assessment of the crisis: “Today, the Shah is obviously a scarred if not scared leader”. As the political situation continued to deteriorate the Shah gradually “seemed variously weak, vicious, disloyal – and ultimately mortally vulnerable” (Cottam, 2012).

In the meantime, the Administration’s enthrallment with other important international issues – e.g., Egyptian-Israeli peace process, normalisation with China, and SALT negotiations – deferred a comprehensive interagency debate on the situation in Iran (Moens, 1991). In fact, the State Department’s first comprehensive analysis on how the Administration should deal with the crisis was only produced on 24 October, 1978

¹⁷⁷ In fact, President Carter reiterated his support for the Shah, both privately and publicly, on several occasions throughout September and early-October (Moens, 19991).

(Brzezinski, 1983; Moens, 1991; Sick, 1985). The analysis revealed an unenthusiastic outlook for the Shah's regime. It argued that the numerous statements and acts of US support in favour of the Shah had failed to have any significant effect on the situation in Iran. The situation was considered grave and it was predicted that if the Shah did not establish an effective government, military intervention was almost certain to follow. In reality, many State Department officials were beginning to doubt the Shah's capacity to subsist even as a mere figurehead in a future parliamentary democracy (Vance, 1983). Nevertheless, the possibility of a military government was rejected outright by the State Department due to the possibility that it could generate greater violence. As a result, the report proposed three complementary courses of action (Sick, 1985): 1) continue supporting the Shah since he was the key element capable of leading the transition to a more comprehensive and stable government; 2) support the Shah's liberalisation project, namely by offering economic assistance; and 3) unwavering opposition to a military government. The memo also contemplated the possibility of the US initiating contacts with opposition forces, namely Khomeini.

The State Department's report was submitted on the same day that Ambassador Sullivan met with the Shah to discuss possible policy options¹⁷⁸. In this meeting the Shah informed Sullivan that he was contemplating two options. The first option was to install a military government – although he personally acknowledged that it would be a non-starter since the military did not possess capabilities to operate the oil industry. The alternative course of action, even though he was not sure of the practical effect of such an initiative, was to try to build a civilian coalition government including members of the opposition (Sick, 1985; Vance, 1983). The Ambassadors suggested that the situation was not as bleak as the Shah had portrayed and opposed both of his proposals. The diplomats argued that a military government could exacerbate the situation and the dismissal of the current government would have a destabilising effect. The alternative put forward by the Ambassadors was to include some opposition figures in the existing government (Sick, 1985). These events also coincided with a memo submitted by Sick that urged the Administration to provide an unequivocal demonstration of support of the Shah

¹⁷⁸ The British Ambassador, Sir Anthony Parsons, also participated in the meeting.

(Brzezinski, 1983). The NSC staff members proposed that Brzezinski travel to Tehran to deliver a message from Carter or a declaration of support or a joint statement of support by America and its main allies.

Looking to initiate a broad discussion on the policy options available to the Administration, the State Department sent its report to Ambassador Sullivan and the NSC for comments. Sullivan responded on 27 October and agreed with most of the recommendations, although he assertively rejected increasing contacts with opposition figures, particularly Khomeini¹⁷⁹. For the Ambassador, “Our destiny is to work with the Shah, who is prepared to accept a truly democratic regime if it is achieved responsibly” (quoted in Moens, 1991: 219). In addition, Sullivan informed that there was no need for more public statements by the President or high-level visits to Iran (Brzezinski, 1983). The NSC held a different opinion regarding the most appropriate course of action. In particular, many NSC members still believed that the Shah needed to be encouraged to act more assertively and this required greater demonstrations of public support from the part of the US (Brzezinski, 1983; Sick, 1985).

This debate was short-lived however. While the State Department’s assessment intended to spark a broad discussion regarding the Iranian predicament, the rebuttal coming from the NSC and the American officials in Tehran dampened the debate and led the State Department to shelve the report before the President could evaluate it¹⁸⁰. As a result, “by the end of October 1978, after ten months of civil disturbances in Iran, there had still not been a single high-level policy meeting in Washington on this subject” (Sick, 1985: 60). Multiple perspectives and policy options existed within the top echelon of the Carter Administration’s foreign policy team. Nevertheless, there was very little interaction between the decision-makers to work out a shared problem representation. Each subgroup within the foreign policy team pushed its own evaluation and

¹⁷⁹ Sullivan’s position is consistent with Vance’s earlier recommendations. In fact, the Secretary of State hesitated in recommending that Ambassador Sullivan initiate contacts with the major figures of the opposition. For Vance (1983: 326), such an initiative “could further weaken the shah’s confidence and feed his fears that we were attempting to position ourselves with a successor regime”.

¹⁸⁰ There is some confusion regarding the responsibility of curtailing the debate on the State Department’s report. While Sick (1985) acknowledges that it was the State Department that shelved the report, Moens (1991) argues that it was Brzezinski who had it archived for not agreeing with its assessment.

recommendations. Accordingly, the policy options presented were disjointed, incoherent, and many times contradictory. This lack of interaction and discussion also hindered the President's capability to decide on the Administration's policy for Iran. The President was "pulled in opposite directions by his advisers" (Brzezinski, 1983: 355; c.f., Vance, 1983) and other external sources of influence and, consequently, was continuously reacting to events rather than outlining an objective course of action (Freedman, 2009).

Sullivan's persistent exchanges with the White House eventually contributed to jump start the decision-making process. In particular, on 02 November, 1978, Sullivan submitted a cable reporting his troubled conversations with the Shah during the previous days (Brzezinski, 1983; Sick, 1985). According to the Ambassador, the Shah confided that Prime Minister Emami's initiatives had failed to quell the protests and the situation in Iran was critical. The Shah initially foresaw two possible alternatives: 1) establishment of a military government or 2) formation of a coalition government around a neutral figure who could satisfy the different factions¹⁸¹. However, during that week, the National Front had acceded to Khomeini's demands that the Shah abdicate power, thus invalidating the Shah's proposal for a coalition government¹⁸². Thus, in a conversation with Sullivan on the following day the Shah informed him that the National Front demanded a general referendum on the issue of the monarchy in order to cooperate¹⁸³. The Shah also let him know that he would never accept a referendum and pressure was mounting for him to establish a military government. From the discussion it was agreed that the Emami government was incapable of dealing with the situation and an attempt to create a coalition government should be made. If this initiative failed, it was concluded that the Shah would attempt to form a neutral government with the exclusive purpose of holding elections (Sick, 1985). Sullivan accompanied his report with an urgent request for

¹⁸¹ The Shah suggested that two notable members of the National Front were the most appropriate alternatives (Sick, 1985).

¹⁸² The National Front went to Paris to negotiate with Khomeini the formation of a reform government – framed on a parliamentary democracy – which preserved the monarchy. However, due to the asymmetry of power between the secular and religious leaders, the National Front was forced to yield to Khomeini's demands (Sick, 1985).

¹⁸³ The British Ambassador, Sir Anthony Parsons, also participated in this meeting.

instructions within 48 hours. In Sullivan's view, the perils facing US decision-makers required a vital decision:

In his meeting of November 1, Sullivan said he detected the first signs that the shah might be thinking of abdication when he said he would "rather leave the country than submit" to a referendum on the monarchy. Sullivan believed that the dilemma facing the shah was much more severe than the choice between a coalition government or a neutral caretaker government. On the contrary, Sullivan believed that if the shah remained, the military could be expected to take over in a coup without the Shah. Of these two Sullivan definitely preferred the former, believing that military government without the shah would be "repressive, brutal and totally unimaginative," abandoning any plans for liberalization and democracy. Sullivan anticipated that within the following forty-eight hours the shah would conclude that his political efforts had failed and would seek US advice whether to abdicate or to impose military government under his continuing rule. Sullivan was convinced that the shah would stay only if he could be sure of continuing support from the United States. (Sick, 1985: 63-64)

As a result, the first formal high-level review of the situation in Iran finally occurred during the 02 November SCC meeting. Brzezinski opened the discussion by highlighting that Zahedi informed him that Sullivan was perceived in Iran as being ambiguous in his support for the Shah (Brzezinski, 1983). This was particularly important since, for the Administration, there were clear indications that the Shah was suffering from a crisis of determination. Consequently, Brzezinski recommended that a message be sent to Sullivan instructing him to express the President's unwavering support for the Shah and, while not dictating which policy the Shah should follow, emphasise the need for decisive action in order to restore order in Iran. In addition, Brzezinski argued that the US should not persist in requesting the Shah to implement any more liberalisation measures and that a coalition government would not solve the Shah's problems.

Christopher¹⁸⁴ discounted Zahedi's evaluation of Sullivan and questioned the effectiveness of a military government. In his view, which was shared by Vance, the US should reaffirm its support for the Shah, albeit he should continue to pursue political reforms and eventually try to form a coalition government under his leadership (Moens, 1991). Admiral Turner also alerted to the hazards involved in implementing a military government, while Brown suggested that if the option was for a military government the US should persuade the Shah to maintain his leadership (Moens, 1991; Sick, 1985). Aaron warned that the US should not push the liberalisation theme too forcefully otherwise the Shah might get the impression that the political reform was more important than his permanence.

During the meeting Brzezinski spoke to the President who authorised that a message of support be sent to the Shah. While there was some contention as to the issues pertaining to political reform and the military involvement in the future government, there was a general agreement in conveying a strong message of support for the Shah, whilst emphasising that it was the Shah's responsibility to choose the best course of action. The following day Brzezinski spoke directly to the Shah underlining America's unconditional support for him and sent a message to Sullivan with the following instructions:

- 1) The United States supports him [the Shah] without reservation in the present crisis;
- 2) We have confidence in the Shahs judgement regarding the specific decisions that may be needed concerning the form and composition of government; we also recognize the need for decisive action and leadership to restore order and his own authority. With respect to the coalition government alternative, our position is that it is up to the Shah if he feels that such an alternative is viable and preferable. We are not pressing for it. The same applies to a military government. Whichever route he goes we will support his decision fully. (FYI: in

¹⁸⁴ Vance was represented in this meeting by his Deputy Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, since we was immersed in the Middle East negotiations at the time. According to Sick (1985), Vance's absence from the meeting established a pattern in which the Secretary was absent from several meetings on Iran and delegated authority on Christopher. In this sense, Sick (1985: 70) argues that "Vance left few enduring imprints on US policy during the Iranian episode".

response to your question: a military government under the Shah is overwhelmingly preferable to a military government without the Shah)

3) That once order and authority have been restored we hope he will resume prudent efforts to promote liberalization and to eradicate corruption. (Reproduced in Brzezinski, 1983: 364)

The message's lack of a definitive policy recommendation is revealing of the difference of opinions within the Administration. Brzezinski and the NSC (1983) argued against any measures that would further weaken the Shah's authority. Brzezinski's recommendations resulted from his belief that revolutions could be suppressed. As he admitted in his memoir, "I felt strongly that successful revolutions were historical rarities, that they were inevitable only after they had happened, and that an established leadership, by demonstrating both will and reason, could disarm the opposition through a timely combination of repression and concession" (Brzezinski, 1983: 355). Therefore, he was convinced that a military solution was the only feasible alternative for restoring order in Iran. The State Department for its part believed that a coalition government was better than a military government since this would only exacerbate the crisis in Iran. While increasingly sceptic as to the Shah's capability to deal with the crisis, he was still considered a key-player in resolving the predicament. More decisively, at this point, the President still believed it was possible for the Shah to salvage the situation and thus did not want him to abdicate: "Not only had the Shah been a staunch and dependable ally of the United States for many years, but he remained the leader around whom we hoped to see a stable and reformed government organized and maintained in Iran" (Carter, 1982: 440). Yet, due to his involvement in other important international issues, the President did not directly engage himself in the Iranian crisis and thus contributed to the fact that issues remained unsettled and policy was irresolute.

In the meantime, the Shah opted for a hybrid solution. After especially violent demonstrations in Tehran, the Shah appointed the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, General Reza Azhari, as Prime Minister on 06 November, 1978. Despite the military leadership, the new government was composed predominantly by civilians. The Azhari government tried to restore order and simultaneously mollify the opposition by detaining

several former government and SAVAK¹⁸⁵ officials and implementing measures against the corruption in government (Vance, 1983). In addition, an investigation of the royal family's finances was also announced.

The PRC meeting of 06 November allowed the principal foreign policy decision-makers to again discuss the Iranian crisis. However, very little progress was made. According to Brzezinski (1983), the meeting was convened so the State Department could regain control over the policy-making process. However, in his view, there was no comprehensive discussion on the long-term strategy for Iran. Rather, the State Department focused on how the US could evacuate Americans in case of an emergency. For Brzezinski (1983), this was alarming since it could seem to signal that the US was ready to abandon Iran. Moreover, when the Iranian request for non-lethal crowd control devices was discussed, Vance argued that the British were already providing the necessary assistance and that the US did not need to supply any additional equipment. The desolation of the situation was evidenced by Admiral Turner's confession that there was no supplementary information on the Iranian opposition due to the prior restrictions on making contact with them.

The debate in the White House received an unexpected impetus on 09 November, 1978, when Ambassador Sullivan cabled a memo titled "Thinking the Unthinkable" (Brzezinski, 1983; Moens, 1991; Sick, 1985; Vance, 1983). In this memo, Sullivan suggested that Administration had to begin contemplating options which before did not seem relevant. The Shah was, in his assessment, in an extremely fragile position and had little if any backing in Iran (Sick, 1985). The key to the revolutionary situation lay with the military and the clerics. The issue was how to balance the different interests between these two groups:

The clerics, he [Sullivan] noted, had called for passive resistance, including strikes in strategic areas of the economy. If the military succeeded in returning key sectors of the economy back to full production peaceable, it would probably, in Sullivan's judgement, prevail. However, if it should fail, the military would have to make a fateful decision either

¹⁸⁵ SAVAK was the Pahlavi regime's secret police, domestic security, and intelligence service.

to enforce production by a bloodbath or else reach an accommodation with the clerics. Since the religious forces were dominated by Khomeini, one had to assume that a precondition for accommodation would be the acceptance of Khomeini's demand that the shah must leave and the monarchy be abolished in favour of an Islamic republic. (Sick, 1985: 81)

Sullivan considered that the current military leadership would not resort to additional violence, nor would they push the Shah towards abdication. This would ultimately lead to them and the Shah to leave Iran, leaving a younger generation of military officers to deal with the religious leaders. Since both these groups were strongly anti-communist and anti-Soviet and thanks to the intense economic ties between Iran and the West, Sullivan believed that the Iranian military could maintain itself, whilst the clerics would accommodate the new military leadership and find them useful for maintaining law and order throughout the country after the revolution. The future US relationship would certainly be less intimate with the new regime, but, according to Sullivan, it could still be satisfactory. The Ambassador went on to state that the current American policy of supporting the Shah and the military was the only secure policy available at the moment. All the same, Sullivan did suggest that "if it should fail and if the shah should abdicate, we need to think the unthinkable at this time in order to give our thought some precision should the unthinkable contingency arise" (quoted in Sick, 1985: 83).

As the situation worsened, the State Department began analysing alternative courses of action to deal with the chaotic state of affairs. The possibility of accommodating to a post-Shah regime was gaining enthusiasts, but Vance wanted to aid the Shah as much as possible (Vance, 1983). For that reason, he instructed Sullivan to reassure the Shah of US support. Sullivan responded by informing the Administration that the Shah had assumed a more discrete role as his supporters tried to fashion a coalition government with moderate elements of the opposition. Brzezinski kept seeking to reinforce the Shah's power and placate any additional measures which could undermine any of his existing authority (Brzezinski, 1983; Moens, 1991). Moreover, while the interagency debate continued on how to deal with the Iranian quagmire, Brzezinski also

kept pressing Carter on the need to face the growing international challenges, particularly those posed by the Soviet Union. The events in Africa had tainted Brzezinski's mental maps of the Middle East and hardened his attitude towards the Soviets. As a result, on 02 December, 1978, in his Weekly Report to the President, Brzezinski alerted Carter to the imminent threat of a major political destabilisation of a large part of the Third World. An "arc of crisis" had emerged which could have serious consequences for US international security interests:

If you draw an arc on the globe, stretching from Chittagong (Bangladesh) through Islamabad to Aden, you will be pointing to the area of currently our greatest vulnerability. All at once, difficulties are surfacing in Iran and Pakistan, and they are thinly below the surface in India and are very manifest in Bangladesh, and there is reason to believe that the political structure of Saudi Arabia is beginning to creak. Turkey is also becoming wobbly. (...) There is no question in my mind that we are confronting the beginning of a major crisis, in some ways similar to the one in Europe in the late 40's. Fragile social and political structures in a region of vital importance to us are threatened with fragmentation. The resulting political vacuum might well be filled by elements more sympathetic to the Soviet Union. This is especially likely since there is a pervasive feeling in the area that the US is no longer in a position to offer effective political and military protection. (Brzezinski to Carter, 02/12/1978: 3)

This came on the heels of an altercation with the Soviets concerning the instability in Iran. The disagreement erupted on 18 November when President Brezhnev sent a message to Carter warning him that US interference in Iran posed a security concern for the Soviets (Brzezinski, 1983). The State Department's planned response created additional friction within the bureaucratic apparatus. According to Brzezinski (1983), the rejoinder proposed by the State Department was excessively apologetic in tone. Brzezinski drafted an alternative response which emphasised that, while the US was not interfering in Iranian internal affairs, it did support the Shah. Additionally, it advised the Soviets to that the US was committed to a free and independent Iran and that the Soviets should avoid using false accusations as the basis for their own interference (Brzezinski,

1983). Brzezinski then sent the message to the Carter, as well as to Brown and Schlesinger who also supported its content in conversations with the President.

While the exchange with the USSR did not alter US policy towards Iran, from the Administration's perspective it did signal a transformation in Soviet policy. According to Sick (1985: 95), *Pravda's* simultaneous publication of the Brezhnev message "suggested that the USSR was beginning to position itself as the 'protector' of the revolutionary forces against US intervention". For many of the Administration's key foreign policy decision-makers, particularly in the NSC, the Shah's weakness coupled with a renewed Soviet activity in the Middle East could facilitate the USSR's access to the Indian Ocean (Brzezinski, 1983). This could, in turn, lead to "a fundamental shift in the global structure of power" (Brzezinski to Carter, 02/12/1978: 3).

In order to help assess the options and develop a policy for Iran, the President asked former Undersecretary of State George Ball to develop a comprehensive analysis of the situation and provide the appropriate recommendations for action¹⁸⁶. The conclusions of the Ball report were discussed in a SCC meeting held on 13 December¹⁸⁷. In accordance with Ball, the Shah was finished unless he immediately handed power over to a civilian Council of Notables which would rule until elections could be held in the following year (Bill, 1988; Brzezinski, 1983; Moens, 1991; Sick, 1985; Vance, 1983). The Shah could eventually assume the role of a constitutional monarch, but with his powers severally curtailed. Ball also argued against the use of any military force to help the Shah consolidate his position. With Christopher's backing, Ball recommended that the US

¹⁸⁶ The idea of bringing Ball in for assistance belonged to Secretary of Treasury Michael Blumenthal. After his visit to Tehran, Blumenthal was worried about the situation in Iran and particularly the lack of a clear American policy for dealing with the crisis. Accordingly, Blumenthal suggested to Brzezinski to get Ball involved to which the latter agreed and also proposed Ball's participation to the President (Brzezinski, 1983; Sick, 1985). Brzezinski (1983: 370) later came to regret bringing in Ball: "Ball's participation in our debate sharpened our disagreements while delaying basic choices by wasting some two weeks, and his subsequent willingness to discuss what transpired within the White House and the State Department with members of the press spiced the perception of an Administration profoundly split on the Iranian issues". However, perhaps more significantly, Ball's positions differed significantly from Brzezinski's: "Moreover, in selecting Ball I violated a basic rule of bureaucratic tactics: one should never obtain the services of an 'impartial' outside consultant regarding an issue that one feels so strongly about without first making certain in advance that one knows the likely contents of his advice" (Brzezinski, 1983: 370-371).

¹⁸⁷ Ball presented his conclusions directly to President Carter on 15 December (Brzezinski, 1983).

encourage the Shah to publicly declare that he would hand over power to a civilian government, while he would remain merely as head of the armed forces (Vance, 1983).

Ball's recommendations were well received by Vance and the State Department. However, Brzezinski and Brown were apprehensive about giving the Shah such detailed instructions (Vance, 1983). Above all, Brzezinski was bothered by the fact that Ball proposed transferring power in the midst of a crisis. The idea of abruptly reassigning power in a country with no democratic tradition was alarming for the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs: "I expressed the view that setting in motion a process of political change was desirable, but I also argued that there were circumstances in which a military government, which in time could be increasingly civilized, as in Turkey or Brazil, might be the best solution" (Brzezinski, 1983: 373). Carter decided to pursue an alternative track. Whereas the President agreed that the US should not send any emissary to Iran so as not to excessively involve the US in the crisis, he did decide to consult the Shah once more. Therefore, it was decided that a message would be sent to Sullivan to present a series of questions to the Shah regarding his evaluation of the possible solutions to the crisis. However, by now, most senior foreign policy officials acknowledged "that we had passed the point of unreservedly supporting the shah, and he [Carter] was beginning to think in terms of advising him to compromise" (Vance 1983: 331; c.f., Brzezinski, 1983).

Sullivan reported back the following day on his conversation with the Shah (Vance, 1983). The Shah had been talking to some leaders of the moderate opposition, but he had little hope regarding the benefit of the conversations. As a result, he was considering three options: 1) continue endeavours to form a civilian coalition government; 2) yield to the demands of the opposition by leaving Iran after appointing a regency council; or 3) form a military junta that would apply an iron fist policy that would try to forcefully suppress the uprising. The Shah confided that he feared the iron fist option could eventually lead to the collapse of the country's military establishment.

In view of these options, the differences within the Administration widened. Brzezinski favoured a military regime. Brzezinski (1983) had gradually come to view a military government without the Shah as the only viable option. While not ruling out a

military government altogether, Vance (1983) did not believe that the US should be responsible for such a decision. Above all, the Secretary of State, backed by Mondale and Christopher, was extremely concerned that the use of the iron fist option could cause large-scale bloodshed and possibly civil war. The debate intensified as the Shah began pondering the need to leave Tehran while the military resolved the situation in Iran. Finally, on 26 December, 1978, the Shah explicitly asked Sullivan what the US wanted him to do (Brzezinski, 1983). This unequivocal inquiry led to a meeting on 28 December in which Brzezinski, with the help of Brown and Turner, were able to persuade the President to approve a message to the Shah reinforcing the preference for a moderate civilian government, but emphasising that “if there is uncertainty either about the underlying orientation of such a government or its capacity to govern or if the Army is in danger of becoming more fragmented, then the Shah should choose without delay a firm military government which would end disorder, violence, and bloodshed” (reproduced in Brzezinski, 1983: 375).

Throughout the interagency debate Brzezinski laboured vigorously to impress on Carter his interpretation of how to deal with Iran and kept on privately insisting for a more assertive global US foreign policy as well. In the end of December 1978 Brzezinski used his Weekly Report to insist with Carter that he must take steps to demonstrate to the Soviets that America was wholly committed to its Iranian allies. The failure to do so would, according to Brzezinski, have devastating consequences: “The disintegration of Iran, with Iran repeating the experience of Afghanistan, would be the most massive American defeat since the beginning of the Cold War, overshadowing in its real consequences the setback in Vietnam” (Brzezinski to Carter, 28/12/1978: 4). For Brzezinski, Carter had to clarify his global strategy because there was a growing concern amongst US allies that the President lacked a comprehensive design and was unwilling to use American power to uphold its national interests. The key issue to this predicament was the how Carter handled the US-Soviet relationship.

According to Brzezinski, Carter had been following a policy of “Reciprocal Accommodation, which means (1) containment, (2) resistance to indirect expansion, (3) ideological competition, and, most important and above all, (4) creation of a framework

within which the Soviet Union can accommodate with us, or face the prospect of isolating itself globally” (Brzezinski to Carter, 28/12/1978: 2). For this policy to be successful, several requirements had to be met. Besides keeping the option of global cooperation open to the Soviets, it also implied acknowledging the connection between the Soviet military build-up and regional instability, particularly in the Third World. To counter this phenomenon the US should deny the Soviets any guarantees regarding future Chinese-American relations. Furthermore, the US should implement a military posture which could adequately balance the Soviets, namely by carrying out the provisions foreseen in PD-18. What’s more, it implied a renewed emphasis in stabilising the Middle East, specifically by “making a basic decision on whether we will seek a breakthrough to peace in the Middle East sometime in the first half of 1979” (Brzezinski to Carter, 28/12/1978: 4). The failure to do so could imply “the Middle East will become increasingly radicalized as it accommodates itself to the reality of US inability to obtain a wider settlement and perhaps also to provide protection to the region from the Soviets” (Brzezinski to Carter, 28/12/1978: 4). In fact, due to concern with mounting Soviet interest, in early-December Brzezinski (1983: 372) had requested that the Defence Department “initiate contingency plans for the deployment of US forces, if necessary, in southern Iran so as to secure the oil fields”.

Yet, while the Administration discussed its policy options, on 02 January, 1979, the Shah decided to appoint Shapour Bakhtiar as Prime Minister in an attempt to try to accommodate the opposition. The new Prime Minister requested that the Shah leave Iran. The Shah admitted to leaving, but did not indicate any precise date. The stalemate led Sullivan to report that the Shah had to leave Iran for there was a general agreement among the opposition that he should leave and the military was beginning to splinter between those who favoured the iron fist solution and those who believed a *coup d’etat* was the best alternative. In addition, Sullivan informed that the Shah was still dallying with the iron fist option and an ultimate alternative (Brzezinski, 1983; Moens, 1991; Vance, 1983). Accordingly, a full NSC meeting was held on 03 January to consider America’s policy options. The Administration finally conceded to the idea of the Shah’s departure and instructed Sullivan to stress the need for unity amongst the military

leaders (Brzezinski, 1983; Moens, 1991; Sick, 1985; Vance, 1983). In order to assist the military in this endeavour, the Administration also agreed to send General Robert Huyser to Tehran to work directly with them to support the Bakhtiar government, assure military unity, and help restore order in case the government collapsed and civil disorder erupted (Moens, 1991; Sick, 1985).

The Bakhtiar government revealed difficulty in moderating the political environment in Iran. Moreover, the Administration was still unable to develop a concerted and clear policy for dealing with the crisis. In fact, Huyser's dispatch to Tehran augmented the confusion in the decision-making process. The General's involvement created a new information channel directly to the White House. Furthermore, the information and assessments provided by Huyser and Sullivan diverged on many occasions¹⁸⁸. For instance, Sullivan informed the Administration that Iranian military leaders were increasingly wary of the Shah and had requested that the US initiate contacts with Khomeini in order to persuade him to give the Bakhtiar government a chance to restore order to the country (Vance, 1983). On 07 January, Vance recommended that the US try to open a direct line of contact with Khomeini to Carter. The Secretary of State argued that this was an opportunity to inform Khomeini that cooperation with Bakhtiar was the best form of avoiding a communist seizure of power¹⁸⁹. Carter rejected the recommendation on the grounds that it might signal that the US was circumventing the constitutional process by reaching out to Khomeini. As an alternative, the Administration decided after a lengthy discussion on 10 January to ask the French government to try to sway Khomeini to the idea of allowing Bakhtiar some political manoeuvrability¹⁹⁰. In the meantime, instructions were sent to Sullivan and

¹⁸⁸ As Secretary Brown later recalled, "the decision process was in shambles at this time" (quoted in Moens, 1991: 230). In the end, Carter (1982) favoured Huyser's accounts over Sullivan's, whom he considered inconsistent and unbalanced in his assessments and recommendations.

¹⁸⁹ There was a general conviction within the Administration's foreign policy experts that Khomeini did not pose a great threat. In fact, in a mini-SCC chaired by David Aaron on 11 January, 1979, it was argued that Khomeini was incapable of running a government and was not concerned with international affairs (Sick, 1985). The natural leaders for any future government of Iran would be the leaders of the National Front and other moderate opposition figures. Sick (1985) contested this view, believing it was too optimistic and warned of the impending dangers to US interests.

¹⁹⁰ This decision led Carter to ultimately lose his confidence in Sullivan. After the Ambassador was informed of the Administration's decision to use the French as intermediaries, he sent a cable criticising the decision

Huyser to encourage the military to support Bakhtiar, to persuade the Shah to leave Iran without delay, and to continue planning for a military government in case the civilian government failed (Vance, 1983).

As the efforts for propping up the Bakhtiar regime continued, Brzezinski pushed the coup option. In a conversation with Carter in early-January, Brzezinski openly recommended that the military should take control of the situation in Iran. He underlined this perspective in his messages to Huyser and to the Iranian military leaders. While stating that the success of Bakhtiar's government was the best possible outcome, Brzezinski was adamant that a military government was the only viable solution:

The question was when the right moment might come. I wanted it understood that the coup would come if Bakhtiar faltered, and that we would not go on supporting a series of increasingly more radical civilian regimes while the Army disintegrated. (Brzezinski, 1983: 379)

Notwithstanding Brzezinski's endeavour, the Iranian military failed to take the initiative. The urgency for action seemed to increase as the Shah left Iran on 16 January, 1979. The prospect of Khomeini's return to Iran and its destabilising effect to the Bakhtiar government reinforced Brzezinski's belief that a military solution was inevitable. However, in his report to Brzezinski and Brown on 15 January, Huyser clarified that plans for a military coup were still in an embryonic stage and the military hardly had the capabilities needed for successfully pulling it off (Brzezinski, 1983). As an alternative, Huyser was encouraging Iranian military leaders to open lines of communication with religious leaders, particularly those close to Khomeini¹⁹¹ (Brzezinski, 1983; Sick, 1985).

Nevertheless, Brzezinski continued to stress the need to maintain the military option on the table. For him, the credible threat of a military coup was also considered a useful political instrument since it could discourage radical initiatives by Khomeini's followers and give Bakhtiar time to try to consolidate his power. As Sick (1985: 142) has

to which Carter (1982: 446) considered was "bordering on insolence". Carter considered pulling Sullivan out of Iran at that moment, but was persuaded not to do so by Vance on the grounds that it might weaken the image of the US in Iran (Carter, 1982).

¹⁹¹ Huyser was particularly worried about the potential destabilising effect that Khomeini's arrival could have in Iran (Brzezinski, 1983; Moens, 1991).

confirmed “President Carter made it clear he shared the view that the *threat* of a military coup was the most effective leverage available to forestall a revolutionary power grab and was an essential element in buying time for a possible constitutional solution under Bakhtiar”.

In order to convince Carter of the need to act boldly, Brzezinski wrote a memo to the President on 18 January highlighting the geopolitical consequences of “losing” Iran:

I warned that the military would become more politicized, demoralized, and fragmented. I argued that Iran was likely to shift piecemeal to an orientation similar to that of Libya or into anarchy, with the result that our position in the Gulf would be undermined, that our standing throughout the Arab world would decline, that the Israelis would become more security-oriented and hence less willing to compromise, that the Soviet influence in southwestern Asia would grow, that our allies would see us as impotent, that the price of oil would increase, that we were likely to lose some sensitive equipment and intelligence capabilities germane to SALT, and that there would be severe domestic political repercussions. (Brzezinski, 1983: 385-386)

Yet, even as military options were still being considered by many US officials, direct contacts had also been made with Khomeini’s associates in Paris. More precisely, on 15 January the political counsellor at the US embassy in Paris, Warren Zimmerman, met with Khomeini aide, Ibrahim Yazdi, to exchange views on the volatile situation in Iran¹⁹² (Sick, 1985). Yazdi informed his counterpart that a Revolutionary Council was already preparing a transitional government in Iran. He also revealed concern regarding the information regarding a potential military coup in the immediate future. In this sense, and on behalf of Khomeini, he insisted that the US do everything possible to avoid such an initiative. Conversations continued between the two representatives in an attempt to establish a basic understanding between the US and Khomeini (Sick, 1985).

As recommendations issued forth from the different foreign policy actors in Washington, on 22 January, 1979, Sullivan and Huyser made a joint-request for a re-examination of US policy (Vance, 1983). According to the American officials in Tehran, the

¹⁹² The meeting was authorised by Carter on 14 January (Sick, 1985).

situation in Iran was chaotic and the two main anti-Communist forces – i.e., the military and the clerics - were on a collision course. Huyser requested authorisation to inform the military that the US no longer supported a coup and, should the Bakhtiar government fail, the military should try to establish a working relationship with Khomeini. Once again, the Administration debated the most appropriate course of action. After an intense debate pinning Vance against Brzezinski and Brown, on 23 January, the President decided to instruct Huyser and Sullivan to obtain Bakhtiar's and the military's agreement to a US overture to Khomeini to form a broad government coalition including all the parties (Vance, 1983).

After Bakhtiar and the military agreed, the US used the Zimmerman-Yazdi channel in Paris to make the offer to Khomeini. The response arrived on 27 January with an ambiguous pitch. Khomeini informed the Americans that if Bakhtiar or the military posed any opposition to him this would harm US interests in Iran. However, if there was no interference on their part, the situation would eventually stabilise. He also assured the US that the new provisional government he would nominate would be agreeable to the Americans, indicating that future cooperation would be possible (Sick, 1985; Vance, 1983). The Administration received similar information from Clark Clifford's reports with his contacts with some of the National Front's more Khomeini-oriented politicians.

In light of these developments, Vance (1983) believed that it was essential for the US to try to press for an understanding between the military and the secular and religious opposition forces rallying around Khomeini¹⁹³. Brzezinski (1983), for his part, continued to argue that the Administration had to support Bakhtiar and maintain the Iranian military united around him and be prepared for any contingency. This course of action was, however, becoming increasingly difficult as Huyser informed that the fractures within the Iranian armed forces continued to grow (Sick, 1985). Meanwhile, in Tehran, Bakhtiar, the military leaders and religious leaders continued to work towards a compromise solution. On 29 January, Bakhtiar informed Ambassador Sullivan that arrangements had been made for the arrival of Khomeini. The military had been instructed to stand down in order

¹⁹³ In the meantime, Sullivan had been instructed to begin evacuating all non-essential US military and civilian employees from the American mission and to advise the American business community in Iran to do the same (Vance, 1983).

to avoid a confrontation. According to Bakhtiar, the situation was only expected to flare up after Khomeini announced an alternative government (Sick, 1985).

By now the situation had completely overwhelmed the Carter Administration. As Moens (1991: 230) confirms, "Toward the end of January, events in Iran overran the administration's ability to keep up with them, let alone influence them". The arrival of Khomeini in Iran on 01 February, 1979, and his appointment of Mehdi Bazargan as provisional Prime Minister on 05 February compelled the Administration to review its policy once more.

Meanwhile, the experience with the Iranian crisis revealed sharp contrasts in the Carter Administration's mental maps. The lack of regular communication between the key decision-makers hindered the development of a clear and coherent policy for dealing with the situation. The incapacity to develop a shared representation of the situation obstructed the advisory process and invalidated a more comprehensive policy. Emphasis was placed many times on the promotion of personal agendas rather than on the necessary interaction with the other decision-makers. The consequences were devastating for American policy. While the dynamics of the revolution would certainly always outpace the policy-making process, greater interaction would have contributed to more consistent decision-making. In the coming months, the Administration would once again face similar challenges. Some decision-makers believed the new regime in Tehran was cooperative, while others deemed it an imminent threat to US national interests. The Middle East continued at the centre of the Carter Administration's geographic mental maps. However, significantly different mental maps continued to coexist.

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ADJUSTING TO A CHANGING MIDDLE EAST

“As 1978 came to an end, I was pleased with the congressional achievements and with our new relationship with China. We were almost at the end of our SALT discussions with the Soviets, and had an excellent agreement in prospect. However, events in Iran were increasingly troublesome, and our hard-won accords in the Middle East were coming apart. [...] The Middle East dispute was the heaviest political burden, even above SALT and China-Taiwan.”

(Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President*)

The Iranian revolution compelled the Carter Administration to re-evaluate its Middle East policy once again. Besides the strategic considerations, the crisis in Iran influenced the Administration’s assessment of the peace process in the region. As Quandt (2005: 222) acknowledged, “the strategic balance of power in the region was changing” and this ultimately altered the Administration’s outlook on the negotiation process between Egypt and Israel. The Camp David Accords signed in September 1978 had established a framework for peace in the Middle East. In essence, they provided a blueprint for the future negotiations for peace in the Middle East. However, as events developed in the region this framework would be adjusted to comply with the political demands on the different parties. Once again, the Carter Administration’s foreign policy would emerge from the cumulative and evolving context which required continuous policy adjustments.

13.1) Assuring the Possible Peace

The Camp David Summit produced two complementary accords - *A Framework for Peace in the Middle East* and *A Framework for the Conclusion of a Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel*. The former agreement, while deliberately ambiguous, stipulated that the

Palestinian problem would be resolved in all its aspects, namely in dealing with the issues of the West Bank and Gaza (Shlaim, 2001). Above all, the framework called for an agreement based on Resolution 242 in all its parts. Therefore, it put forward three stages of negotiations which would involve Egypt, Israel, Jordan, and the representatives of the Palestinian people. The first stage would establish the basis for the election of a “self-governing authority” for the territories, as well as its powers and responsibilities. The second stage determined the beginning of a transitional period in which Israel’s military government and civilian administration would withdraw. The final stage, which would begin no later than the third year after the transitional period had commenced, foresaw the negotiation process regarding the final status of the West Bank and Gaza.

The latter agreement was more straightforward and stipulated that a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt be concluded within three months and its provisions implemented in a period between two to three years after its signing. The peace treaty was bound to four principles (Shlaim, 2001): 1) complete Israeli withdrawal from Sinai and the acknowledgment of Egyptian sovereignty over this territory; 2) demilitarisation of most of the Sinai territory; 3) stationing of UN forces to oversee the demilitarisation of the territory and to guarantee freedom of navigation in the Gulf of Suez and the Suez Canal; and 4) full normalisation of relations between Israel and Egypt. Normalisation of relations would begin after Israeli withdrawal from western Sinai, i.e., in about two years.

Carter was particularly determined to initiate the negotiations right away. He was acutely aware that the momentum of the past several months had to be maintained in order to reach a final triumph. While the Camp David agreements were an important accomplishment towards peace in the Middle East, “many of the blanks in the Camp David Accords had to be filled in, and many of the ambiguities had to be resolved one way or the other” (Quandt, 2005: 205). In addition, midterm congressional elections were to be held in November and such an accomplishment would certainly bolster the Democrats standing.

Nevertheless, several problems soon arose and hampered the Administration’s desire for a prompt and straightforward solution. To begin with, the Saudis and Jordan were annoyed with Sadat for his failure to explain to them what had been accomplished

at Camp David (Vance, 1983). In fact, King Hussein refused to take part in the subsequent negotiations and the PLO denounced the Camp David Accords (Shlaim, 2001). As a Department of State (1978b) briefing memo submitted in late-September highlighted, “King Hussein seems inclined, for the moment at least, to lean in the direction of Damascus and Assad's hardline response while keeping his options open”. As a result, Carter dispatched Vance to the Middle East to brief the leaders of Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Syria on the contents and implications of the Camp David Accords. However, as soon as he arrived in Israel, Begin started making controversial statements regarding arrangements for Jerusalem, withdrawal from the West Bank, Palestinian refugees, and new settlements in the occupied territories. In addition to his public remarks, Begin’s actions regarding the settlements vexed the Carter Administration (Carter, 1982).

The discrepancies began on 18 September, 1978, when Begin sent Carter a letter he had promised regarding the settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. The letter was identical to the text Carter had previously rejected. In the Administration’s view, the parties had agreed that Israel had committed itself to refrain from creating any new settlements in the West Bank and Gaza during the negotiation stage for the establishment of a Palestinian self-governing authority (Vance, 1983). After several days of discussion, Begin sent the Americans Aharon Barak’s notes from the meetings which, in Begin’s view, confirmed the position that he never agreed to freeze settlement activities, but rather only agreed to consider it (Quandt, 1986a; 2005).

Despite the misunderstanding, the Carter Administration began working on a draft of the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty. The method of using a “single negotiating text” was similar to the one used in Camp David and which all sides accepted (Quandt, 1986a; 2005). After the Knesset approved the Camp David Accords¹⁹⁴, Carter reviewed the draft treaty prepared by his team on 09 October, 1978. According to the draft version, the state of war between the two states was officially terminated and peaceful relationships were established. In addition, Israel would withdraw to an international border that would be ascertained by the negotiating parties. Once the withdrawal stage was

¹⁹⁴ The Knesset voted the Camp David Accords on 27 September, with 84 votes in favour, 19 opposed, and 17 abstentions (Quandt, 1986a).

completed, normal diplomatic relations would be established. The draft also called for security arrangements in Sinai and along the border in Article 4 and freedom of navigation in Article 5. Article 6 articulated the relationship between the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty and other international commitments assumed by the parties (Quandt, 1986a; 2005).

The Administration immediately recognised several potential litigious issues (Quandt, 1986a; 2005; Shlaim, 2001). The first problem was associated with timing. Israel was particularly concerned that Egypt might recover most of its territory before assuming peaceful relations. As a result, Israel maintained that Egypt should establish diplomatic relations and some normal relations before the final Israeli withdrawal. This posed a challenge to Sadat who wished to withhold exchanging ambassadors until provision for the election of the Palestinian self-governing authority had been secured. Equally controversial would be the issue pertaining to the priority of obligations. In other words, Israel sought to guarantee that the treaty would supplant Egypt's other international commitments, mainly regarding the Arab countries. Nevertheless, the most contentious issue between the two parties was how to secure their continued determination to resolve the Palestinian problem after the treaty was signed. The controversy was due to the fact that "Begin wanted only a vague commitment to negotiate, whereas Sadat insisted on deadlines and specific commitments that would make clear that Egypt had not concluded a 'separate peace'" (Quandt, 1986a: 270).

In order to overcome these and other challenges, the Israeli and Egyptian delegations assembled in Washington on 12 October, 1978, for a new round of negotiations – i.e., the Blair House talks¹⁹⁵. President Carter wanted negotiations to produce an agreement quickly. He insisted that the negotiations should deal with the problems of Sinai and the West Bank and Gaza. However, progress towards an Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty should not be hindered by problems regarding the West Bank and

¹⁹⁵ Contrary to Camp David, the Blair House environment was different in format and content. The demands brought on by the SALT II negotiations and normalisation with China implied that Carter and Vance were initially less directly involved in the negotiations, leaving sensitive political problems unreciprocated. In addition, Egypt and Israel were represented by important political actors, but lacked the authority to solve the most pressing problems. In fact, Begin delegated very little authority to the Israeli delegation, hindering their decision-making capability (Carter, 1982; Quandt, 1986a; 2005; Vance, 1983).

Gaza¹⁹⁶ (Quandt, 2005). Notwithstanding American objectives, the initial round of negotiations produced few results. Israel pushed for the need to have Egypt initiate diplomatic relations without delay and for the requisite of American financial aid to withdraw Israeli forces from the Sinai. Egypt, for its part, sought “confidence-building measures” from Israel regarding the future of the West Bank and Gaza (Quandt, 1986a). While some progress was being made on secondary matters, the intricate political issues evaded any progress.

As the negotiations dragged on, Carter joined the Blair House talks on 17 October. The President was able to push the delegations towards a basic compromise on the majority of the key issues. An agreement *ad referendum* was reached on the treaty text and which emphasised in its preamble the commitment of both parties to engage in a comprehensive peace settlement and in solving the Palestinian problem. The text also committed Israel to accelerate its withdrawal from Sinai and Egypt to exchange resident ambassadors once withdrawal to the El Arish line was completed. The Egyptians also satisfied Israel’s request pertaining to the priority of obligations. The text, however, was not accompanied by the side letter referring to the West Bank and Gaza since the delegations could not find common ground on the issue (Vance, 1983). On 22 October, Carter wrote to Sadat and Begin informing them of the terms of the treaty agreed to in Washington and asked them to accept the text resulting from the negotiation.

Sadat’s response was fairly positive. He would accommodate Carter’s requests as long as the text stated that Egypt had sovereignty over the Sinai and it was agreed that Egypt would not accept permanent limits to forces in the Sinai. However, Sadat requested that Egypt’s previous international commitments not be relegated in the treaty (Quandt, 2005). While Begin was able to approve the treaty text in his cabinet, he concurrently announced the decision to expand Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

Moreover, in late-October, Dayan informed the American delegation that Israel was only prepared to negotiate the “modalities” for the electoral process in the West

¹⁹⁶ The major justification for the peace treaty not being contingent on an agreement on the West Bank and Gaza was that the West Bank issue was dependent on the actions of third parties, such as Jordan or the Palestinians and these could not be guaranteed during the negotiations between Egypt and Israel (Quandt, 2005).

Bank and Gaza. According to Dayan, the Israeli government would never agree to discuss the “powers and responsibilities” of the self-governing authority. What’s more, in a conversation with Quandt, Dayan was particularly forthcoming about the limits in addressing of the Palestinian issue:

First, he said, the Israeli military government would not be abolished. It would keep its authority, and it might not even be physically withdrawn from the West Bank for many years after the election of the self-governing authority. Israel, he said, also was planning about eighteen to twenty more settlements in the Jordan Valley over the next five years and would need to keep at least 20 percent of all public land for itself. (Quandt, 1986a: 278)

Quandt (1986a) transmitted this point of view to Brzezinski in a memo on 31 October. While acknowledging that an Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty was feasible in the immediate future, the NSC staff member was sceptical on future progress regarding the West bank and Gaza.

Despite the continued negotiations there were very few additional developments. The US team produced a series of alternative text formulations in order to try to bridge the differences between the two parties. However, the disagreements regarding the West Bank and Gaza hampered any further progress: “The Egyptians kept trying to pin the Israelis down to specific arrangements and time frames, while the Israelis resisted any phrase that could not be traced back to the Camp David language” (Vance, 1983: 236). Therefore, the situation was once again at an impasse and the Administration’s prospects for a achieving a prompt agreement were dismal. While acknowledging the constraints on Sadat and Begin, Carter was convinced that Israel was trying to undermine a comprehensive peace settlement:

It’s obvious that the Israelis want a separate treaty with Egypt; they want to keep the West Bank and Gaza permanently... And they use the settlements [on the West Bank] and East Jerusalem issues to prevent the involvement of the Jordanians and the Palestinians. (Carter, 1982: 409)

On 01 November, 1978, Carter summoned Brzezinski, Jordan, Mondale, and Vance to discuss the situation. The principals shared Carter's assessment and agreed to slow down the negotiation process, review Israel's commitments under the Camp David Accords, and develop a strategy to pressure Begin to respect those agreements (Quandt, 1986a). In addition, the group decided that the US would delay its replies to Israeli requests for weapons.

The relationship with Israel continued to deteriorate as Begin denounced the treaty text proposed by the Americans during his meeting with Vance in New York in early-November (Vance, 1983). Begin was principally critical of the language in the preamble referring to a commitment to a comprehensive peace. The Prime Minister even suggested that while the agreements in Camp David had envisioned that Jordan participate in the negotiations on the West Bank and Gaza, it would be possible for Israel and Egypt to solve the issue alone if necessary. Nevertheless, Israel would not agree to a target date for election of the Palestinian authority. Contradicting Dayan's previous proposal, Begin did affirm that it would be possible to define the authority's powers and responsibilities before the electoral process occurred (Quandt, 1986a; 2005). Moreover, Begin concluded the meeting by requesting over \$3 billion in US aid for financing the withdrawal from the Sinai¹⁹⁷.

Once again, events pressed the Administration to re-evaluate its policy options. On 05 November, after a summit meeting in Bagdad, the Arab states criticised the Camp David Accords and decided to transfer the Arab League's headquarters from Cairo and implement an economic boycott in case of an Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty (Quandt, 2005; Vance, 1983). Albeit Sadat's public admonition of his Arab counterparts, he promptly informed Carter that in order to uphold his position in the Arab world it was essential to secure an indisputable agreement on the future of the Palestinians. For Sadat the signing of the peace treaty would imply an explicit Israeli commitment to what would happen in the West Bank and Gaza (Quandt, 2005; Vance, 1983).

¹⁹⁷ In the meeting in New York, Begin stated that the aid should be provided as a loan with low interest rates. He would later claim – 12 November, 1978 – this was a mistake and requested that aid be provided as a grant not a loan (Quandt, 1986a; 2005).

The foreign policy team developed a memorandum for Carter to review Begin's behaviour and statements on the West Bank and Gaza since signing the Camp David Accords. According to this assessment, Begin had deviated from Carter's interpretation of the agreements on at least eight points (Quandt, 1996a). Reports received from the intelligence services reinforced the belief that Begin was not predisposed to make any concessions to Sadat. This rationale was explained in an intelligence report submitted in late-November (CIA, 1978). According to the CIA analysis, the Israelis believed that Sadat expected the Arabs to reconcile themselves to the Egyptian-Israeli settlement in due course. The report also stated that the Israelis also doubted the seriousness of the Arab threat to apply sanctions against Israel. What's more, Israel estimated that the improved Syrian-Iraqi relations and the events in Iran would reduce Saudi hostility towards Sadat.

The Administration's senior foreign policy meeting on 08 November, 1978, confirmed the unenthusiastic prospect on Israeli compliance with the Camp David agreements and put forward a more assertive strategy for dealing with Begin. Brzezinski was particularly critical of the Israeli position and argued for a linkage between further US aid to Israel and progress on the issue regarding the West Bank and Gaza. Brzezinski (1983) claimed that once Israel signed a peace treaty with Egypt the US would have even less leverage to push it towards a solution to the Palestinian problem. As a result, the principals decided to cancel Vance's scheduled trip to the Middle East and "try to pin down the agenda for the West Bank and Gaza, even if that meant delaying the signing of an Egyptian-Israeli treaty" (Quandt, 1986a: 281).

The Administration worked to complete its revision of the treaty text and its annexes, namely the side letter on the West Bank and Gaza. The essence of the text remained unchanged and was sent to the Egyptians and Israelis on 11 November (Vance, 1983). The proposal did not include a timetable for achieving autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza, but it did commit Israel to commence negotiations towards that objective one month after the Peace Treaty's ratification. Also, the draft text did establish the end of 1979 as the target date for elections for the self-governing authority.

Begin discarded the text arguing that he would not accept a target date for the election of the Palestinian authority or hasten Israeli withdrawal from Sinai (Quandt,

1986a; 2005). Sadat was equally cautious of the text (Vance, 1983). He insisted in reviewing the language on the subject of the priority of obligations, the linkage between the treaty and a comprehensive settlement, and other issues previously validated by the delegations. Egyptian officials emphasised the need to show progress on the Palestinian issue. During his visit to Washington in mid-November, Egyptian Vice-President Hosni Mubarak reinforced this view on the Administration¹⁹⁸:

Mubarak noted that we had resolved 90 per cent of the problems at Camp David, and that, of the remaining questions, only one-fourth had still not been answered. However, these few were serious. He said the Egyptians wanted to be as flexible as possible, but could not have a separate treaty without assurance of future progress on the West Bank. Therefore, the timetable for action on the West Bank was very important to them. (Carter, 1982: 411)

As the Administration wrestled with these retractions, Begin called Carter on 21 November informing that his cabinet had accepted the treaty draft after all, providing that Egypt also accept it. However, when questioned on the side letter on the West Bank and Gaza, Begin answered that Israel rejected any timetable or target date for discussions on the autonomy of the West Bank and Gaza¹⁹⁹. Carter reaffirmed the Egyptian position that the interim withdrawal coincide with the beginning of Palestinian self-government. Additionally, he suggested that Israel could eventually delay, without setting a fixed date, the interim withdrawal until elections were held in the West Bank and Gaza (Quandt, 1986a). While admitting to consider the proposal, according to Begin, “the treaty negotiations were finished and Egypt should accept the language as it stood” (Vance, 1983: 239).

When informed of the Israeli position Sadat rejected it outright. He countered that Israel only wanted a separate peace and this was unacceptable. Any settlement depended

¹⁹⁸ In the meantime, Saudi representatives met with US officials explaining their position in Baghdad. According to the Saudis, the position they assumed gave them greater influence in dealing with the more radical Arabs and they would defend the Camp David Accords if Egypt did not celebrate a separate peace treaty with Israel or if it guaranteed some kind of linkage to withdrawal from the occupied territories (Quandt, 1986a).

¹⁹⁹ Begin also stressed the need of US financial assistance for withdrawing from the Sinai and, due to the crisis in Iran, requested assurances on guaranteeing oil supplies to Israel (Quandt, 2005).

on the redefining Article 6 of the draft treaty – i.e., on the priority of obligations – and revising Article 4 in order to remove permanent constraints on Egyptian forces in the Sinai. Moreover, if Israel reneged on its promise of an accelerated withdrawal this would alter his previous formula for an early exchange of ambassadors (Quandt, 2005). In addition, Carter's proposal was equally worrisome because delaying withdrawal from the Sinai without fixing a deadline could imply deferral *ad infinitum*. According to Quandt (1986a: 284), "the talks had reached a crossroads".

The impasse led Brzezinski to emphasise the risks of failing to secure a peace agreement in the Middle East. As the situation in Iran worsened, Brzezinski (Brzezinski to Carter, 24/11/1978) submitted a memo to Carter highlighting the "Worst Case Scenarios in the Middle East". In this report, Brzezinski acknowledges that the Administration's Middle East policy has been successful in advancing American interests so far. Nevertheless, the crisis in Iran and the reactions to the Camp David agreements could potentially generate a new alignment in inter-Arab politics. In particular, the prospect of a separate Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty could push Iraq and Syria closer together, eventually swaying Jordan, and Saudi Arabia might distance itself from Egypt. The stalemate of the Egyptian-Israeli peace negotiations or the conclusion of a separate agreement could threaten US interests by alienating the Saudis, Jordanians, and other moderate forces in the region.

As usual, Brzezinski's evaluations always had a global outlook. In other words, his mental maps of the Middle East were always interrelated to global political dynamics. Therefore, he warned that "a separate Egyptian-Israeli treaty, with no clear commitment from Israel to proceed on the West Bank/Gaza, will risk driving a wedge between Egypt and Saudi Arabia and will play into the hands of the Soviets and the rejectionists" (Brzezinski to Carter, 24/11/1978: 4). In this sense, it was imperative that the US obtain some kind of linkage regarding the West Bank and Gaza and effectively curtail the expansion of Israeli settlements in these territories.

Brzezinski continued to impress on Carter the need for firm action and the maintenance of American leadership. For instance, in a memo submitted on 30 November, Brzezinski (1983) stressed that the success of Camp David was due to Carter's

control of the parties. However, according to the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, since the signing of the Accords, the President had lost control of the negotiation process, creating the idea that the US would accept a separate peace between Israel and Egypt. To counter this image, Brzezinski proposed a more aggressive stance towards both parties, namely:

...that there be a full press effort to get Sadat to accept the treaty. Israel should set a target date to initiate a substantive dialogue with the Palestinians and negotiations with the Egyptians on the scope and authority of the autonomous region. Further, I thought that we should tell Sadat that US-Egyptian cooperation would in effect come to an end unless Egypt acceded to the treaty, but if Sadat did agree, then the United States would engage in long-term military and economic cooperation with Egypt and with Saudi Arabia on behalf of regional security and containment of Soviet influence. As far as Israel was concerned, I believed it was time to tell Begin that Israeli failure to accept the timetable and to begin positive movement on the West Bank would mean that we would take the entire matter to the UN. I wrote that we should also tell Begin that US economic and military relationships would not be allowed to perpetuate a stalemate which would inevitably radicalize the Middle East and re-introduce the Soviets into the region. (Brzezinski, 1983: 277)

In order to revitalize the peace process, the Administration decided to send Vance to the Middle East to try to reach a compromise proposal (Brzezinski, 1983; Carter, 1982; Quandt, 2005; Vance, 1983). Although the Administration knew it could jeopardise the support of the American Jewish community, the proposal sought two main objectives: 1) complete the negotiations on the treaty draft; and 2) guarantee that the side letter on the West Bank and Gaza mentioned the target date for the establishment of the self-governing authority. More precisely, rather than reopen the discussion on the draft text, the Administration proposed to assuage Egyptian concerns by adding an American letter on the priority of obligations issue confirming the American legal interpretation that the treaty would not prohibit Egypt from complying with its previous international commitments and also safeguarding linkage by including an interpretative note declaring that the treaty was established “in the context of a comprehensive peace settlement in

accordance with the provisions of the Framework for Peace in the Middle East agreed at Camp David” (reproduced in Vance, 1983: 241). The side letter on the West bank and Gaza would state that elections “would be held ‘not later than the end of 1979’ for the self-governing authority – but as a good-faith target, not as a deadline, and the self-governing authority would be established within one month after the elections” (Vance, 1983: 241).

Sadat reacted positively to the new US proposal. He accepted the interpretative and side letters and agreed to drop his demand for a fixed date to the elections since 1979 was foreseen as the target. However, Sadat did insist that the exchange of ambassadors would only take place after the self-governing authority was in place²⁰⁰. The American delegation introduced the majority of Sadat’s demands to the draft treaty and complementary documentation and asked him for a letter from committing Egypt to the exchange of ambassadors once the self-governing authority was established (Quandt, 1986a). Sadat fulfilled this request and informed the US that these were Egypt’s last concessions.

The new proposal was presented to Israel on 13 December. Despite US explanations that Sadat had conceded on several issues, Begin accused Sadat of straying from his earlier commitments. In particular, Begin censured Sadat for going back on his promise to exchange ambassadors after the interim withdrawal and reiterated his pledge that Israel would not accept a target date for establishing the self-governing authority. In addition, Begin was highly critical of the interpretative notes, considering them loopholes which could be used by Egypt to escape from its obligations (Quandt, 1986a; 2005; Vance, 1983). As Vance departed from Israel for the celebration of the normalisation of relations with China, the Israeli cabinet issued a statement criticising the American position which ultimately terminated the possibility of celebrating the peace treaty by the 17 December deadline established at Camp David: “The Government of Israel rejects the attitude and the interpretation of the US government with regard to the Egyptian proposals” (reproduced in Quandt, 2005: 222).

²⁰⁰ Sadat suggested that the autonomy negotiations could proceed first in Gaza. Similar proposals had been previously put forward by Sadat in which progress would be first achieved in Gaza and then proceed to the West Bank (Quandt, 1986a; 2005).

The impasse regarding the Israeli-Egyptian peace was shattered as regional events once again jolted the Administration into action. The crisis in Iran helped colour the Administration's shadowy and pessimistic mental maps of the Middle East. Moreover, domestic political constraints compelled the Administration to try to reach a foreign policy achievement which could compensate for the fall of the Shah (Quandt, 1986a; 2005). Political and strategic considerations moved the Administration's policy forward once again:

In brief, the American role in this last phase of the peace negotiations was heavily influenced both by Iran and by the domestic political clock. Iran provided a strategic rationale for pressing for a quick conclusion of the Camp David process; the political calendar told Carter that he would soon have to turn his attention to other matters, namely reelection. Either he needed a quick and dramatic success, or he would have to back away from further involvement in the negotiations and hope the electorate would not accuse him of losing the chance for peace between Israel and the largest Arab country. (Quandt, 2005: 223)

While talks between the two sides continued in the following weeks, very little headway was made²⁰¹. Throughout January 1979 the Administrations key decision-makers discussed the best way to reenergise the peace talks. Whereas effective solutions evaded the Administration, the decision-makers did acknowledge the need for a new policy framework for the Middle East as a whole. In particular, in a PRC meeting on 23 January, 1979, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General David Jones, raised the issue that the US needed to clarify its security commitments to the region, preferably by developing a "Carter Doctrine" for the Persian Gulf (Quandt, 1986a). This was an important observation considering that the principals all shared the conviction that Saudi Arabia could never replace Iran in guaranteeing US regional security interests (Quandt, 1986a). Accordingly, it was decided that Secretary Brown would travel to the Middle East to review the region's security situation and to bolster US security ties with Egypt, Israel,

²⁰¹ For instance, Israeli Foreign Minister Dayan and Egyptian Prime Minister Khalil did meet in Brussels in late-December for a new round of talks but the stalemate was not resolved.

Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. Brown was to underline the American view that an Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty was essential to the parties and would allow the US to focus more on the security context of the extended region. Additionally, Brown was also instructed to explore the possibility of increasing American military and naval presence in the region, as well as improving access to basing facilities (Vance, 1983). While Brown's trip did not produce significant progress, his evaluation of the situation highlighted the Administration's understanding of the challenges facing US policy in the Middle East:

Brown reported that while there was serious concern in the wake of the Iranian Revolution, there was neither panic nor any willingness to suppress local disputes, above all the Arab-Israeli conflict, in the interest of greater regional security cooperation. Brown concluded, as had I, that the main threats to the moderate states in the region came from internal political, economic, and social problems – often exacerbated by external forces – rather than from direct military aggression from the Soviet Union, a radicalized Iran, or the Arab rejectionists. Brown recommended that we intensify our efforts to conclude an Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty as soon as possible. At the same time, he felt we must increase economic assistance while continuing to provide essential military assistance. Finally, he concluded we must find a way to enhance our military capabilities in the area without the necessity of establishing local bases; but that would be difficult for our Arab friends. Brown was clear that broader security cooperation would come only over time and in an evolutionary way. I strongly endorsed his assessment. (Vance, 1983: 243)

Seeking a solution to the deadlock, the Administration decided to invite Israeli and Egyptian representatives to Camp David to try to reach a final settlement. The talks between Vance, Dayan, and Khalil began on 21 February, but progress was inconsequential since Dayan had very little authority to negotiate. When Begin was invited to join the talks, the Israeli cabinet rejected the proposal on the ground that the Prime Minister would only negotiate with Sadat (Quandt, 2005). As a result, the Camp David talks came to an end and Carter decided to invite Begin and Sadat to Washington for separate discussions.

Prior to the meeting with Begin, the President met with his senior advisors to assess the situation and delineate a policy for the upcoming encounters. The exchange on 28 February centred on the extent of the President's involvement in the process and the pressure the Administration would put on Begin to reach an agreement with the Egyptians. Brzezinski was the first to evaluate the situation and alerted that the Israelis were trying to stall the negotiation process in order for the US to ultimately capitulate to a separate peace with Egypt. In fact, Brzezinski (1983: 279) claimed that he "had now reached the conclusion that the Israelis would prefer Carter not to be reelected and that this objective was influencing their current tactics". Hamilton Jordon subscribed to a similar outlook in his intervention. Vance's judgment was close to this, but, according to Brzezinski (1983), he did not take a firm stance on the issue. On the contrary, Mondale was wary of pressuring Israel. In his understanding, being too assertive with the Israelis could cause controversy and be politically counterproductive. The meeting did not provide a clear guide for action for, as Carter afterward confided to Brzezinski (1983), his direct engagement with the parties was always domestically portrayed as being detrimental to Israel.

However, the meeting with Begin shattered the President's uncertainty. In the 02 March meeting, Begin initiated the discussion by highlighting Israel's strategic importance in the region. He then continued to identify his many objections to the treaty proposal – e.g., the American interpretations of the article on the priority of obligations, the side letter on the West Bank and Gaza, the setting of a target date for the election of the self-governing authority. The Administration tried to convey Sadat's predicament and persuade him to try to move forward with the negotiations, but Begin was adamant. In a meeting with his senior advisors that evening Carter was particularly annoyed with Begin's attitude and facing the prospect of Sadat coming to Washington to denounce Israeli intransigence he considered a new trip to the Middle East to try one last attempt to overcome the impasse. Nevertheless, by 04 March, the Administration had made some

alterations to the draft text to which Begin promised to take to the Israeli cabinet for consideration²⁰².

Once the Israeli cabinet approved the proposal the next day, the Administration's key decision-makers decided that Carter should travel to the Middle East to work out the issues still pending and force a final agreement on the parties²⁰³. Accordingly, Carter sent Brzezinski to Cairo to update Sadat on the new proposals and explain their strategic purpose. What's more, Carter also instructed Brzezinski (1983: 282) to privately inform Sadat "that the President's domestic political situation was becoming more difficult and that Begin might even wish to see the President defeated". Despite some reluctance towards some issues, Sadat welcomed the new proposal in general and vouched that as far as he was concerned the treaty would be signed during Carter's upcoming visit (Carter, 1982; Quandt, 1986a; 2005). During his visit to Cairo, Carter was able to work out the last details with Sadat: "Over the opposition of some of his advisers, Sadat accepted the troublesome texts, and within an hour he and I resolved all the questions which still had not been decided after all these months" (Carter, 1982: 417).

The enthusiastic élan of Cairo quickly vanished as Carter met with Begin in Jerusalem on 10 March, 1979. Begin informed the President that it would be impossible to celebrate a treaty agreement during his visit. The wording of the draft treaty continued to be unsatisfactory to Begin, even though he did not propose any alternatives. Any such decision had to be made by the Israeli cabinet. According to Carter (1982: 421) "Begin

²⁰² The amendments to the text focused on the language pertaining to Article 6 and to the target date for elections in the West Bank and Gaza. More precisely, the matter of the priority of obligations, the US agreed to drop the letter with the US legal opinion and include an interpretative minute which could be annexed to the treaty with the following incongruous wording: "It is agreed by the Parties that there is no assertion that this Treaty prevails over other Treaties or agreements or that other Treaties or agreements prevail over this Treaty. The foregoing is not to be constructed as contravening the provisions of Article VI(5) of the Treaty, which reads as follows: 'Subject to Article 103 of the United Nations Charter, in the event of a conflict between the obligations of the Parties under the present Treaty and any other obligations, the obligation under this Treaty will be binding and implemented'" (reproduced in Vance, 1983: 244). In addition, Begin also accepted that the letter on the West Bank and Gaza substitute the word "goal" for the expression "target date", relating the goal to the completion of the autonomy negotiations rather than to the electoral process which was to proceed "as expeditiously as possible" (reproduced in Vance, 1983: 244).

²⁰³ The major issues to overcome during the trip were (Brzezinski, 1983): 1) guarantee Israeli access to oil; 2) solve the Egyptian scheme for self-government in Gaza before the West Bank; and 3) solve the problem of the timing of the exchange of ambassadors.

told me then for the first time that he could not sign or initial any agreement; that I would have to conclude my talks with him, let him submit the proposals to the cabinet, let the Knesset have an extended debate, going into all the issues concerning the definition of autonomy, East Jerusalem, and so forth, and then only after all that would he sign the documents”²⁰⁴.

The American delegation met that night to evaluate the situation. Despite the unenthusiastic atmosphere, the group agreed that the only way to move forward was to present the proposal to the cabinet the following day. However, meetings with the Cabinet on 11 March were unproductive as discussions centred on the language of the texts and the need to secure Israeli access to oil. Despite American concessions and conciliatory proposals, the majority of the Cabinet was unyielding. The discussion in the Knesset the following day was also sterile and the Carter Administration decided that it was time to return home for a breakthrough was unfeasible in the immediate future (Carter, 1982; Quandt, 1986a; 2005; Vance, 1983).

That evening, Dayan met with Vance and suggested several alterations to the text which he believed could be accepted by the Cabinet. He implied that if the Egyptian would drop the demand for the “Gaza first” idea and omit any reference to Egyptian liaison officers on the West Bank and Gaza in the side letter they could propose advancing elections first in Gaza during the autonomy negotiations. In addition, Dayan indicated that there was a possibility of Israeli accelerated withdrawal to an interim line in the Sinai which would coincide with the beginning of normal relations with Egypt. In return, he requested that the US guarantee oil supplies to Israel for a period of 25 years and that the treaty include a clause upholding Israel’s right to buy oil directly from Egypt (Quandt, 1986a; Vance, 1983).

The Administration worked these proposals into the text and Carter presented them to Begin the following morning. Once again, Begin tried to avoid any personal commitment to the new offer (Carter, 1982; Quandt, 1986a). With Vance and Dayan’s support, Carter pressed Begin to accept the entire proposal. Begin then indicated that he

²⁰⁴ Despite Begin’s claim, in a conversation the following day Israeli President Navon informed Carter that he was unaware of such a commitment by any Prime Minister to a Cabinet and that Begin had complete autonomy to negotiate on Israel’s behalf (Carter, 1982)

would “sympathetically” consider some symbolic unilateral steps on the West Bank and Gaza in return for dropping the Egyptian claim for a separate arrangement for Gaza and an agreement for an early exchange of ambassadors²⁰⁵. Moreover, Carter asserted that the US and Israel would negotiate a memorandum of agreement regarding the American position in case Egypt violated the treaty and assured Israel he would ask Congress for substantial financial assistance to aid in relocating the Israeli bases in the Sinai. Begin finally acceded to the proposal as long as Sadat accepted it as it was and the Israeli cabinet approved it (Carter, 1982; Brzezinski, 1983; Quandt, 1986; 2005; Vance, 1983).

Carter (1982) was confident he could convince Sadat to accept the new proposal. Although the Administration had not received any assurance of an Israeli agreement, the Americans departed for Egypt to try to finally seal the agreement. Finally, despite some objections from his aids, Sadat accepted the proposal. Carter immediately called Begin informing him of Sadat’s decision. Accordingly, while still on the airport tarmac, Carter and Sadat told the press corps that a final agreement had been reached for the treaty. After finalising some remaining details, the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty was signed in Washington on 26 March, 1979²⁰⁶.

While the Peace Treaty was deemed important for improving US interests in the Middle East (Carter, 1982), it fell significantly short of the Carter Administration’s initial objectives. The Treaty ultimately materialised the principles agreed upon at Camp David (Shlaim, 2001). It began by stating in the preamble that that the treaty marked an important step towards a comprehensive peace in the Middle East and in resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict in all its aspects. The subsequent articles dealt with the Israeli

²⁰⁵ In fact, Carter offered to delete all references to Gaza from the treaty “in order to give Begin a chance to claim some kind of victory on the language” (Carter, 1982: 424-425).

²⁰⁶ The formal agreement between the two states was composed of the treaty text, three annexes regarding security arrangements, maps, and the normalisation of relations between the parties. In addition, seven interpretative notes were attached to the documents, as were letters from Begin and Sadat to Carter related to the negotiations over the West Bank and Gaza and a letter from Carter acknowledging that the Israeli Government understood the expression “West Bank” to mean Judea and Samaria. Additional letters were included regarding the exchange of ambassadors and the security arrangements in the Sinai, namely a letter committing the US to \$3 billion in aid to Israel for constructing new airfield in the Negev and military support. An analogous letter was written to Egypt pledging the US to provide over \$1,5 billion in aid over the next three years and the military equipment available for purchase. Several interpretative memorandums were also included, as were a few secret letters on some unresolved issues (Quandt, 2005).

withdrawal from the Sinai and the resumption of Egyptian sovereignty over the area, the establishment of full diplomatic relations upon the completion of the first stage of withdrawal, the security arrangements in Sinai, stationing of UN forces, freedom of navigation, and the details of normalisation. The issue of the West Bank and Gaza was dealt with in a joint letter from Begin and Sadat which committed both parties to initiate autonomy talks within a month of the treaty's ratification.

Nevertheless, the outcome of the Treaty differed considerably from the ambitious objectives set out early in the Carter Presidency for, as Quandt (1986a: 311) later acknowledged, "Many adjustments had been made in strategy as initial preconceptions clashed with stubborn realities". In fact, the relentless interaction within the decision-making group and with the interested parties led the Administration to continuously change its outlook and policies to adapt to the constantly evolving political environment. Therefore, the comprehensive peace settlement for the Middle East conflict was adjourned *ad infinitum* and the resolution of the Palestinian problem was sidelined as other regional concerns focused the Carter Administration's attention once again²⁰⁷.

13.2) Probing the New Regime in Iran and Re-evaluating US strategy in the Middle East

The arrival of Khomeini in Iran created a new dilemma for the Administration. Khomeini refused to negotiate with Bakhtiar on the pretext that he was placed in power by the Shah and thus lacked a legitimate mandate. Therefore, he immediately appointed a provisional government headed by Mehdi Bazargan. The Administration needed to define its policy for Iran once again in the face of contrasting assessments and outlooks.

²⁰⁷ The main dispositions of the Peace Treaty were implemented according to the provisions. While Egypt was expelled from the Arab League, the timetable established in the treaty was respected and on 26 January, 1980, the Egyptian Israeli border was opened and one month later diplomatic relations were established as ambassadors were exchanged between the two countries (Shlaim, 2001). However, the issue of Palestinian autonomy was deferred as negotiations came to an impasse in the following months. This time, Carter refused to directly involve himself or his principal aides in the negotiations. Instead, he nominated Robert Strauss as his representative – later replaced by Sol Linowitz - in the negotiating process. As positions became increasingly rigid and as the more moderate Israeli elements – i.e., Dayan and Weizman – resigned from the Israeli government, the chances of achieving the goal of resolving the Palestinian problem were crushed.

Several options were still being considered by the Administration. The military had informed Huyser that it supported Bakhtiar in any situation. In other words, they would support his decision to negotiate an accommodation with Khomeini or would take measures to prevent Khomeini from establishing a rival government in case negotiations faltered (Sick, 1985). The Administration informed Huyser it continued to support a constitutional process under the current leadership and instructed him coordinate all activities with Bakhtiar (although he was not prohibited from maintaining previously established contacts with moderate forces of the opposition).

Huyser travelled to Washington to brief the Carter Administration on the current situation and assess the possible options. In a meeting with the key foreign policy decision-makers on 05 February, 1979, Huyser reported that there were two differing outlooks on how to deal with the situation. In his view the US should support Bakhtiar at all cost, even if that meant using the Iranian military. In contrast, Ambassador Sullivan advocated that the military should not get involved in the political quarrel in Iran. Rather it should support the side that emerged victorious from the political clash – as should the US (Brzezinski, 1983; Sick, 1985). According to Huyser, Sullivan believed that the revolution would eventually drift towards democracy, while in his view it would turn towards Communism (Brzezinski, 1983; Sick, 1985). Carter confirmed Huyser's understanding as being concurrent with official US policy and instructed the General to carry on with his mission.

During the meeting Brzezinski questioned Huyser on the feasibility of a military coup. The General responded that the military had shown willingness to take action if the government was in jeopardy. While he considered that the military would be unqualified to run the government, it would be capable restoring a minimum level of order from which it could subsequently establish a functioning government (Sick, 1985). Carter then clarified that a military option would only be sanctioned by the US if it implied supporting the Bakhtiar government and the constitutional process. A military coup and takeover was not an option for the President (Sick, 1985). Accordingly, after the meeting a message was sent to Ambassador Sullivan reiterating the continued American support for Bakhtiar and to the use of military force in case the Bakhtiar government was in jeopardy. For the

Administration, the Iranian military “should not be encouraged to stand aside if action was required to preserve the constitutional government” (Sick, 1985: 153). Sullivan, however, was also authorised to work informally with Bazargan in order to secure the safety of American citizens in Iran and the arrangements for an eventual evacuation of US personnel (Vance, 1983).

During the following days the Administration was compelled to reassess its policy as the Iranian military crumbled in the face of growing hostility. As fighting erupted between pro-revolutionary homafars²⁰⁸ and the Imperial Guard during the second week of October the Iranian military decided not to intervene and declared neutrality in the political conflict. The SCC convened on 11 October to try to deal with the situation. While the majority of the principals acknowledged that the military’s position was undeniable confirmation that they had accommodated to the opposition, Brzezinski still pushed for some kind of military solution (Brzezinski, 1983). However, as the unenthusiastic reports from Sullivan and Huyser were received during the meeting, Brzezinski eventually accepted the fact that the military had lost its determination to act and the military option was definitively abandoned by the Administration²⁰⁹ (Sick, 1985).

Consequently, Bakhtiar resigned and left Tehran leaving the Administration a new political conundrum – i.e., how to deal with the Bazargan government. On 12 February Sullivan was instructed to maintain contacts with the new government pending a presidential decision regarding the question of relations (Vance, 1983). The key priorities for the Administration at that moment were preventing sensitive military and intelligence equipment from falling into unfriendly hands and securing the safety of US citizens in Iran (Vance, 1982). In reality, Sullivan and US military advisors had been previously cooperating with the provisional government and the Iranian military to protect US installations and critical infrastructure. The new government also complied in assisting in protecting the American embassy in Tehran. As Vance (1983: 342) has stated, this “cooperative attitude of Barzagan’s government was indicative of the political moderates’

²⁰⁸ Iranian air force cadets and technicians.

²⁰⁹ Sullivan informed the Administration that the military was already accommodating to Bazargan and was too divided to take action (Sick, 1985). Huyser reported that the military would only intervene in the case of a massive US political commitment and military support (Brzezinski, 1983; Sick, 1985).

strong desire to continue a military relationship with the United States and their healthy concern for Iran's external security".

The cooperative relationship was tested on 14 February as the US embassy was attacked by a Fedayeen group. The Barzagan government intervened and was able to resolve the situation within 24 hours. The Iranian government's good offices led the US to respond in an encouraging manner, namely by announcing that it would maintain normal diplomatic relations with the new regime on 16 February, 1979. Moreover, as the internal political environment in Iran continued in disarray, the US sought to demonstrate its support for the moderate forces in the Government. Therefore, on 21 February, Vance persuaded Carter to instruct Sullivan to call Barzagan and assure him and Khomeini, that "the United States accepted the revolution and did not intend to intervene in Iran's internal affairs" (Vance, 1983: 343). In addition, Sullivan also informed the new regime that the US was willing to continue supplying Iran with arms.

Sustained reassurances coming from the upper echelons of power in Iran eased some of the Administration's concerns. Although the Barzagan regime was extremely critical of America's previous Iranian policy, it did seek to ameliorate the strained situation between the two countries. As a result, bilateral governmental contacts increased over the ensuing months and in early-October high-level policy discussions were held between the two countries for the first time since the Shah departed Iran²¹⁰ (Sick, 1985). Even the President was hopeful that cooperation with the new regime was forthcoming:

At the same time, there were some favourable signals. Khomeini sent his personal representative to see Secretary Vance, to pledge increased friendship and cooperation, and to seek our assurance that we were supporting the new Prime Minister and a stable government. Despite the turmoil within Iran, I was reasonably pleased with the attitude of the Iranian government under Bazargan. (Carter, 1982: 452)

²¹⁰ The meetings were held on 03 and 04 October, 1979, when the Iranian Foreign Minister, Ibrahim Yazdi, met with Secretary Vance during the opening of the UN General Assembly in New York.

Accordingly, the Administration's general goal in mid-1979 was to secure a tentative accommodation with the new regime in Tehran. While some advisors still had some difficulty coping with recent events, Carter reined in any exploratory initiatives²¹¹. For example, in his 03 August Weekly Report to the President, Brzezinski indicated that a PRC would be held to review the situation in Iran in which the Shah's exile in the US is to be considered. Carter responded to this information by writing in the margins "Zbig – attenuate your crusade" (Brzezinski to Carter, 03/08/1979: 2).

The underlying rationale of this outlook was that the moderate forces in the Iranian Government would ultimately prevail in the internal struggle for power in Iran. As Gary Sick (1985: 164) bears witness, Western cultural assumptions could not grasp the idea that the religious leaders could triumph in a revolutionary situation: "The participation of the church in a revolutionary movement was neither new nor particularly disturbing, but the notion of a popular revolution leading to the establishment of a theocratic state seemed so unlikely as to be absurd". The Administration believed that while the religious leaders were important elements in catalysing the revolutionary dynamics, their political importance would fade away once the revolutionary's objectives were achieved.

The State Department was particularly active in pitching this view. As the Egyptian-Israeli settlement and events in Afghanistan and Yemen occupied the Administration's key foreign policy decision-maker's attention, the State Department began implementing the day-to-day policy in Iran – e.g., embassy staffing, managing embassy security, and unravelling previous commercial relationships. The Country Director for Iran in the State Department, Henry Precht, was principally responsible for carrying out US policy in the country and was a major advocate of this perspective (Sick, 1985). In a report developed in February 1979 for discussion with NATO allies, Precht argued that Iranians were weary of the disorder brought about by the revolution and sought a return to normality under the moderate leadership of Barzagan. Consequently,

²¹¹ The President, however, found it quite difficult to restrain Congress from assuming a more hard-line approach to the new regime. For instance, on 17 May, 1979, the Senate adopted a resolution presented by Senator Jacob Javits condemning Iran for the execution program being carried out by the Revolutionary Council (Bill, 1988). The Javits resolution created a furore in the Iranian regime and impaired the development a more amenable relations between the US and Iran.

Precht recommended that a working relationship with Barzagan was the only viable option. While some members of the Administration, namely Sullivan and NSC staff, challenged this sanguine judgment, Precht had the confidence of the senior State Department officials and “it was his optimistic philosophy that shaped the many small but important decisions about manning and operating the embassy” (Sick, 1985: 188)

This view prevailed throughout much of the year of 1979 – i.e., until the beginning of the hostage crisis. For instance, in a 05 September memo to Vance, Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs Harold Saunders asserted that the moderates in the Bazargan government were increasingly disenchanted with Khomeini and were seeking to establish compromises, better international relations, and restart the economy. While acknowledging Khomeini’s vast popular support, Saunders argued that his influence and power would in the end diminish²¹²:

The clerics cannot themselves run a complex country and will be forced to seek help from Westernized officials and to compromise Islamic principles to meet popular needs. The main modernizing thrust of Iran's development will inevitably over time weaken Khomeini and the clerics. If Khomeini dies, clerical influence will be weakened somewhat but not eliminated. There will be less unity in their ranks and alliances will be formed with the secularists. As the Islamicists lose their hold, the question will be whether the Left or the Center inherits its power. (Saunders to Vance, 05/09/1979: 2)

So far, American policy had been to “lie low” and show restraint. However, in order to pursue US objectives, a more active role was needed. In particular, Saunders recommended that the US maintain a working relationship with the group in power, while also maintaining connections with other important political groups, including those in the opposition. Options should be left open for dealing with the future authority in Iran:

In the short-tem (i.e., until a new government is formed) we want to clear away as many of the problems of the past as possible and avoid new issues of contention. During these

²¹² In his 03 February meeting with the principals, Huyser had equally suggested that Khomeini’s popularity could diminish over time (Sick, 1985).

months we are laying the basis for dealing with the new government that we hope will have more effective powers. During this period and beyond we will want to allay the suspicions of the religious leaders and, where possible, cultivate their friendship. (...) Over the longer term we will want to work for an Iran in which the moderate, secular nationalists are predominant in managing the country. (Saunders to Vance, 05/09/1979: 3)

Above all, there was a general belief that cooperation with the new regime could be achieved on the basis of a policy of anti-communism (Brzezinski, 1983). Brzezinski, meanwhile, remained active in his pursuit of a more global US strategy, namely vis-à-vis the USSR. Returning to a regular theme, in early-March the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs cautioned Carter on the implications of the Iranian crisis for the Soviet role in the Persian Gulf: “In a prolonged period of change in Iran, the Soviets would be increasingly inclined to provide backing to those forces which they considered sympathetic to their own interests” (Brzezinski to Carter, 05/03/1979: 2). Brzezinski acknowledged the limits to Soviet expansion due to the Gulf States’ apprehension of Soviet intentions. Nevertheless, he warned that the Soviets would adopt a strategy that would reassure the regional powers of their peaceful intentions.

Vance countered this rationale. He rejected the idea of a “grand Soviet design” for gaining access to the Persian Gulf by destroying the American security system in the region (Vance, 1983). In his assessment, Vance acknowledged that the Soviets would exploit regional disorder but he also considered that they attributed great importance to maintaining stable borders. Ultimately, Vance (1983: 346) believed that Khomeini was equally disturbing to the Soviets considering “atavistic Russian fears of Islamic revival stirring the rapidly growing Muslim ethnic minorities in the Central Asian Soviet republics into opposition to Communist control”.

However, not willing to leave American security to chance, Brzezinski renewed his appeals for a more assertive US military policy in the Middle East. Thus, on 03 March, 1979, Brzezinski submitted a memo to the President titled “Consultative Security Framework for the Middle East” assessing the situation in the region and recommending

policy options which might compensate for recent setbacks²¹³. According to Brzezinski (Brzezinski to Carter, 03/03/1979), the fall of the Shah created a political and psychological problem regarding perceptions and expectations of US power. In particular, American allies “lack confidence in the direction of US policy and the willingness of the US to use its power on behalf of their security” (Brzezinski to Carter, 03/03/1979: 1). There were several sources of regional instability which could further aggravate this condition: the Arab-Israeli conflict, political radicalism, Soviet opportunism, and increasing social and economic disparity. An additional setback – such as the failure of the Camp David agreements, the fall of Sadat, political instability in Saudi Arabia, or a deterioration in US-Turkey relations – could destabilise the region, namely by leading to another Arab-Israeli war, renewed Soviet influence in the region, sharp decline of US influence in the Arab world, and/or denial of Western access to the regional oil.

Brzezinski’s proposal was the development of a broad consultative security framework for the Middle East. Rather than a formal alliance or bilateral security cooperation, the concept envisaged a “consultative relationship on regional security issues between a cluster of states that share common security concerns” (Brzezinski to Carter, 03/03/1979: 2). The relationship would begin with consultations between the individual countries and the US and would progress towards a system of multilateral discussion. More formal security arrangements could be considered with one or more countries in the region, depending on their alignment with US interests. In view of the immediate crisis, Brzezinski argued that the foundations of the security framework should be immediately implemented by the US, namely through the promotion of the Egyptian-Israeli peace settlement, resolution or containment of the Palestinian dimension of the Arab-Israeli conflict, establishment of a security framework enhancing stable military relationships and excluding destabilising external influence in the region, and promotion of regional social and economic development. While highlighting the contextual differences, Brzezinski emphasised the importance of this framework by comparing it to other major American political initiatives, such as the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan,

²¹³ The Consultative Security Framework set the groundwork for the future Persian Gulf Security Framework.

and the creation of NATO. The demands of such an undertaking would require US leadership and a significant increase in American economic and military assistance to the region, as well as an increase in the US military presence in the Middle East.

Brzezinski reinforced his position by submitting, later that month, Comprehensive Net Assessment-1978 (CNA-78) to the President²¹⁴. In its analysis of the global balance of power, the conclusions of CNA-78 concurred with earlier assessments (CNA-78, 30/03/1979): 1) existence of a general asymmetrical equivalence in military capabilities between the US and the USSR; 2) significant American advantage in economic, technological, diplomatic and political appeal; and 3) US-Soviet relationship involves both cooperation and competition. While there was equivalence in capabilities, the analysis of the trends was worrisome. In particular, the trend in the nuclear strategic balance favouring the Soviets had become considerably more pronounced. According to the study:

...the trends in almost all non-military components of national power (except technology and covert action) now favour the US. The trends in the military components of national power, on the other hand, all favour the Soviet Union, except for a mixed trend in the NATO-Warsaw Pact military balance (CNA-78, 30/03/1979: 2).

Regarding the Middle East, the study concluded that in the previous two years the Soviets had gained a foothold in Ethiopia, Afghanistan, and South Yemen, while losing Somalia. However, the loss of US influence in Iran was considered to have “major implications for the regional balance of power, domestic stability in neighboring states, the world oil supply, and US intelligence and security interests” (CNA-78, 30/03/1979: 7). However, despite these changes, CNA-78 acknowledges the limited role of the Soviets in driving events:

²¹⁴ CNA-78 was the result of the President’s early request for a review of the US-USSR relationship, i.e., PRM-10, completed in June 1977. The assessment provided by Brzezinski was an updated version completed by the NCS in the fall of 1978.

In Afghanistan and in Africa, the Soviets and the Cubans promptly took advantage of opportunities to expand their presence and influence. In Cambodia, the Soviets and Vietnamese seized similar opportunities. Virtually all the other major changes in the global balance in 1977 and 1978 did not however, derive from Soviet initiatives. Overall Soviet policy, particularly with respect to its military programs, was characterized by substantial continuity. In general, both positive and negative changes in the global balance during the last two years have been due less to what the Soviets have done than to what we and others have done. (CNA-78, 30/03/1979: 8)

In the view of the NSC, the recent changes in the global balance of power resulted largely from US initiatives, namely in the field of arms control negotiations (SALT II, CAT, ASAT). Accordingly, the strategy set out in PD-18 was substantially validated. However, current developments required some changes in the framework of the directive. The study presented several proposals for enhancing America's position in the arena of global competition. In particular, rapid and coordinated action was necessary to develop the strategic mobility and quick reaction forces envisioned in PD-18. Also, in order to offset the fall of the Pahlavi regime in Iran and reduce the likelihood of further regional instability, CNA-78 suggested a series of initiatives (CNA-78, 30/03/1979: 12-13)²¹⁵:

1. continued efforts to secure as much access as possible to the current regimes in Ethiopia and Afghanistan (as well as Iraq and South Yemen);
2. clarification of US interest in the stability of the area and of the seriousness with which the US would view Soviet efforts to expand their influence in pro-Western countries;
3. technological assistance and political support designed for pro-Western regimes in the region;
4. rapid implementation of the PD-18 provisions concerning a quick reaction force;
5. increasing US military presence in the Persian Gulf area;
6. reinstatement of CIA covert action capabilities in the region.

²¹⁵ President Carter wrote in the margins of the study that he agreed with these suggestions.

In the accompanying memo (Brzezinski to Carter, 30/03/1979), Carter instructed Brzezinski to send the study to Vance, Brown, and Turner for their comments and suggestions on how to address the insufficiencies and enhance US advantages.

In retrospect, Odom considered Brzezinski's proposal for a regional security framework to be an audacious proposal. According to him

At the time this memorandum was written, in early March 1979, I had only a vague sense of what Brzezinski envisioned and no idea that he had proposed such wide-ranging ideas to the president. Although a few other NSC staff members (especially Paul Henze and Fritz Ermarth) and I had emphasized the dangers emerging in the region and had also proposed various steps that might be taken, none of us had offered anything as sweeping or as bold as the guidelines Brzezinski offered in his March 1979 memorandum. (Odom, 2006: 61)

However, many of the ideas discussed in Brzezinski's memo and CNA-78 had been previously discussed within the US security and defence establishment (Njølstad, 2004). In fact, some of the issues had been raised in the context of PRM-42 ("US Strategy for Non-military Competition with the Soviet Union") and PRM-43 ("United States Global Military Presence"), both issued in August 1978. PRM-42 called for the development of non-military strategy options and initiatives that would allow the US to improve its position in relation to the Soviets. The directive requested that the study take into consideration the strategy for dealing with critical geographic areas of US-Soviet competition, namely developing a strategic concept for guiding US policy in Western Europe, the Middle East (particularly Saudi Arabia and Iran), and Northeast Asia (mainly China, Japan and South Korea). PRM-43, for its part, requested an assessment of American "military presence abroad from the standpoint of maintaining and enhancing our political and military position vis-à-vis the Soviets and of providing reassurance and confidence to key countries of concern to us". Therefore, many of the issues Brzezinski pressed for in his memo and in CNA-78 had been subjected to prior analysis and therefore were not as ground-breaking as some tend to authors suggest²¹⁶.

²¹⁶ Some of these measures were: upgrading US military base facilities in Diego Garcia; deployment of a carrier task force element from the Seventh Fleet in the Arabian Sea or Persian Gulf; organisation and

Regardless of the innovative quality of the proposals, Brzezinski's memo set off a renewed discussion regarding America's Middle East policy. Vance was particularly critical of Brzezinski's memo and the content of CNA-78 arguing that the US did not require a standing military force projection capability for the Middle East (Odom, 2006). In fact, in early-May, 1979, the State Department denounced CNA-78 for its pessimistic outlook and raised methodological issues concerning the studies central assumptions (Tarnoff to Brzezinski, 01/05/1979). In fact, the State Department used the studies own conclusions to refute any significant benefits accruing to the Soviet in the recent past. CNA-78 was equally reproached for downplaying the role of NATO. In the view of the State Department, the Administration should continue PD-18's emphasis on European security. Moreover, many recent developments were actually missing from the study which could affect the overall strategic balance. As the State Department evaluation contends:

Perhaps because of the time at which the CNA was written, it does not take account of (a) the Egyptian-Israeli treaty; (b) the Baghdad Summit and shift of conservative Arab governments; (c) the current anti-Soviet unrest in Afghanistan; or (d) the shift in US policy from arms control to increased military presence in the Indian Ocean/Persian Gulf area. These recent events underscore the difficulty of drawing balances in a time of significant and rapid political flux and the dubiousness of weighing all countries the same. (Tarnoff to Brzezinski, 01/05/1979: 4)

In contrast, Brown and the Department of Defence responded positively to Brzezinski's memo. The NCS's assessment was attuned to the mounting security concerns within the Department of Defence. In fact, in his memo to Brown regarding the evaluation of CNA-78, Brzezinski acknowledged that "I share many of your concerns" and reinforced the belief that "we need to take some decisions now if the negative trends, which could so adversely affect our position in the early eighties, are to be averted" (Brzezinski to Brown, 01/05/1979: 1). In a follow-up memo to Brown, Brzezinski

completion of several combined force exercises in the southwest US in order to test logistics as well as air, sea, and land combat capabilities appropriate for operations in the Persian Gulf; launching a small, but visible, joint-amphibious landing exercise with Oman military forces; and establishment "an East-of-Suez Command entity of some kind, located in the U.S. but equipped to move" (CNA-78, 30/03/1979; c.f., Njølstad, 2005).

highlighted the disagreement between the decision-making group, namely signalling the State Department's divergent outlook: "As you will see, they tend to be pointed in a different direction than those that came from you" (Brzezinski to Brown, 02/05/1979: 1).

In order to settle on a course of action, Brzezinski requested a SCC meeting to deal with three fundamental questions (Brzezinski to Brown, 01/05/1979: 1):

1. What are the requirements of stable deterrence, now and up to the mid-eighties?
2. What are the requirements of stable crisis bargaining, now and up to the mid-eighties?
3. What are the requirements of effective war management with defined political purposes, now and up to the mid-eighties?

In the subsequent SCC meeting in May 1979, Brzezinski advocated that the prior assumption that the US and USSR should have military parity in the Indian Ocean was no longer valid²¹⁷ (Odom, 2006). Discussions continued throughout the following weeks and several PRC meetings were held in June to develop a comprehensive review of the American Middle East security policy. The discussions between the principals had resulted in a broad agreement on two basic points (Brzezinski to Carter, 22/06/1979: 1):

- The United States has vital interests in the Middle East area and the Soviet Union, by comparison, does not. Denial of this area to us would be calamitous for the West; denial to the Soviet Union does not have the same consequences for the Soviets. Therefore, our objective is not an equal military balance with the Soviet forces in the area; rather, we must have a perceptible military preponderance. Accordingly, there was a consensus on the need to augment our forces there, taking adequate account of local sensitivities.
- There was also agreement that the military aspect is only half the equation and that the other half is the need to strengthen and accelerate the peace process.

²¹⁷ This was the general assumption underlying the American proposals for the Indian Ocean Arms Control Talks and the Conventional Arms Transfer Talks (Odom, 2006).

As the situation in Iran began displaying some negligible forms of normality, the discussions within the Administration as to how to secure and improve the overall US position in the Middle East moved on. More precisely, in a V-B-B luncheon on 03 August, 1979, it was decided that the Department of Defence would develop a new report on the RDF and would circulate a position paper evaluating the possible US military use of the Somali port and airfield at Berbera (Brzezinski to Carter, 03/08/1979).

The interagency debate set the policy wheels in motion once again. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Jones, initiated a joint-service level planning of the RDF, which would ultimately lead to the creation of the future RDJTF (Odom, 2006). The improvement of US defence ties and military capabilities in the region, namely through the enhancement of the rapid deployment of US forces, was agreed to by the key decision-makers (Vance, 1983). However, the use of facilities in Somalia for supporting US military operations instigated a lively discussion throughout the month of August. While Brzezinski and Brown both favoured this option in order to improve the US position in the Indian Ocean, Vance and some NSC staff members rejected it. Vance and the State Department were opposed to any use of Somali facilities as they were of any further expansion of US capabilities in the Indian Ocean at that point in time (Henze to Brzezinski, 24/08/1979). The members of the NSC staff were not disinclined to a greater US presence in the Indian Ocean but challenged the Department of Defence's general assumptions. While Sick alerted to the lack of existing operational conditions for sustained operational use (Sick to Brzezinski, 03/08/1979), Henze was mainly worried about the signal it would give the Siad regime and the leverage he could gain over US policy in the region. For that reason, Henze concluded that the most the US should aspire to was making occasional port visits or air landings in Berbera (Henze to Brzezinski, 24/08/1979). Ultimately, in October 1979, a compromise solution was reached in which port calls in Somalia and Equatorial Guinea would be undertaken in the immediate future (Brzezinski to Brown, 12/10/1979).

During the following weeks discussions proceeded within the Administration and with the Iranian Government on the nature of the relationship between both states. There was some discussion involving military cooperation between the US and Iran. In

particular Iran inquired the Administration about its interest in repurchasing the 78 F-14 aircraft it had sold the Shah. The US indicated its willingness to discuss this option and began making arrangements for establishing a working group in Tehran to proceed with more detailed negotiations (Christopher to Carter, 01/08/1979). Nevertheless, much of the interagency debate during the summer focused on what to do with the Shah. Since late-February the Shah had been enquiring about the possibility of moving to the US. The Administration was reluctant to satisfy the Shah's request and was able to postpone any definitive verdict (c.f., Bill, 1988; Sick, 1985). However, news of the Shah's dismal medical condition led the Administration to re-evaluate its position and on 19 October, 1979, the principal unanimously recommended allowing the Shah to come to the US for medical treatment. The President approved the decision on 21 October (Sick, 1985).

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MAPS OF FEAR AND WAR

“In recent years it's become increasingly evident that the well-being of those vital regions and our own country depend on the peace, stability, and independence of the Middle East and the Persian Gulf area. Yet both the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the pervasive and progressive political disintegration of Iran put the security of that region in grave jeopardy.”

(Jimmy Carter, *Address Before the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia*)

14.1) The Iranian Hostage Crisis

The Shah's arrival in the US created considerable angst amongst the Carter Administration's key decision-makers. Vance had recommended that the Administration inform the Bazargan government of the Shah's medical condition and of his need to be treated in the US. The US would then proceed in accordance with the Iranian reaction (Sick, 1985). Carter rejected this suggestion and instructed the State Department to merely inform Iran that the Shah would be admitted in the US for humanitarian purposes²¹⁸ (Sick, 1985).

Bazargan and Yazdi were displeased with the American decision. According to them, the Shah's admission in the US would create problems in US-Iranian relations. Nevertheless, they acquiesced to the Administration's request for additional protection for the American embassy in Tehran by increasing the police forces surrounding the

²¹⁸ US chargé Bruce Laingen and Henry Precht informed the Iranian government of the decision on 21 October, highlighting the particular medical circumstances for admitting the Shah and reiterating that the decision had no political motivation and did not entail the Shah's permanent residence in the US (Sick, 1985).

complex (Sick, 1985). In addition, the US and the Iranian government agreed to exchange information in order that Iran could verify the severity of the Shah's medical condition.

Shah arrived in New York on 22 October. The overall Iranian response to the admittance of the Shah was less temptuous than the Administration had initially anticipated. In fact, Vance (Vance to Carter, 24/10/1979) informed that the Shah's arrival in the US had been reported discreetly by the Iranian press and that "Iranian public reaction to the Shah's hospitalization in New York has been restrained". The Administration was particularly worried about the possible consequences of the anti-American demonstration scheduled for 01 November in Tehran. There was a general expectation in Washington that the embassy would be attacked because events could rapidly escalate out of control (Sick, 1985). However, the demonstrations of 01 November did not materialise the Administration's worst fears. In a memo to the President, Christopher once again highlighted the accommodating attitude of the Iranian government in helping to protect the American Embassy (Christopher to Carter, 01/11/1979).

The apparent cooperative rapport between the Administration and the Bazargan regime was additionally corroborated by the top-level meeting in Algiers. During an anniversary celebration of the Algerian revolution, Brzezinski met with Bazargan and Yazdi to discuss issues of common interest to both countries²¹⁹. During the encounter, the Iranians restated their discomfort with the Shah's presence in the US. Brzezinski acknowledged the Iranian's concerns and emphasised that the US had no intention of destabilising the current Iranian government. In contrast, Brzezinski highlighted the common strategic interests between both countries and stressed the need for greater cooperation:

we are prepared for any relationship you want. ... We have a basic community of interests but we do not know what you want us to do. ... The American government is prepared to expand security, economic, political, and intelligence relationships at your pace.
(Reproduced in Brzezinski, 1983: 475-476)

²¹⁹ The Iranian Minister of Defence, Mustapha Ali Chamran, also participated in the meeting (Brzezinski, 1983; Sick, 1985).

The possibility of future security cooperation was briefly discussed, as were the means of legally dealing with the Shah's assets. Brzezinski's general appraisal of the meeting was positive and he conveyed his assessment to Washington.

Despite the more optimistic outlook towards Iran within the Administration, events quickly turned sombre as the American embassy in Tehran was attacked and seized by militant students on 04 November, 1979. While the situation was considered grave, the Administration was still confident it could count once more on the Iranian government's cooperation in defusing the situation (Sick, 1985; Vance, 1983). In fact, Yazdi assured the US officials that the situation would be resolved within 24 hours (Sick, 1985). However, the Administration quickly became aware of the Iranian government's limitations in dealing with the current predicament. Christopher promptly underlined this fact in a memo to Carter on 05 November, 1979:

Yazdi this afternoon publicly expressed regret for the takeover and indicated the Iranian Government was doing everything possible to secure the release of the hostages. Yazdi stated, however, that the US was to blame for the incident, because we had admitted the Shah. The morning press and TV in Tehran violently denounced the US, and enthusiastically supported the students. Ayatollah Khomeini's son Ahmad, who is known as a moderate in clerical circles, was in the compound today and said that the matter was in the hands of the students. We spoke by telephone with the Ayatollah Behesti in Teheran, in an effort to break the stalemate. While Behesti seemed to understand our concerns and agreed to take the matter up with the Revolutionary Council, he was also very firm in expressing support for the student's actions. [...] it seems clear that the power of decisions is with the religious authorities. (Christopher to Carter, 05/11/1979: 03)

The SCC convened on 05 November to assess the situation. The initial discussion focused on the internal struggle for power within Iran and how this would complicate the release of the hostages. As a result, the group decided to exercise maximum prudence in US public statements to avoid further deterioration of the situation (Sick, 1985). The decision-makers also recognised the need to communicate directly with Khomeini and his inner circle. A decision was taken to recommend sending a special emissary to Iran. In

addition, the SCC pondered the development of contingency plans, namely military actions to be taken in case the hostages were harmed or disorder broke out again in Iran. The contingency plans were to focus on a possible rescue mission or punitive retaliatory measures (Sick, 1985).

That evening, after the State Department was able to establish contact with the Ayatollah Beheshti and discuss the possibility an American emissary being sent to Iran, instructions were outlined that would serve as the first formal US position on the hostage crises (Sick, 1985; Vance, 1983). The letter stated that the key objective was to obtain the immediate release of all American hostages and, subsequently, to discuss with the religious authorities the difficulties in the US-Iranian relationship. The message also highlighted the gravity of the Shah's illness and stressed that he could not leave while he was hospitalised. Arrangements, however, could be made for Iran to confidentially confirm the nature of his condition. Moreover, it was confirmed that the Shah was not in the US as a permanent resident and that his stay was determined by his clinical situation. In addition, the message asserted that claims against the Shah's assets could be pursued through the appropriate US legal means, namely through legal actions in American courts. The emissary's message mentioned that the US supported the independence and territorial integrity of Iran and, therefore, the US was not involved in the events in Kurdistan. What's more, the possible supply of military equipment was left open pending future negotiations. Finally, the message emphasised the need for allowing US journalists to report freely from Iran so that speculation regarding the events would not be fabricated.

However, the Iranian government's failure to resolve the situation led to the fall of the Bazargan government on 06 November. Khomeini did not replace the government leadership, preferring to attribute full political authority to the Revolutionary Council (Vance, 1983). In fact, the seizure of the American embassy and the hostage crisis effectively radicalised Iranian domestic politics (Bill, 1988). The Administration promptly realised the seriousness of the situation. Initial prospects of a quick resolution to the hostage crisis dwindled as Iranian religious leaders had completely sided with the students at the embassy. The situation was, thus, transformed "from a largely symbolic

act of political protest into a full-scale confrontation between Iran and the United States” (Sick, 1985: 209).

The interagency discussions reflected this new outlook. Carter was increasingly worried about the safety of all American citizens in Iran and in a meeting with his principal advisors on the morning of 06 November he instructed the State Department to try to convince all Americans to leave Iran (Sick, 1985). In particular, Carter was worried about the Iranian reaction to US initiatives. Brzezinski argued in favour of issuing a public statement pledging the US to a diplomatic resolution of the problem, but also affirming that it would hold the regime in Tehran responsible for its actions. Brown also felt that the Khomeini feared a US reaction and it was thus wise to proceed with the initiative. Carter was reluctant to agree that such threats would help release the hostages. Vance sided with the President and emphasised the need to press for a diplomatic solution (Sick, 1985).

Carter decided that the Administration would not make any public statement except to underline that Iran had given the US assurances which they expected to be honoured. Nevertheless, Carter was certain that the US-Iranian relations had arrived at a dead-end and he was determined to break relations once the hostages were released (Brzezinski, 1983; Sick, 1985). When questioned on the nature of a US response should the hostages be harmed, Carter instructed the advisors to develop studies on the possible retaliatory options while admitting that retaliation risked destabilising international oil supplies (Sick, 1985).

A SCC meeting convened immediately afterwards and the contingency plans assumed great importance in the discussion. Brzezinski (1983) recommended that three military options be considered: 1) a rescue operation; 2) retaliatory action if any Americans were killed; and 3) military intervention securing the oil fields of Southwest Iran in the case that Iran collapsed as a political entity. This led to some debate regarding the potential international effects of an Iranian cut off of oil (Sick, 1985). In particular, Secretary Brown and General Jones emphasised the difficulties of implementing these military options and the possible repercussions they could have on the hostages

(Brzezinski, 1983; Sick, 1985). The State Department, headed by Vance (1983), was against considering any military option which could harm the Americans in Iran.

However, without the Bazargan government in the dialogue and with Khomeini and the Revolutionary Council refusing to meet with the US emissaries, Carter sanctioned, later that day, the development of the contingency plans: “After some general discussion it was decided that the entire range of possible US military actions should be studied in terms of their entire range of possible effects on Iran, the implications for broader US interests in the Gulf area, the effects on America’s friends and allies in the Middle East and elsewhere, and the risks of drawing the Soviets into the Persian Gulf” (Sick, 1985: 215). Additionally, Carter requested an assessment of the feasibility of implementing an embargo on Iranian assets as well as other economic measures.

The volatile situation in Iran and the inadequacy of a robust American military option led the Administration to pursue two broad objectives (Vance, 1983): 1) protect America’s honour and US interests and 2) secure the safe release of the hostages. Accordingly, the US would not return the Shah to Iran, apologise for US policies or action in the past, or allow the hostages to be tried. Consequently, the Administration developed a dual-track strategy to try to achieve these goals (Vance, 1983). The first path was to open all the possible channels of communication with the authorities in Tehran “to determine the condition of the hostages and give them aid and comfort, to learn the Iranians’ motives and aims in holding them, and to negotiate their freedom” (Vance, 1983: 377). The second track was to apply as much political, economic, and legal pressure on Iran as necessary for the release of the hostages. In the meantime, military contingency plans were to be developed focusing particularly on a rescue mission and punitive strikes²²⁰ (Sick, 1985).

The Administration promptly began implementing its twofold strategy (Carter, 1982; Sick, 1985; Vance, 1983). The punitive economic and political measures commenced on 09 November when the US halted the shipment of all previously ordered military parts and equipment to Iran. A week later, the US banned Iranian oil imports and

²²⁰ Sick (1985) has highlighted the fact that while these strategies were complementary, the military contingency planning was organised outside the SCC. The group responsible for these studies was headed by Brzezinski and consisted of a few Defence Department representatives.

froze Iranian assets held in American banks and their foreign branches. Carter also contemplated breaking diplomatic relations immediately with Iran. However, Vance (1983) argued that such an initiative might endanger the hostages and hinder the establishment of lines of communication with the regime in Tehran. Carter (1982) agreed with Vance that the hostages' diplomatic status was essential to keeping them immune from additional harm and, therefore, decided not to break official relations with Iran at the moment.

The diplomatic strategy was also executed without delay. The US sought to open lines of communication to Tehran by using intermediaries with special influence or close relations with the Iranian regime. Accordingly, the Administration was able to get the Vatican to send an emissary on 10 November to speak with Khomeini. Moreover, the US used its rapport with the PLO to obtain the release of 13 hostages on 17 November. The Administration also relied heavily on international organisations to pressure Iran. The US was able to get the UN Security Council to unanimously condemn Iran for its actions and brought an action against Iran in the International Court of Justice which also ruled against Tehran's behaviour (Vance, 1983). In particular, on 04 December, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 457 which called on Iran to immediately release the hostages and requested that the UN Secretary General intercede to help resolve the crisis. Additionally, despite the reluctance of many of America's European allies, the PRC recommended proposing a Security Council Resolution banning all states from selling military equipment to Iran, prohibit new financial credits, seriously curtail air and rail links to Iran, and apply a general trade embargo (with the exception of food and medicine). As a result, the UN passed Resolution 461 on 31 December, setting 07 January, 1980, as the deadline for Iran to comply with Resolution 457. Failure to meet these terms would lead the UN Security Council to reconvene to adopt sanctions.

The UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim was particularly active in trying to resolve the crisis. He interceded directly by carrying out negotiations with the Iranian Foreign Minister Abolhassan Bani-Sadr to try to secure the release of the remainder of the hostages. The negotiations centred on the creation of an international commission to investigate the Shah's rule in Iran and secure the release of the US hostages in Tehran.

While Bani-Sadr was dismissed from his post on 28 November and his replacement Sadegh Ghotbzadeh postponed further negotiations, these negotiations did open and provide a direct channel to the Iranian regime for further talks.

While the Administration tried to combine punitive political and economic measures on Iran and open lines of communication with the regime in Tehran, the development of the contingency plans proceeded. On 20 November, the NSC convened to review the military options. With Khomeini increasingly threatening to place the hostages on trial, Carter approved the stationing of another aircraft carrier in the region, the deployment of tankers for supporting long-range attacks on Iran, and also placing helicopters in Diego Garcia (Brzezinski, 1983). The NSC analysed the situation once again on 23 November (Brzezinski, 1983; Carter, 1982; Sick, 1985; Vance, 1983). Carter was particularly determined to show US resolve in pressuring Tehran. The President outlined the military options available to the US, listing them as a sequence of escalating steps: “condemn, threaten, blockade, break relations, mine three harbors, bomb Abadan, total blockade” (reproduced in Brzezinski, 1983: 483). The President also considered the expulsion of Iranian diplomats in the US. Carter wanted to make it clear to Iran that failure to release the hostages would have dire consequences for them by sending a private message to the leadership in Tehran. Vance argued in favour of continuing the diplomatic initiatives previously agreed upon and was able to persuade the President not to evict the diplomats because it would interfere with the ongoing negotiations. Nevertheless, while agreeing to temporarily postpone a direct military action, the President ordered that the preparations for military strikes against Iran continue. Also, Carter overruled the recommendations from Brown, Mondale, and Vance, not to send a message directly threatening Iran. Rather, Carter approved a private message stating that if the hostages were put on trial the US would interrupt Iranian commerce and if any of the hostages was harmed it would result in direct retaliatory action (Carter, 1982; Sick, 1985). The message was then transmitted to the key Iranian authorities by a government close to the US.

The greater use of military means to try to resolve the situation was constantly accentuated by Brzezinski in his interactions with the President. Prior to the 04 December

NSC meeting, the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs emphasised the deteriorating situation in the entire region. An increased American security presence in the Persian Gulf was essential to preserve US interests. According to, Brzezinski (1983: 484) “I felt that the question of the lives of the hostages should not be our only focus but that we should examine as well what needed to be done to protect our vital interests”. What’s more, Brzezinski also forwarded a memo from Secretary Brown to Carter indicating that the time for the use of a military option was approaching. The Secretary of Defence’s prospects of a diplomatic solution were limited:

My own judgement is that we can go for a period of 10-15 days along with the diplomatic route if it appears to be moving in a promising way and there is not evidence or grave suspicion that any hostages have been harmed. If strong economic measures against Iran are taken by our key allies acting with us, that might give us another week or so. But even then I do not think we can delay facing up to at least the mildest military action for more than about a month from now” (Brown, reproduced in Brzezinski, 1983: 484)

This view contrasted with a memo prepared in mid November by the Department of State’s Bureau of Intelligence and Research which claimed that the hostage crisis would most likely continue for several months (Sick, 1985). The Bureau’s judgment was that this was due to the internal political struggle in Iran which would use the hostage situation in the factional struggle for power. Accordingly, it was believed that neither diplomatic initiatives nor economic or military retribution would hasten the release of the hostages. However, at the time it was presented, the content of Bureau’s analysis was in sync with the general belief in the Administration and, consequently, the memo did not circulate beyond the State Department (Sick, 1985).

However, the intense interaction involved in dealing with the hostage crisis would soon overlap with a new foreign policy crisis created by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in late-December 1979²²¹.

²²¹ The exact date of the invasion varies in accordance with the literature. Some authors place the invasion occurring in the period between 24 and 27 December (c.f., Gibbs, 2006). Other authors are more specific and tend to distinguish between the official order of invasion and the actual arrival of Soviet troops in

14.2) Soviet Involvement in Afghanistan and the Consolidation of the Carter Doctrine

The Soviet intervention sought to topple the Afghan President Hafizullah Amin and replace him with Babrak Karmal. Tension had been growing between the Kremlin and Amin for several months. In fact, the Soviet invasion had its origins in the coup led by the communist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) in April 1978. The new regime's attempts to centralise control over the tribal system and to topple the traditional social-religious-economic order gave way to a major insurgency throughout Afghanistan (Garthoff, 1985). The Soviets supported the PDPA government since its rise to power, but were unhappy with the policies of its leaders, Nur Mohammad Taraki and Amin, who insisted on purging the regime and imposing radical social reforms. Nevertheless, the Soviets provided military support in order to help the PDPA crush the rebellion.

Despite his greater power after Taraki's death in October 1979, Amin could not quell the insurgency²²². Moreover, the Soviets increasingly viewed Amin, not only as inept, but also as dangerous (Braithwaite, 2011; Garthoff, 1985). According to the Soviets, Amin was increasingly looking to unshackle Afghanistan from the Soviet orbit and steer it towards the US (Freedman, 2009; Garthoff, 1985; Gibbs, 2006). As a 29 October document from the Politburo emphasised, "Upon the availability of facts bearing witness to the beginning of a turn by H. Amin in an anti-Soviet direction, introduce supplemental proposals about measures from our side" (quoted in Gibbs, 2006: 254). As the situation deteriorated in Afghanistan and Soviet distrust of Amin increased, the Soviets decided in early-December 1979 to send troops to resolve the mounting predicament (Braithwaite, 2011). Accordingly, on 27 December, Amin's palace was attacked and he was killed.

Kabul. For instance, Feifer (2009) indicates that the first advance divisions of the Fortieth Army entered Afghan territory on 25 December, but the actual invasion occurred on 27 December when Soviet troops began landing at the Kabul airport. Braithwaite (2011: 86), for his part, argues that the formal marching orders were given on 25 December and thus "The Soviet intervention had begun". I have opted to use the date of the formal order – i.e., 25 December, 1979 – because it is in accordance with the view of the Carter Administration's key decision-makers (c.f., Brzezinski, 1983; Vance, 1983).

²²² Amin and the most radical elements of the PDPA staged a coup and seized full power on 16 September, 1979.

Karmal assumed the leadership of the Afghan government and subsequently requested Soviet military assistance. Within hours, 30,000 Soviet troops seized control of Kabul and other major Afghan cities.

Traditionally, Afghanistan was not viewed as a strategic actor in regional politics and it was believed that US “vital interests were not involved there” (Vance, 1983: 386; c.f., Gibbs, 2006). America’s traditional Afghan policy was to attempt to maintain Afghanistan relatively independent from Soviet pressures (Garthoff, 1986). This implied maintaining a free and independent Afghanistan which could contribute to maintaining a balanced regional order. The main objective of US policy “was not, however, to end the Soviet presence and its replacement by American, Iranian, and Pakistani influence” (Garthoff, 1986: 938). Rather, the US sought to encourage the Afghan regime to move toward a more pro-Western alignment through the provision of modest economic assistance and military training. Even after the April 1978 coup that brought the PDPA to power the US maintained this restrained stance. In fact, as Vance (1983: 384) acknowledged, “Although the officers who overthrew Daoud were from the far Left, we had no evidence of Soviet complicity in the coup”. In addition, the Administration believed that Taraki and Amin’s strong nationalistic character would keep Afghanistan from becoming a Soviet satellite. Therefore, the Carter Administration reiterated that it would maintain diplomatic relations with the new regime in Kabul and continue providing limited economic assistance (Vance, 1983).

However, to claim that the invasion caught the Carter Administration “off guard” (Freedman, 2009; Hastedt, 2004) is an overstatement. In fact, since mid-1979, Brzezinski (1983) had been alerting Carter to the growing Soviet involvement in the Afghanistan. In late-July Brzezinski informed Carter that he believed that the Soviets were aiming to oust Amin. As a result, in early-September, the President requested that the NSC prepare contingency options for a potential direct Soviet intervention in Afghanistan (Brzezinski, 1983). The president also called for the State Department and the NSC to give greater exposure to growing Soviet involvement in Southwest Asia. Additionally, in early-July 1979, Carter authorised the CIA to begin providing covert aid to the Afghan rebels,

namely by providing \$500,000 (Braithwaite, 2011; Craig and Logevall, 2009; Gibbs, 2006; Hartman, 2002).

In addition, the US had been monitoring the increasing Soviet military build-up on the borders of Afghanistan for some time. In fact, in a SCC meeting in mid-December, Admiral Turner reviewed the build-up of the preceding months (SCC, 17/12/1979). As the Soviets augmented the number of military forces, the Carter Administration became increasingly aware that the Soviets would become more actively engaged in the civil war in Afghanistan. However, in the fall of 1979, it was still widely accepted that Soviet involvement would merely imply an increase in military assistance and training of the Afghan army and greater operational control of the conflict (Vance, 1983). As the mobilisation increased, the Administration began weighing the possibility of direct involvement of Soviet forces in the war. According to the CIA, the build-up resulted from a plan to assist the Afghan military in trying to maintain control of the situation: “We believe the soviets have made a political decision to keep a pro-Soviet regime in power and to use military force to that end if necessary” (SCC, 17/12/1979: 2).

In order to face the growing challenge, the SCC decided on a three part strategy (SCC, 17/12/1979). The first measure was to continue the private diplomatic exchanges with the Soviets in order to dissuade them from direct intervention. The second initiative was to try to cooperate with Pakistan and Great Britain to improve the rebels capacities, namely by providing financing, weapons, and communications. The third measure was to increase public international pressure on the USSR. The US would seek with its European allies to highlight and sensitise the public to the Soviet attempt to crush the religious and nationalist expressions in Afghanistan.

Brzezinski quickly seized upon the Soviet incursion to push his agenda. The day following the invasion, in a memo submitted to the President, Brzezinski (Brzezinski to Carter, 26/12/1979: 1) restated his thesis that Soviet success in Afghanistan would fulfil “the age-long dream of Moscow to have direct access to the Indian Ocean”. The subject was now particularly pertinent since the “Iranian crisis has led to the collapse of the balance of power in Southwest Asia, and it could produce Soviet presence right down on the edge of the Arabian and Oman Gulfs” (Brzezinski to Carter, 26/12/1979: 1). In an

ensuing memo on 29 December, Brzezinski reiterated his conviction that the lack of tangible US action in the past had weakened America's credibility and led the Soviets to disregard US geopolitical concerns. After identifying the US response to the invasion thus far, Brzezinski recommended that there should be some definite initiative regarding US-USSR bilateral relations. While acknowledging that he opposed "any freeze on our efforts to achieve SALT ratification", a concrete response was indispensable (Brzezinski to Carter, 29/12/1979: 2). Regardless of the detail of the initiative, Brzezinski believed that it should achieve three broad outcomes: 1) punish the Soviets for infringing international law; 2) compel the Soviets to withdraw their troops and allow Afghanistan to return to an semblance of sovereignty and neutrality; and 3) deter the Soviets from further ventures, such as pursuing rebels across international borders or massively escalating the fighting with the insurgents²²³. Despite his insistence on the need for action, Brzezinski was aware of the limits of the initiatives targeting bilateral US-Soviet relations:

With regard to the possible impact on the Soviets of various steps, Moscow will not be much swayed by deterioration in the climate of US-Soviet relations. This deterioration almost certainly was anticipated, and has therefore been discounted in advance. Certain steps affecting US-Soviet relations may have the desired effect on other countries, but the most effective steps in getting our point across to Moscow are likely to be those that strengthen opposition to the Soviets worldwide. (Brzezinski to Carter, 29/12/1979: 3)

In fact, the suddenness of these events hampered the development of concrete policy recommendations. The SCC convened on 26 December brought little new insight into how to react to the crisis (SCC, 26/12/1979). In general, the CIA briefed the principals on the events and Soviet behaviour in Afghanistan. The greatest risk identified by the decision-makers was "a quick, effective Soviet operation to pacify Afghanistan" since it would tarnish the image of US in the region and domestically (SCC, 26/12/1979: 2). Accordingly, the US objective should be to make the Soviet operation in Afghanistan as costly as possible. Nevertheless, few immediate actions of significance were determined.

²²³ Carter responded by writing in the margins of the memorandum that the first and third objectives were interrelated and that the second was "unlikely".

In fact, policy options were limited since the US had very little effective capability to make any compelling demonstration of force in the region. This was evident in the 27 December memo from Aaron which emphasised the serious deployment problems still facing the RDF (Aaron to Brzezinski, 27/12/1979). Actually, the Administration had been seeking to secure basing, over flight, and transit access rights in Djibouti, Kenya, Oman, and Somalia for some time (Ermarth and Welch to Brzezinski, 16/01/1980). However, formal access was not yet guaranteed at this time, hindering American power projection in the region.

Carter convened a formal NSC meeting on 28 January, 1980, to assess the situation and propose more appropriate responses. The debate between the principals was intense as different perspectives collided. Two main theories were presented (Vance, 1983). The first, argued by Vance, was that the Moscow feared that the Amin regime in Afghanistan was fragile and could be toppled by Islamic fundamentalists. This would pose a serious threat to the Soviet Central Asian republics since they had a large number of Muslims. As a result, the Moscow intervened directly to replace Amin with a more compliant regime and to weaken the insurgents so they would no longer threaten Soviet interests. According to this thesis, Soviet intervention was essentially local and limited and directly associated to perceived threats to its national security²²⁴. The second theory had a more global perspective and claimed that the Soviets had calculated that, due to the quickly deteriorating US-USSR relations, they had nothing to lose by decisively eliminating the Afghan threat and improving their strategic position in the region. In accordance with this view, the consolidation of the Soviet position in Afghanistan would allow them to better exploit the situation in Iran and pressure Pakistan and India as a response to increased US involvement in the Indian Ocean and Middle East (Vance, 1983). Brzezinski was particularly supportive of the latter theory and had been pitching it for several months. In his view, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan “was a vindication of my

²²⁴ While Vance (1983: 388) did view the intervention in Afghanistan as an issue of Soviet national security regarding its southern border, he did acknowledge that the worsening of US-USSR relations did contribute to removing the restraints on Soviet international behaviour: “If, as is likely, Moscow decided by late December that the SALT Treaty was in deep trouble, that access to American trade and technology was drying up, and that the dangers of an American-Chinese-western European encirclement were growing, it probably had concluded that there was little reason to show restraint in dealing with a dangerous problem on its border”.

concern that the Soviets would be emboldened by our lack of response over Ethiopia” (Brzezinski, 1983: 429).

Despite the different assessments regarding Soviet motivations, there was a consensus within the Administration that the US had to respond boldly. The need for an assertive reaction resulted from the shared conviction in the Administration that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan posed a serious threat to US security interests, particularly in the Middle East. For Carter (1982: 471-472), the invasions success would give the Soviets a “deep penetration between Iran and Pakistan, and pose a threat to the rich oil fields of the Persian Gulf area and to the crucial waterways through which so much of the world’s energy supplies had to pass”. Moreover, if the Soviets could consolidate their power in Afghanistan the balance of power in the region would sway in favour of the USSR. As a result, Carter framed the Afghan problem in the wider context of the Middle East regional security, rather than as an isolated issue.

Brzezinski was more detailed in his rationale. According to him, Soviet domination of Afghanistan would allow the USSR to encourage the creation of a separate Balochistan²²⁵ and, thus, simultaneously gain access to the Indian Ocean and contribute to the dismemberment of Iran and Pakistan (Brzezinski, 1983). Vance also shared a similar conviction:

Assisting moderate governments in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf was a major element of the administration’s policy. It underpinned our arms supply relationship with the shah, our decision in 1978 to sell advanced aircraft to Saudi Arabia, and our efforts to shore up Middle East stability by bringing peace between Israel and the Arabs. Ever since Harold Brown had gone to the gulf, in February 1979, we had been working to augment our military power in the region and strengthen our security ties with Saudi Arabia and other moderate states. Afghanistan and the continuing disorder in Iran were threatening the Persian Gulf security system. There was a danger of a vacuum into which Soviet power would spread toward the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf. (Vance, 1983: 386)

²²⁵ Region comprising south-western Pakistan, south-eastern Iran, and a small section of south-western Afghanistan which has approximately 900 miles of the Arabian Sea coastline (for more details on the importance of the region in the superpower rivalry see Harrison (1981).

Vance also believed that the invasion set a dangerous precedent that required a firm response (Vance, 1983). For the Secretary of State, the invasion and occupation of a sovereign state was not acceptable as part of the East-West competition. Moreover, the invasion placed the Soviets much closer “to the gulf and the West’s jugular vein of oil”, compelling decisive action on the part of the US and its allies (Vance, 1983: 391).

The outcome of the ongoing discussions was summarised in a memo submitted to the State Department on 02 January and which identified the President’s decisions:

1. Our ultimate goal is the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. Even if this is not attainable, we should make Soviet involvement as costly as possible and should use the events in Afghanistan as a rallying point for our policies in the area.
2. We should push these objectives vigorously, going to the United Nations if necessary. It would be preferable, however, for other countries to take the lead in the UN.
3. Messages should be sent to our NATO Allies, China and key leaders in the UN and Non-Aligned Movement, drawing their attention to the events in Afghanistan and calling for appropriate responses.
4. We will not link the Soviet action in Afghanistan to SALT. At the same time, we will not permit our interest in SALT to deter us from speaking and acting forcefully.
5. We will send public and private messages to the Soviets, citing the unacceptability of their behavior, the threat to the peace posed by their actions, and their violation of the principles of behavior we agreed to in 1972. (Brzezinski to Vance, 02/01/1980: 1)

It was also determined that the US would increase economic and military aid to Pakistan in return for its cooperation in dealing with the Soviet-Afghan problem and talks with India would continue regarding their request for fuel for their nuclear reactor in Terapur (Brzezinski to Vance, 02/01/1980).

The NSC meeting held on 02 January, 1980, advanced additional measures which sought to signal to the Soviets the American determination (NSC, 02/01/1980). The meeting had a broad agenda – Iran, Christopher’s Mission to Afghanistan, SALT, and Secretary Brown’s Trip to China – but there was a general consensus on the most

essential issues. The relationship between the events in Iran and Afghanistan was briefly considered. According to Vance, Tehran viewed the invasion of Afghanistan as a threat and so he believed that the US should reinforce that argument in order to gain some leverage towards changing the attitude of the Iranian regime. Carter, however, did not share his optimism.

The decision-makers also discussed the possibility of taking the issue of Afghanistan to the UN while it was still discussing possible sanctions against Iran. The President concluded that the US should forcefully press the issue at the UN (in both the Security Council and the General Assembly) because he “was convinced that we will not be able to get the Soviets to pull out of Afghanistan, but Soviet actions over the next ten to twenty years will be colored by our behavior in this crisis” (NSC, 02/01/1980: 7). The principals maintained their conviction that the Afghan problem should not be linked to SALT. The treaty’s benefits were undeniable to the Administration hence it was decided that SALT would be kept on the Senate calendar, but not brought onto the Floor for a vote²²⁶. Brzezinski did speculate that if the USSR vetoed sanctions on Iran this might imply withdrawing SALT from the calendar as well.

With regard to other arms control talks – e.g., Indian Ocean talks – the principals debated the possibility of terminating some of them. Brzezinski and Vance argued that it would be preferable not to single out any particular negotiation but rather allow let them to stand as they were without further progress. When considering possible military measures, the principals agreed that “a US alert was inappropriate” (NSC, 02/01/1980: 15). In fact, contrary to conventional accounts, the Administration concluded that “As far as increasing the United States permanent military presence in the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf, that was already underway” (NSC, 02/01/1980: 15).

The issue of increased military cooperation with China was also discussed. Brzezinski suggested the US could provide China with an over-the-horizon radar and other military equipment. Both Vance and Brown were reluctant to commit the Administration to grant US intelligence equipment. In particular, Vance indicated that Congressional

²²⁶ The main reason was that the Administration was convinced that the domestic political climate would not be favourable to the Treaty’s ratification (Brzezinski, 1983; Carter, 1982; Vance, 1983).

approval was required for such an initiative. Nevertheless, Carter wanted to explore a closer security relationship with China: “The most important thing he [Carter] concluded is that we give a strong signal of support to the Chinese and of displeasure to the Soviets” (NSC, 02/01/1980: 23).

A host of additional proposals were discussed and approved during the meeting²²⁷. However, the Administration was conscious of the limited effect of such initiatives (c.f., Brzezinski, 1983; Vance, 1983):

Secretary Brown said, however, that we also need to leave some room on the ladder of escalation, otherwise there is no need for Soviet restraint. Dr. Brzezinski added that we do need to give enough of a signal so the Soviets know we are serious. [...] The President said that he was not sure that what we had decided today will deter the Soviet from going into Pakistan and into Iran. Both the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense agreed that it would not, but that it would provide a signal. Secretary Brown said that our response must make the Soviets wonder whether the next step will be worth it. (NSC, 02/01/1980: 23)

Despite these reservations, President Carter (1983a) addressed the nation on 04 January, 1980, and presented the Administration’s policy in light of the recent events in Southwest Asia. Carter (1983a: 813) presented the threat of the Soviet invasion to the maintenance of the peace in Southwest Asia and to the security of the US and its allies and stated that the “United States nor any other nation which is committed to world

²²⁷ Some of the most specific proposals accepted were (Brzezinski to Mondale, Vance, and Brown, 02/01/1980): recalling of the US Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Thomas Watson; proposal of a reduction to Soviet diplomatic staff in the US; suspension of scheduled diplomatic and commercial initiatives between the US and the USSR; increasing broadcasts by Radio Liberty, Radio Free Europe and Voice of America; suspension of formal business with the Afghan government; reduction of American personnel at the US Embassy in Afghanistan; reduction of Soviet media representation in the US to corresponding levels of US media representation in the USSR; deferral of the shipment by CSA aircraft of the MHD channel; postponed decision of US participation in the upcoming Olympic Games; increased travel controls on Soviet officials in the US; examine Soviet commercial expansion in the US with a view of restricting it; restrictions on the allocations to the Soviet Union of US Fishing Agreements; appeal to US allies to increase broadcasts to Muslim countries and Soviet Central Asia on developments in Afghanistan; urge those countries to deny further credit to the Soviet Union; urge International Financial Institutions (IFI) to terminate assistance to Afghanistan; seek an amendment in the Foreign Assistance Bill exempting Pakistan from the restrictions of the Symington and Glenn Non-proliferation Amendments making it possible for the US to provide Foreign Military Sales (FMS) and Economic Support Funds (ESF).

peace and stability can continue to do business as usual with the Soviet Union". Accordingly, Carter proceeded to state the punitive measures approved in the NSC meeting, as well as an embargo on additional grain sales to the USSR, greater restrictions on the export of high-technology items to the Soviets, and a reduction of Soviet fishing privileges in American waters.

In the meantime, the Administration continued to analyse its options and worked to build a strong international coalition which would enforce similar measures against the Soviets. The measures generated an animated debate within the Administration's senior decision-making group. Several issues were highly contentious – e.g., strengthening the US-China security relationship, grain embargo on the USSR, US participation in the forthcoming Olympic Games in Moscow (Brzezinski, 1983; Carter, 1982; Vance, 1983). Nevertheless, the majority of the principals agreed to the overall strategy of assuming a more assertive role towards the Soviets, particularly in challenging its expansion into the Middle East.

This shared outlook was evident in the 14 January SCC meeting on the US Strategy for South West Asia and Persian Gulf (SCC, 14/01/1980). All of the members accepted that the US must bolster Pakistan's capacity to resist further Soviet encroachment in the region. Brzezinski argued that if a Moscow/Kabul/New Delhi Axis threatened Pakistan, the US would respond by developing "a US/PRC/Pakistan/ and eventually Iran axis as a counter"²²⁸ (SCC, 14/01/1980: 2). This analysis did not raise any dissenting views since there was an interagency consensus that a new regional security framework was essential²²⁹. Some differences existed when evaluating the need and convenience of the safeguarding of US access to bases in Pakistan. Most of the group believed that US facilities in Pakistan could hamper US-India relations by driving India closer to the USSR, but the degree of the risk involved was not consensual. Therefore, it was determined that the US would not currently press this issue as a way of not overloading relations with India. Basing access in other countries, such as Oman and Somalia, nevertheless was agreed to.

²²⁸ In this case, PRC refers to the People's Republic of China.

²²⁹ In fact, prior to the meeting, Brzezinski (1983) had submitted a memo to Carter restating the importance of developing a regional security framework involving Egypt, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey.

In regards to US military capacities in the region, General Jones highlighted that the Soviet military deployment in Afghanistan would change the regional military balance. More precisely, Soviet military stationed in Afghanistan facilitated penetration into the Persian Gulf region²³⁰. According to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the short-term measures for the meeting the Soviet challenges were (SCC, 14/01/1980):

- Reducing the naval presence in the Arabian Sea to one aircraft carrier battle group (since presently the US could not sustain the existing two groups);
- Projection of tactical air power into Egypt and Jordan and request that Saudi Arabia “over build” their air fields to enhance support to US fighter formations;
- Prepositioning heavy equipment and supplies backed by an increase in US sealift capability

By adopting these proposals, the Joint Chiefs of Staff argued that the US could significantly reduce the time for deployment of heavy ground forces and provide sealift supply capabilities for the first time. These considerations were consistent with the memo Odom had submitted to Brzezinski the previous week and which emphasised the problems of securing the necessary funding and enthusiasm for effectively implementing the RDF and the need for the White House to enforce the complete implementation of PD-18²³¹ (Odom to Brzezinski, 07/01/1980).

The SCC also discussed the possibility of convincing the ASEAN countries to help India accept America’s policy toward Pakistan. While the majority of the members

²³⁰ More precisely it allowed (SCC, 14/01/1980): Soviet fighter aircraft stationed in Afghanistan access to the Gulf of Hormuz; By moving through Balochistan, Soviet armoured ground forces could reach the Arabian Sea in 10 to 12 days; Using land routes in the Caucasus, Soviet heavy military ground forces could reach the oil fields near Kuwait in 10 to 12 days; Soviet could project force through the Suez Canal into the Gulf in approximately 20 days using sea lift from the Black Sea; A soviet airborne division (approximately 8,000 troops) with armoured vehicles could land anywhere in the proximities of the Persian Gulf within two to three days if all the Soviet airlift was employed.

²³¹ Odom succinctly framed the problem as follows: “The JCS did not really ignore PD-18 for two years. They were discouraged from addressing it by ISA. Convinced that they would demilitarize the Indian Ocean, the ISA staff in Defense had no time or enthusiasm for the RDF. They got lots of encouragement from State and no discouragement from NSC regional and security clusters. The services – as distinguished from the JSC – also need some blame. The JCS, surprisingly, tried to take the RDF seriously but could not get service or OSD support for funding to meet JSPID requirements” (Odom to Brzezinski, 07/01/1980: 1).

believed that ASEAN would be helpful, the State Department was assigned to develop a list of messages or demarches that the President could make towards some countries to try to persuade them to be more accommodating to US policy regarding Afghanistan. Once again, the Administration emphasised the need to move forward the Middle East peace process. The group decided not to assume a very active public role, particularly concerning the participation of the PLO, for that could alarm Israel and hamper negotiations.

Following the meeting, on 16 January, Carter informed the principals that he would put much emphasis on the Soviet challenge in Southwest Asia in his forthcoming State of the Union Address (Brzezinski, 1983). The principals were requested to deliver an initial draft of the speech. This draft would certainly make reference to the American capability to intervene decisively in the Middle East since Carter's key advisors had been discretely discussing "the possibility of a politically-oriented, quick intervention capability in the Persian Gulf" in the V-B-B luncheons (c.f., Brzezinski to Carter, 15/02/1980; Brzezinski to Aaron and Denend, 14/02/1980).

Brzezinski's initial draft was framed on the model of the Truman Doctrine. Brzezinski (1983) was able to convince Carter, notwithstanding Vance and Cutler's objections, to include a reference to the regional security framework he had been promoting for several months. As a result, on 23 January, 1980, Carter delivered his State of the Union Address to a Joint Session of the Congress putting forward the principles of the Carter Doctrine. Besides his commitment to defend the Persian Gulf region against any assault, augment defence obligations, improve US rapid force deployment, and modernise US and NATO strategic forces, Carter avowed that

...we will further strengthen political and military ties with other nations in the region. [...] Finally, we are prepared to work with other countries in the region to share a cooperative security framework that respects differing values and political beliefs, yet which enhances the independence, security, and prosperity of all. All these efforts combined emphasize our dedication to defend and preserve the vital interests of the region and of the nation which we represent and those of our allies—in Europe and the Pacific, and also in the parts of the

world which have such great strategic importance to us, stretching especially through the Middle East and Southwest Asia. (Carter, 1983b: 55)

Carter's message was met with positive reactions both domestically and internationally. While some criticism was inevitable, namely concerning the lack of effective force to back up the President's claims to the satisfaction of many constituents and allies, the State of the Union address publicly committed the Administration to the security of the Persian Gulf region (Brzezinski, 1983; Carter, 1982; Vance, 1983).

But contrary to most conventional accounts, the announcement of the Carter Doctrine was not the radical watershed in the Carter Administration's Middle East policy. Nor did the invasion of Afghanistan contribute "heavily to a major shift in a decade's policy whose legacy may have been a precarious US strategic position in the Gulf" (Yetiv, 1990: 69). It is equally mistaken to claim that "prior to the invasion, the US public, moderates in the US government, and even the president were not sufficiently impressed by Soviet gains in Angola, Ethiopia, and South Yemen to promote a noticeable shift in what was widely viewed as a policy of accommodating Moscow" (Yetiv, 1990: 69). Undoubtedly the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan further darkened the Carter Administration's geographic mental maps of the Middle East. Nevertheless, the Administration's overarching mental maps of the Middle East were already dismal, reflecting a sense of fear and distrust regarding the existing situation and the foreseeable future. As the preceding chapters have illustrated, the Carter Administration had long altered its perception of the Middle East as a place of hope and peace. The Administration had early in its tenure elevated the Middle East to a primary place of honour in US geopolitical considerations. Even before the Iranian revolution the key foreign policy decision-makers in the Administration were eager to secure US interests in the region by creating the military means deemed necessary. The Carter Doctrine did in fact embody a policy outlook quite different from the one espoused by the Carter Administration in its early days. However, it was the result of a cumulative and continuous process of policy adjustments and adaptations, rather than a sudden break with the past. At most, the invasion of Afghanistan and the Iranian hostage crisis provided the crucial legitimacy for endorsing the Administration's emergent Middle East policy.

These events allowed the Administration to move forward and carry on its continually escalating engagement with the Middle East. The proclamation of the Carter Doctrine facilitated the validation of the Administration's policy options, particularly towards an increasingly hostile domestic audience. Brzezinski tacitly acknowledged this in his memoirs:

As a practical matter, there is no way for the United States to reach the conclusion secretly that the Persian Gulf is in our vital interest, then to build up our military forces in order to have the capability of responding locally, and then only to announce the United States is committed to such a defense. In a democracy such as ours, only a public commitment is capable of generating the necessary budgetary support and the other decisions that are needed to implement a commitment. (Brzezinski, 1983: 446)

However, the proclamation of the Carter Doctrine did not imply that foreign policy issues within the Administration were resolved and that US policy was consistent throughout the final year of the Carter Presidency. While it is still commonplace to state that the Carter Doctrine "has since governed United States policy in the Gulf" (Klare, 2002: 416) this claim is equally inaccurate and can even be deceiving. It would seem from such accounts, that the Administration implemented the measures anticipated in the Carter Doctrine in a rational and planned process. The result was a fixed policy of assertive unilateral action supported predominantly by military power (DeConde et al, 2002; Jones, 2008; Macris and Kelly, 2012; Sokolsky, 2003). In addition, this erroneous ideal of the Carter Doctrine underrates the dynamic and contested nature of the interactions that continued to pervade the Carter Administration's decision-making process throughout its final year. Differences continued to persist within the Administration. Whereas few decision-makers held any optimistic outlook for the Middle East in the near future, there was no tacit consensus on how to deal with the challenges facing the US (c.f., Shulman to Vance, 15/02/1980). The Administration's policies continued to result from the intense interactions within the top echelons of power.

The Administration's policy for dealing with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan proved more consistent than that for dealing with Iran. The implementation of the Carter

Doctrine, nevertheless, resulted from a step-by-step process carried out by the discussions in the SCC with the initiative belonging essentially to the NSC staff (Brzezinski, 1983; Odom, 2006). Despite popular accounts to the contrary, the establishment of the Persian Gulf Security Framework was marred by interagency squabbling. In fact, in mid-May 1980, Brzezinski relayed his exasperation to Carter in his NSC Weekly Report:

I have chaired eleven SCC meetings on security framework issues for the Persian Gulf. Getting results is like pulling teeth. The complicated interests and issues make progress difficult; bureaucratic resistance makes it more so. State is fearful of military power projection into the region. Defense is unable to act expeditiously, lacks funds, especially for operations and exercises, and cannot break through service rivalries to build a command structure for the region. (Brzezinski to Carter, 16/05/1980)

Progress was made nonetheless. By mid-1980, several concrete initiatives had been carried out, namely (Brzezinski, 1983): US force capabilities were improved due to the acquisition of access to regional facilities; increased Navy and Marine presence in the Middle East region; joint-contingency planning had begun with some key regional allies and joint-exercises were scheduled; regional allies were supported in improving their defence capabilities and procedures for the sale of military equipment was streamlined; European NATO allies were encouraged to share greater responsibility for their security; and approval of the development of a very small and rapid intervention force for aiding friendly regimes under subversive attack.

However, while the regional security framework for the Persian Gulf and the development of the RDF were progressing due to the NSC's, particularly Brzezinski's, initiative, Njølstad (2004: 42) has highlighted that some crucial issues remained unresolved within the Administration: "should the defence of Western Europe still have first priority, or had the time finally come to put equal or more emphasis on US commitments elsewhere, especially in the Persian Gulf-Middle East region?". The final months of the Carter Presidency once again gave way to a heated interagency debate on US strategy for the Middle East. The 24 November, 1980, SCC meeting is illustrative of the divergent views still persisting within the Administration (SCC, 24/11/1980). The meeting

sought to analyse the geopolitical and strategic challenges that would face the US in the future, particularly, those with relevance to American foreign policy. At the heart of the discussion was the Department of Defence's paper on "Basic Strategy Issues". Secretary Brown had presented the paper's main assumptions at a previously SCC meeting. According to Brown, in the upcoming years, the strategic challenges facing the US implied the need to acquire capability for America to fight one full-scale war or two "half wars" (Brzezinski, 1983: 469). These scenarios would require the US to increase its military capabilities in the Middle East as well as press for the quicker rearmament of Japan and tightening of the US-Sino security relationship. The recently appointed Secretary of State Edmund Muskie was particularly critical of the Department of Defence assessment. In his view the paper challenged many of the Administration's campaign statements and referred to a period in which they would not have any jurisdiction over policy and thus should be revised²³² (SCC, 24/11/1980).

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Jones, also commented on the need for the US to be able to secure its vital interests without being dependent on its regional allies. Brzezinski and Brown countered that in Europe and Japan the US would require the allies help to defend them. However, both principals agreed that in the Persian Gulf region only the US could defend it and it should be prepared to do so. Geography once again determined US policy for Brown:

...if you look at the US/Soviet relationship you see that we play down areas far away from the Soviet Union like South Africa, the Caribbean, and the South Pacific. Geography is not against us there, but in Europe, East Asia, and Southwest Asia/Persian Gulf, the USSR is very close. Thus, we need advanced preparations for those regions. (SCC, 24/11/1980: 3)

In fact, in determining which of the regions should receive priority in programmes, Brown highlighted that Southwest Asia had the greatest interests/risks ratio and therefore should get priority. Brown equally explained that the US was moving from a three and a half division to a six and a half division plan for the Persian Gulf. In this case

²³² This was due to the fact that the Carter had lost the Presidential election to Ronald Reagan.

the European allies would have to assume a greater role in defence of NATO. Muskie questioned many of the underlying assumptions regarding the region and claimed that the European would contribute adequately to the new defence requirements. A similar argument was made regarding East Asia. The majority of the decision-makers agreed that it would be difficult to get Japan to increase in defensive role in the region and building-up China would take too long to be effective. CIA Director, Stansfield Turner, recommended that the US focus its policy on Europe and the Persian Gulf and ignore East Asia. Brown was sympathetic to this argument, recognising that East Asia would be the last priority in a three front war. When analysing the relationship with China, Muskie also rejected greater military cooperation on the basis that it could lead the Soviets to assume a more problematic stance. Brzezinski countered that the US relation with China would reflect Soviet behaviour. Brown favoured Brzezinski's view but stated that the policy towards China should be essentially addressed by the new Administration (SCC, 24/11/1980).

The continued debate of these issues ultimately led to President Carter's signing of PD-62 (*Modifications in US National Security*) and PD-63 (*Persian Gulf Security Framework*) on 16 January, 1981. As stated in Part 1, these directives codified the outcomes of the strategic debate within the Administration. While the directives resulted from the interaction among the key foreign policy decision-makers, their convenience was not shared by all. In fact, Muskie objected to their approval and refused to comment on the preliminary drafts (Brzezinski, 1983). However, for Brzezinski (1983), the documents summarised the Administration's strategic doctrine and provided the basis for a regional security framework for the Middle East region.

14.3) Securing the Release of the Hostages

While PD-62 and PD-63 resulted from an animated interaction process, it differed noticeably from the Administrations decision-making process regarding Iran. The US National Strategy and the Persian Gulf Security Framework resulted essentially from the interactions occurring within the Administration, particularly from the interagency

debate. However, Iranian policy was highly influenced by the interactions with external actors, such as the Iranians, the Algerians, and other foreign intermediaries. These exchanges were much more unpredictable and led the Administration to continuously adapt and adjust its policies to the dynamic nature of the negotiation processes.

In fact, since mid-November 1979, the Administration had been contemplating both diplomatic and military responses to try to persuade the Iranian regime to release the American hostages. However the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan unexpectedly altered US political and strategic considerations (Emery, 2013). The renewed tension with the Soviets seriously curtailed the possibility of a UN Security Council Resolutions against Iran since the Soviets would most likely veto any American proposal. Moreover, without an international mandate, Western allies would be reluctant to pursue additional sanctions on their own. Since the beginning of the crisis contingency plans had been developed and many of the principals were increasingly favouring a military option. Nevertheless, the military dimension of the Afghan crisis also diverted military considerations away from Iran. In reality, the US and Iran shared similar concerns and objectives in opposing further Soviet expansion in the region. According to Sick:

The Afghan invasion transformed the entire strategic environment in the region, and it provided a compelling set of reasons for seeking a negotiated settlement with Iran instead of pressing the situation toward possible conflict. The Soviets, by their actions, appeared to have provided renewed evidence that the United States and Iran shared fundamental security interests, regardless of how much their politics might diverge. Similarly, the Soviet invasion shocked the Islamic states of the Persian Gulf into awareness of their own vulnerability and opened up new possibilities for cooperation with the United States. To have launched military action against Iran at that moment would have contributed to the political destabilization of regional governments and interrupted US efforts to develop a regional security framework. (Sick, 1985: 282)

Hence, during the early months of 1980, the Administration focused essentially on the diplomatic track to try to defuse the situation. In particular, the Administration relied on several intermediaries to drive the negotiation process forward. Special emphasis was

placed on the services of Christian Bourguet and Héctor Villalón. These two lawyers were used by Ghotbzadeh and Bani-Sadr to try to work out an agreement for releasing the hostages. On the American side, the secret negotiations were conducted by Saunders and Jordan who reported directly to Carter and Vance. This informal process kept much of the negotiations and the policy discussion out of the official channels and outside the normal framework of the NSC (Sick, 1985). While not openly opposing this course of action, Brzezinski and his staff were highly sceptical of its value and efficiency. Nevertheless, negotiations proceeded for several weeks as the parties tried to work out the details for establishing a UN commission which would address Iran's grievances in return for the release of the hostages. Whereas in early-March the students at the embassy announced that they were willing to transfer the hostages to the care of the Revolutionary Council, Khomeini demanded that the commission issue a report on the Shah's crimes before it could visit the hostages. As a result, the commission announced it was suspending its activities and departed Iran.

In late-March 1980, Carter decided to issue an ultimatum to the regime in Tehran. The President sent a letter reminding Bani-Sadr of his assurances of improving the hostages' conditions and resolving the crisis. However, Carter made it known that if the hostages were not transferred to the Revolutionary Council by 31 March, the US would implement additional non-belligerent measures against Iran. The list of sanctions was discussed in a series of high-level meetings within the Administration and finally agreed upon in the SCC meeting of 30 March (Sick, 1985; Vance, 1983): break-off of diplomatic relations with Iran and expulsion of Iranian diplomatic and consular personnel; banning of all US exports to Iran (except food and medicine); development of a formal survey of Iranian assets in the US; and invalidation and refusal to renew all US visas to Iranians (except for compelling humanitarian purposes or reasons of national interest).

Bani-Sadr informed the Administration that he was negotiating the transfer of the hostages with the students and requested that Carter defer new sanctions for a few more days. Carter, with Vance's insistence, postponed the sanctions once again. However, as progress continued to evade the Administration, Carter convened the NSC on 07 April to re-evaluate the situation and the available policy options. The President was resolute in

the need to act assertively for the situation on the ground had once again changed. More precisely, according to Carter, the students had offered to transfer the hostages to the Iranian government and it had refused to receive them. Moreover, Carter informed the principals that Bourguet had admitted to US officials in a recent meeting “that the negotiating game was over” (Sick, 1985: 288). Therefore, with the negotiation process exhausted, more forceful US action was required. All the principals, with the exception of Vance, shared the conviction that America had to demonstrate its resolve by applying severe measures (Brzezinski, 1983; Vance, 1983). On 07 April, 1980, the Carter Administration broke off diplomatic relations with Iran and unilaterally imposed the political and economic sanctions previously recommended.

Mindful of the limits of economic and political sanctions, Brzezinski and Sick submitted a memo to the President stressing the need for a more forceful attitude (Brzezinski, 1983). Two military alternatives were contemplated: 1) escalating pressure including the mining of Iranian harbours; and 2) rescue mission. The memo concluded that

...a carefully planned and boldly executed rescue operation represents the only realistic prospect that the hostages – any of them – will be freed in the foreseeable future. Our policy of restraints has won us well-deserved understanding throughout the world, but it has run out. It is time for us to act. Now. (Reproduced in Sick, 1985: 290)

As a result, the NSC convened on 11 April to assess the feasibility of carrying out a rescue operation. Vance was absent from this meeting and Christopher represented the State Department. However, due to the secrecy involved in the contingency planning, Christopher was not fully briefed on the rescue operation and his argumentation was seriously hindered. As a result, Christopher did not take any position regarding the operation, but emphasised that several political and diplomatic options were still available before resorting to military force (Vance, 1983). Nevertheless, the State Department was isolated in its arguments against the rescue mission and Carter approved it (Brzezinski, 1983; Vance, 1983).

Once Vance arrived in Washington and was informed of the conclusion of the meeting he strongly objected to carrying out the rescue mission. Carter (1982) gave him the opportunity to present his views to the NSC at their following meeting. Vance stressed the fact that a rescue mission would undermine the recent support the US had obtained from its allies in enforcing sanctions against Iran. Additionally, it would undercut future negotiations with the regime Tehran. This would be aggravated by fact that Iranians could take more US hostages and ultimately drive Iran towards the Soviets (Sick, 1985; Vance, 1983). However, the NSC did not support Vance's arguments and the President reaffirmed his decision to proceed with the rescue mission. As a result, Vance submitted his letter of resignation to Carter on 21 April. The rescue operation – i.e., Operation Eagle Claw – was launched on 24 April but was soon aborted due to serious operational setbacks. The failure of the rescue mission cooled the political climate and thwarted any additional progress in freeing the hostages.

After several months of inaction, negotiations for releasing the hostages were resumed in the summer of 1980. More precisely, the German Foreign Minister informed the Carter Administration that Khomeini had sent an emissary, Sadegh Tabatabai, to speak with high-level US officials to work out the provisions for the release of the hostages (Carter, 1982). With the Shah deceased and tension between Iran and Iraq mounting, the Iranian emissary put forward a proposal which omitted the majority of the issues which the US had previously refused to accept. In fact, Iran's demands were limited to the returning of Iranian assets frozen by the US, the return of the Shah's assets, and an agreement for the US not to interfere in Iranian affairs (Carter, 1982; Sick, 1985). Khomeini reiterated Tabatabai's proposal in a message delivered in mid-September 1980. Christopher was briefed on the situation and prepared for the negotiation process. In his exploratory conversations with Tabatabai the Administration was informed that US proposals were reasonable and negotiations could continue²³³.

²³³ Meanwhile, as negotiations proceeded, Iraq invaded Iran on 24 September. As a result, the Iranians inquired about their request for military material and spare parts prior to the hostage crisis (Carter, 1982). A working group was set up by the Administration to evaluate the possibilities of satisfying the Iranian request. The group proposed a military package of nearly \$150 million which Carter approved (Sick, 1985). However, the Iranians ultimately declined the offer and no military equipment was ever provided to Iran.

Algeria assumed a pivotal role in the negotiations. As the mediator, the Algerians alerted the different parties to divergent interpretations and perspectives on each side. Their interaction with the Carter Administration allowed for policy adjustments and alterations to be conducted in a timely manner and minimised conflicts with the Iranians. Therefore, the interactions served two distinct purposes:

First, they provided an external check – by individuals sensitive to the ideological requirements of the Iranian revolutionaries – on the drafting work that had to be done in Washington. In some cases, a possible clash was averted by a simple change of words that had no legal effect. In others, substantive problems were brought to light and remedied. Second, the US negotiators were required to present in great detail the constitutional, legal, financial and other considerations that had gone into the preparation of the US response, thereby providing the Algerians with the necessary ammunition to make a persuasive presentation in Tehran. (Sick, 1985: 320-321)

In fact, Algerian mediation was essential to overcoming many of the obstacles that emerged during the negotiation process. As negotiations wavered in December, the Algerians were able to help the US and Iran jumpstart the negotiation process and carry it through until the final release of the hostages on 20 January, 1981.

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CONCLUSION

“What that belief really means is that my map is a distortion. All its representation of terrain and oceans is but the revelation of how I regard my visitors’ perceptions in the first place. I now realize that the world is not real save in the way each of us impresses upon it his own sensibility.”

(Fra Mauro, *A Mapmaker’s Dream*)

In the preceding chapters I have presented an alternative explanation of the Carter Administration’s Middle East policy and the development of the Carter Doctrine. While the chapters do not settle the matter of *why* the Administration’s policy changed, they do seriously refute the conventional accounts of *how* policy changed. More precisely, they challenge traditional accounts which implicitly employed rationalisations based on the principles of punctuated equilibrium and planned change models.

Punctuated equilibrium emphasises discontinuous episodic change (Romanelli and Tushman, 1994). The general assumption is that organisational activities evolve through reasonably long periods of stability (i.e., equilibrium) that are interrupted by short and abrupt periods of radical, or revolutionary, change. These revolutionary periods interrupt the established patterns of activity and subsequently set up the foundations of a period of renewed equilibrium. FPA has traditionally favoured this outlook in explaining foreign policy change (Rosati, 1994; Schraeder, 1994).

Several factors have been presented to justify the resistance of policy to change. For instance, organisational inertia is one such rationale. In this perspective, national governments are bureaucratic organisations which develop routines that maintain unconscious, self-sustaining, and recurring practices which perpetuate behaviour (Gersick and Hackman, 1990). Policy equilibrium has also been attributed to groups outside the governmental organisation, such as societal elites. According to some researchers, these

groups can influence policy by establishing coalitions of vested interests in the existing political system (Skidmore, 1994a; 1996; Snyder, 1991). As a result, strong domestic groups are able to hinder foreign policy change in normal circumstances.

Cognitive theories also emphasise stability by highlighting the multiple cognitive tools that contribute to the resistance to change (Jervis, 1976; Renshon, 2008; Rosati, 2000; 2005). In particular, the application of cognitive psychology to FPA has favoured the study of the decision-maker's cognitive consistency. In most cases, research stressing cognitive consistency argues that individuals tend to interpret new information in accordance with their pre-existing beliefs and ignore and distort conflicting incoming information (Jervis, 1976). Moreover, studies on group decision-making have traditionally also posited that collective beliefs are equally unyielding. In fact, some researchers argue that group cognition possess even greater resistance than individual beliefs (Eidelson and Eidelson, 2003). Therefore, foreign policy change is infrequent.

When change does occur, is usually portrayed as infrequent, episodic, and abrupt (Rosati, 1994; Weick and Quinn, 1999). It essentially results from a serious disparity between planned objectives and actual outcomes. The resistance to change is thus only surmounted through crises or critical events which reveal the inadequacy of existing policies (Brockner and James, 2008; Hermann, 1990; Welch, 2005). This failure sets-off a process for replacing the existing policy and leading to a wholesale transformation of the existing state of affairs.

The change process is traditionally understood within the framework of the planned change model. Planned change models are fundamental to RAM which is still predominant in most accounts of foreign policy decision-making (Allison and Zelikow, 1999; Stein and Tanter, 1980; Yetiv, 2004). The general argument is that change is achieved through several different discrete stages: unfreeze, move/change, refreeze (Burnes, 2004a; 2004c; Schein, 2002; Weick and Quinn, 1999). From this perspective, foreign policy change is a deliberate and rationally-oriented process. Once the desired policy change has been achieved, policies are allegedly fixed and a renewed period of stability ensues. The establishment of a new period of equilibrium is essential to keep policies from backsliding.

Most accounts of the Carter Administration's foreign policy and the development of the Carter Doctrine implicitly apply similar assumptions and arguments. In fact, most of the research on the Carter Administration claims that halfway during the Presidency US foreign policy experienced an abrupt and radical transformation. Prior to that, a period of policy equilibrium reigned due to numerous stabilising factors. For instance, several bureaucratic impediments to change have been identified. In particular, it is argued that the State Department, the Department of Defence, and the intelligence community resisted the idea of increasing US power in the Third World. Ultimately, the different agencies were immersed in their routines and blocked significant changes in US foreign policy, especially regarding the Middle East (Kupchan, 1987; Odom, 1996).

Other studies have highlighted the Carter Administration's cognitive consistency. For example, Rosati (1991) contends that Administration's cognitive images of the international system and of the Soviet Union were particularly resistant to change. In a similar vein, in analysing the Carter Administration's operational code, Walker et al. (1998) have reported that Carter maintained a high degree of cognitive consistency in the initial years of the Presidency.

Allegedly, this equilibrium was only shattered by a series of the critical events in the Middle East – e.g., Iranian Revolution, Iranian hostage crisis, and Soviet invasion of Afghanistan – which revealed the shortfalls of the Administration's foreign policy. These crises exposed the failures and shortcomings of the Carter Administration's original policies and allowed for the unfreezing stage to begin. In other words, the original cooperative and morally-oriented foreign policy of the Carter Administration was sidelined as it relinquished its commitment to a shaping a global community. Furthermore, the events revealed that the US could no longer rely on local actors to uphold regional stability and protect US interests which compelled the US to step-up and guarantee the defence of the Middle East from Soviet encroachment and endogenous instability.

The new policy was epitomised by the Carter Doctrine. From this moment forward, the Middle East would be at the forefront of US foreign policy (Little, 2008; Rosati, 1991) as America would commit itself to increasing its defence forces and military capabilities to be able to counter any threat which could potentially destabilise the

region. Once conceived, this policy was purportedly codified by a series of Presidential Directives which would serve as the foundation for the following Administrations Middle Eastern policy (Bacevich, 2010; Klare, 2004; 2007; Little, 2008).

However, the preceding chapters dispute this traditional account and emphasise new or previously neglected dynamics by applying the theoretical concepts underlying continuous, or emergent, change models. The emergent approach views change as “a continuous process of experiment and adaptation aimed at matching an organisation’s capabilities to the needs and dictates of a dynamic and uncertain environment” (Burnes, 2004a: 312). This naturally assumes that organisations, such as national governments, operate in a highly dynamic and unpredictable international environment. While the emergent approach tends to accentuate small and incremental changes, the underlying logic is that over time the cumulative nature of the adjustments and adaptations may lead to a wholesale policy transformation.

By employing the theoretical assumptions of emergent change, I have argued that the Administration’s Middle East policy was in a state of continuous flux throughout the Carter Presidency. From this perspective, the Carter Doctrine did not result from a radical and abrupt break from previous policy. It was the product of a continuous process of policy construction and re-construction which resulted from the communicative interactions involving the Administration’s key foreign policy decision-makers. The previous chapters attest that the Administration’s policies were the cumulative result of constant adjustments and adaptations to the perceived political situations at each particular moment in time.

The Carter Administration came to Office placing considerable attention on the Middle East. The key foreign policy decision-makers shared an optimistic outlook that the US could constructively engage the region and tackle many of the challenges. While diplomacy and cooperation were the favoured means for dealing with regional issues, the Administration also contemplated military options. As new challenges and threats surfaced decision-makers in the Administration interacted amongst themselves and with others to assess the situations. The interaction process allowed the Administration’s geographic mental maps of the Middle East to be continuously reconstructed. The Middle

East was increasingly viewed as a place of danger and potential conflict. While diplomacy and cooperation were still political options, the Administration gradually assumed a more assertive policy towards regional events, particularly towards Soviet involvement in the Middle East. Over time, small-scale, continuous adjustments to policy ultimately transformed America's engagement with the Middle East.

15.1) Issues of Contention and Debate

The current study has several theoretical and policy implications which may be contentious and thus require some consideration. I will begin with the theoretical considerations and progress to the implications of the research for foreign policy decision-making.

The first issue regards the use of geographic mental maps as a conceptual framework for assessing the foreign policy decision-makers definition of the situation. Geographic mental maps have intermittently appeared on the academic landscape for the last three decades. We can locate their conceptual underpinnings in much earlier work – e.g., in behavioural geography and FPA. However, a thorough effort to develop geographic mental maps as an analytical concept for FPA has eluded us for most of this time. Even the most recent research using mental maps in international politics has failed to develop an appropriate conceptual framework for employing them efficiently in the field of FPA (c.f., Casey and Wright, 2008; 2011).

I have argued that while concept formation is never an unproblematic enterprise, at minimum, an effort should be made to develop the geographic mental map as rigorous an analytical concept as possible. How to properly develop these concepts has been open to debate for quite a long time (c.f., Collier and Mahon Jr., 1993; Gerring, 1999; Goertz, 2005; Sartori, 1970). Nevertheless, Gerring (1999), though recognising that there is no single “best” solution to this problem, identified a series of criteria which can help determine the “goodness” of a concept – i.e., familiarity, resonance, parsimony, coherence, differentiation, depth, theoretical utility, and field utility. Accordingly, we can

evaluate the conceptualisation of the geographic mental map above in order to verify if it exhibits all the criteria of conceptual “goodness” presented by Gerring.

The first criterion – i.e., familiarity – is one of the major strengths of mental maps for FPA. According to Gerring (1999: 368), “The degree to which a new definition ‘makes sense,’ or is intuitively ‘clear’, depends critically upon the degree to which it conforms, or clashes, with established usage – within everyday language and within a specialized language community”. The use of mental maps as a metaphor for the cognitive representations of geographic space has been widely cited (Golledge and Stimson, 1997). In fact, mental maps hastily lead to thoughts of internal cartographic-like representations that individuals possess²³⁴. The frequency with which references to mental maps are encountered in the scholarly and non-academic literature testifies to the familiarity of the concept, as well as to the second criterion – resonance. The simplicity and commonsensical quality of the allegory of the mental map is precisely responsible for its generalised, though under-conceptualised, usage.

The definition of mental maps presented above also guarantees parsimony. Considering that a concept “*is an abbreviation*” (Gerring, 1999: 371), by defining mental maps as a cognitive representation encompassing an individual or group’s beliefs about the geography of a particular place or places I have avoided festooning the concept with endless attributes. Also the concept reveals coherence in that all of its attributes and characteristics “belong” to one another. In other words, none of the attributes of mental maps here defined are in contradiction with each other. Rather the core features are effortlessly identified and consistently associated: i.e., cognitive representations and geographic places.

Especially important in this conceptualising effort is the process of differentiation. One of the major denunciations of the traditional application of mental maps in FPA is the difficulty in distinguishing them from other similar concepts. By defining them and highlighting their geographic quality we can differentiate between other related concepts, namely those associated with the cognitive research agenda. For example,

²³⁴ However, the mental map has no literal correspondence with physical maps, for we do not necessarily have map-like representations in our head.

while sharing many resemblances with operational codes, these centre on the philosophical and instrumental beliefs of decision-makers. They say nothing about the geographic character of those beliefs. By focusing on the geographic representations underlying decision-makers beliefs we are able to examine and evaluate an entirely different set of constructs at work in the decision-making process. Accordingly, a good conceptual enterprise simultaneously identifies what a concept is as what it is not (Gerring, 1999; Sartori, 1970). An additional criterion – depth – is also achieved with the above conceptualisation. While depth may seem in disagreement with parsimony, Gerring (1999: 379-380) clarifies that it is necessary to “group instances /characteristics that are commonly found together so that we can use a concept’s label as a shorthand for those instances/characteristics”. Therefore, by acknowledging the notions of geographic space *and* place we can offer greater analytical depth to mental maps without losing focus of our principal research objective.

More importantly, by conceptualising geographic mental maps we give them a truly analytical value, for concepts are crucial to most theoretical undertakings. As Sartori (1970: 64) pointed out, concepts “are the central elements of propositions, and – depending on how they are named – provide in and by themselves guidelines for interpretation and observation”. By delineating the conceptual underpinnings of mental maps I have proceeded to develop the conceptual framework necessary to explaining how geographic mental maps affect foreign policy decision-making. As noted above, there are considerable causal inferences regarding the role of geographic variables in foreign policy decision-making without establishing the theoretical propositions underlying such conclusions. Until this conceptualisation is accomplished we are walking an empirical tightrope without a net.

The last criterion is field utility. Gerring (1999) has suggested that most conceptualisations are in fact *reconceptualisations* and that their redefinition has implications for adjacent concepts. As a result, “any change in the original definition involves changes in these relationships” (Gerring, 1999: 387). Achieving such a correspondence between meanings is a taunting feat. I feel, however, that the initial paucity of any conceptualising effort of geographic mental maps has avoided this

predicament. Not only were geographic mental maps underdeveloped conceptually, but many of the concepts used in a synonymous fashion have also lacked clear conceptual development.

I believe the conceptualising exercise provided in the preceding pages contributes to a superior understanding of geographic mental maps. Above all, I trust that the present conceptualisation allows for a better and more consistent application of mental maps in FPA. While there is certainly a great deal of scholarly debate and research to follow, I am certain that any such discussions and investigations must begin from a well-structured basis. In my view, this implies first and foremost clarifying the basic assumptions of what we aim to study and understand. Without this, we run the risk long recognised by Sartori (1970: 1033) and which cautions to being “a wonderful researcher and manipulator of data, and yet remain an unconscious thinker”.

In addition, the current study has also emphasised the social dimension of geographic mental maps by adopting a social psychological approach. This contrasts with the majority of the existing research which still tends to apply assumptions of cognitive psychology concentrating on individual cognitive representations. While much scientific endeavour in political science, especially in International Relations, continues to hold to this line of inquiry (e.g., Malici and Malici, 2005; Renshon, 2008; Schafer and Walker, 2006), we risk missing out on important dynamics in foreign policy decision-making. Above all, important group dynamics are ignored when we confine ourselves to a cognitive psychology approach. This is especially compelling when FPA has long acknowledged the importance of small groups in the decision-making process. Holsti has warned that a focus on collective approaches could minimise individual differences and thus diminish the accurate expression of individual group member’s beliefs (Ripley, 1993). However, this observation overlooks an essential point. Most studies on group foreign policy decision-making have concentrated on the aggregation of the individual beliefs of group members (Axelrod, 1976b; Beasley, 1998). Social psychology’s approach to cognition as a fundamentally social activity defies traditional perspectives and sheds new insight on many social processes, namely on information processing and decision-making.

Therefore, I have argued that the adoption of a social cognition approach opens up new avenues of investigation which can greatly expand our understanding of how geographic mental maps influence foreign policy decision-making, namely by exposing the social dynamics involved in the group decision-making process. This does not imply that we should discard individual cognition; quite the contrary. Individual cognition is at the base of social cognition. It is the mind that organises reality, but reality is always conditioned by the social context (Laffey and Weldes, 1997; Zerubavel, 1996). The individual is after all a social being. For that reason, rather than treating individual and shared cognition as two distinct phenomena, we should adopt an integrated perspective in which we can understand that

...group life depends on individual participation and individual life depends on the impact of the groups. Social psychology is collective and communal as well as personal and particular. The understanding of individual cognition and affect must be analyzed in relation to relationships with others. (Thompson and Fine, 1999: 297)

However, it is my account of the emergence of the Carter Doctrine that will certainly generate the greatest contention. To begin with, many will argue that foreign policy change is less regular and much more difficult to accomplish than I have acknowledged (c.f., Jewett and Turetzky, 1998; Rosati, 1988; Skidmore, 1996; Volgy and Schwarz, 1994). In reality, FPA continues to pay very little attention to change, particularly change in decision-makers cognitive representations (Rosati, 2005). Some research has tentatively focused on the dynamic character of political beliefs. For instance, operational code analysis has confirmed that individuals' philosophical and instrumental beliefs can change. However, as Renshon (2008: 827) has acknowledged, while these studies emphasise the dynamic nature of decision-makers political beliefs, "they were unable to highlight how and why these changes occurred". This study seeks to contribute to a better understanding of the change process.

According to Stephen Jay Gould, one of the godfathers of punctuated equilibrium theory, what is essentially at stake is our understanding of change:

In the largest sense, this debate [gradualist vs. punctuationalist] is but one small aspect of a broader discussion about the nature of change: Is our world (to construct a ridiculously oversimplified dichotomy) primarily one of constant change (with structure as a mere incarnation of the moment), or is structure primary and constraining, with change as a “difficult” phenomenon, usually accomplished rapidly when a stable structure is stressed beyond its buffering capacity to resist and absorb. (Gould, 1982: 383)

Foreign policy researchers tend to favour understanding policy change as a “difficult” phenomenon, i.e., they tend to emphasise the fixed nature of policies. Change is thus preferentially understood as an infrequent phenomenon in foreign policy. When it does occur it is viewed as the result of a rationally planned change processes. This outlook seems natural considering political sciences’, particularly IR’s, fascination with replication and prediction.

In the first case, according to one of the most cited sources for conducting research in the Social Sciences, “all data and analyses should, insofar as possible, be replicable” (King et al., 1994: 26). King (1995: 444) claims that the “*replication standard* holds that sufficient information exists with which to understand, evaluate, and build upon a prior work if a third party could replicate the results without any additional information from the author”. According to this perspective, as long as the primary data sets and methods are identified and available, empirical analyses will always provide the “truth”. Many political scientists favour approaching international politics as if it could be subject to reproducible experimentation. By indentifying the independent and dependent variables researchers can determine the antecedent conditions and establish causes, correlations, and consequences.

This approach leaves very little room for human agency. As Hudson (2005) has claimed, *agent-oriented* and *actor-specific* theories are two of the hallmarks of FPA. By emphasising agency and actor-specificity accounts foreign policy researchers have to take into consideration concrete circumstances, spatial and temporal contexts, and the complex social dynamics involved in the decision-making process. In this sense, political actors are capable of innovating and acting differently in similar situations. This, in turn, makes human affairs very difficult to replicate (Gaddis, 1997; Ingram, 1997).

Furthermore, the prevailing view favouring replication also collides with the premises of historical research. More precisely, it discards the interpretative nature of historical analysis by depriving it of its imaginative quality. Hayden White has made this argument quite eloquently:

Insofar as historical entities by definition belong to the past, descriptions of them are not subject to verification or falsification by direct (controlled) observation. What can be studied by direct observation, of course, are the documents that attest to the nature of the past object of the historian's interest. But this record requires interpretation if it is to yield up the facts on the basis of which a plausible initial description of the object as a possible subject of investigation is to be posited. This leads me to conclude that historical knowledge is always second-order knowledge, which is to say, it is based on hypothetical constructions of possible objects of investigation which require a treatment by imaginative processes that have more in common with 'literature' than they have with any science. (White, 2000: 398)

By negating historical imagination, the emphasis on replication also undercuts the possibility of historical revisionism (Gaddis, 2007). If historical events cannot be re-interpreted then historical re-evaluations are not possible. This outlook would have us believe that, in the absence of new data, once an event has been explained through empirical analysis it is precluded from further investigation.

In the second case, Mearsheimer and Walt (2013; c.f., Van Evera, 1997; Walt, 2005) argue that theories should be able to predict the future. Political scientists and foreign policy analysts are comforted with theories that posit that "If X happens, then Y will be the result". A theory's capability to forecast future events is essential to its prescriptive character (Walt, 2005). Consider Skidmore's (1996) study of the Carter Administration. His research revealed that policy change is directly related to international and domestic conditions. More precisely, "States are more likely to carry out policy adjustment if the international pressures to do so are strong and immediate and if decision-making authority at home is relatively centralized and insulated from domestic pressures" (Skidmore, 2006: 175). In view of this theoretical assumption, researchers and

analysts can confidently claim that “If State X is highly centralised and internationally weak, then foreign policy change is more likely”. In contrast, the same theoretical postulate can claim “If State X is decentralised and strong internationally, then foreign policy change is less likely”. Accordingly, by adopting a this theoretical approach, the Skidmore’s (2006) analysis revealed that due to a combination of international hegemony and domestic state weakness, the Carter Administration was unable to keep pace with ongoing international change.

In contrast, by adopting an emergent change approach to foreign policy we may find that “If X happens, then W, Y, or Z”. Equifinality wreaks havoc on a theory’s predictive and prescriptive potential. If foreign policy is understood as an emergent phenomenon it seriously hinders forecasting future outcomes. Yet, while I argue that the current study does not provide a foundation for prediction and prescription, it does have some implications for foreign policy decision-making. In considering the relationship between theory and policy in IR, Walt (2005: 35) has acknowledged the need for more policy relevant research: “many prominent works of general theory are simply not very relevant for informing policy decisions (and to be fair, they are not intended to be)”.

I believe the present study is relevant for policy-makers in several aspects. First of all, it provides a more complete understanding of the complex dynamics actually involved in foreign policy decision-making. Even the most enthusiastic proponents of IR’s theoretical development concede that the explicative power of a theory is more important than its ability to predict (Walt, 1999; Waltz, 1997). Therefore, by highlighting the continuous and spontaneous nature of foreign policy change, decision-makers can obtain a better appreciation of how the decision-making actually works. In fact, the assumptions underlying emergent change have been long been acknowledged by researchers and decision-makers alike (c.f., Brownstein, 1977; Cohen et al., 1972; Lindblom, 1959; Steinbruner, 2002). William Quandt (2005) has been particularly emphatic in signalling the continuous and unplanned nature of foreign policy-making. As an experienced official involved in US foreign policy decision-making he is categorical in claiming that:

Policy is not static, set once and forever after unchanged. Nor is policy reassessed everyday. But over time views do change, learning takes place, and policies are adjusted. (...) It is this process of adjustment, modification, and adaptation to the realities of the Middle East and to the realities of Washington that allows each administration to deal with uncertainty and change. Without this on-the-job learning, American foreign policy would be at best a rigid, brittle affair. (Quandt, 2005: 9-10)

In a similar fashion, Richardson (2006: 15) has acknowledged the emergent nature of the European Union's policy process: "Over time it changes its procedures in the light of past practice and [...] it has a capacity for policy learning that leads to a continuous process of policy adjustment...". Likewise, in his recent study on the origins of the Balfour Declaration, Schneer (2011) has vividly described the development of British policy in Middle East in the early Twentieth Century. In narrating British interactions with the Arabs, the French, the Ottoman, the Russians, and the Zionists, Schneer (2011: 369) reveals how the "Balfour Declaration was the highly contingent product of a tortuous process characterized as much by deceit and chance as by vision and diplomacy".

Many more examples of emergent change in foreign policy could be presented. However, as Gaddis (1997: 84) has written, ultimately the issue "is not so much to *predict* the future as to *prepare* for it". Accordingly, by understanding change as an emergent process decision-makers can also try to steer the decision-making process to avoid undesirable outcomes. For instance, the emergent nature of foreign policy-making has often resulted in unwanted outcomes, such as mission creep. On numerous occasions initial policy objectives have been incrementally transformed without any organic intention, leading to an increase in the tasks assigned to an actor's forces or mission (Pugh, 1997). A regularly mentioned example is the Reagan Administration's inadvertent commitment to supporting the Lebanese government and direct involvement in the ongoing civil war (Freedman, 2009; Mearsheimer and Van Evera, 1995). While the Administration originally sought to guarantee the withdrawal of the PLO from Beirut, the deteriorating situation on the ground gradually led the US to approve a more "active presence" and involve itself militarily in order to support the Multi-National Force and the Lebanese Armed Forces (Freedman, 2009).

According to Pugh (1997: 15) “the problem of mission creep is solved by controlling it”. While this observation seems self-evident, it is necessary to understand the policy dynamics involved. Being aware of the emergent nature of foreign policy, decision-makers can try to act and manage the policy process in order to attenuate these effects. While the emergent approach views detailed plans of change with suspicion, its acknowledgment does allow decision-makers to be more vigilant to policy deviations. In particular, it allows the top echelons of power to be aware of how a government’s “reality” is being continuously interpreted and constructed at the different levels of Government. This is especially relevant in periods of crisis in which the policy apparatus is trying to adjust to new circumstances and the interaction processes are at their apex.

Whilst I believe the current study can contribute to broadening the discussion on foreign policy change, there are many issues that still warrant considerable reflection and research. To begin with, the study of geographic mental maps in foreign policy still raises many caveats. The first has to do with the application of social psychological theories. Most of the research findings enumerated resulted from laboratory-type experiments. As ‘t Hart et al. (1997) elucidate, these experiments generally require a controlled and parsimonious research design and environment which severely curtail the capacity to consider the “real-world” complexities actually involved in foreign policy decision-making.

Another problem is identifying the relationship of geographic mental maps to the other elements influencing the decision-making process. Whereas it has been acknowledged that geography is never the only factor influencing foreign policy (Henrikson, 1980a), we must understand how it interacts with other factors - namely those of a cognitive nature - in shaping policy decisions.

However, the most daunting challenge is methodological. The measurement and evaluation of geographic knowledge has challenged geographers for decades. Behavioural geographers have dealt with it in various ways (see Golledge and Stimson, 1997; Kitchin and Blades, 2002). Still, most studies focus on the individual acquisition of geographic knowledge (da Vinha, 2010). How we can determine group mental maps needs to be developed in greater depth. Certainly constructivist research in IR and critical geopolitics have both dealt with collective representations (e.g., Laffey and Weldes, 1997; Ó Tuathail,

2002; Ó Tuathail and Agnew, 1998; Weldes, 1996). Yet few, if any, have focused on the decision-making process of the “authoritative” group (Hermann, 2001) and how social cognition constructs the problem representation that informs policy. This is an issue that certainly merits additional attention in the near future.

Nevertheless, despite these many uncertainties, we should agree that “the field of international relations is fortunate to have more than one active, coherent research program given the urgency of the problem it endeavors to solve” (Ripley, 1993: 414). I believe that the mental map research program supports this idea. Employing geographic mental maps to FPA is another contribution to understanding the complex structures and processes involved in foreign policy decision-making. While not exhausting all the possible ways in which individuals share a common understanding of a situation, analysing mental maps certainly allows for a better understanding of how groups develop a core set of shared geographic beliefs that contribute to the decision-making process.

The application of an emergent approach to foreign policy change also warrants our reflection. A word of caution is always necessary when applying models from one field of research to another too generously (Gersick, 1991). Applying concepts and theoretical propositions from other scientific domains is acknowledged as a valuable contribution to scientific development (Hudson, 2005). Nevertheless, their application requires a critical assessment of the suitability and adaptability of such concepts. This is particularly relevant when considering adopting the theoretical assumptions underlying emergent change. As Burnes (2004a: 316) has pointed out, one of the key criticisms of the emergent approach is that “It seems less a coherent approach to change and more a label for a collection of approaches critical of Planned change”.

This raises several issues. For one, further studies are required to assess how different decision-making structures and processes affect the change process. By adopting a more open and collegial system, the Carter Administration facilitated the communicative interaction processes which stimulated change. However, more formal decision-making structures may hinder these processes and this may influence foreign policy change differently. This does not imply that policy change will be less frequent, but

it does assume that managing change is more difficult since many of the representations and policy options will not be available for discussion among the principals.

Moreover, the emergent approach to change assumes that the political environment is highly dynamic. However, while this might be the case for the US and other great powers, it may be an inappropriate model for States which have less foreign policy considerations. In particular, smaller states may tend to bandwagon and align themselves with a more powerful state and thus their foreign policy may result more from external factors than from their own initiatives.

Considerable problems also arise at the methodological level. By seeking to trace the communicative interactions underlying the change process, access to a vast and rich assortment of primary sources is required. However, the sheer quantity of documents required for such an analytical endeavour may discourage many researchers. Moreover, many of these primary sources may not always be available, further hindering the development of similar studies.

However, I conclude by subscribing to the rationale of Cronin et al (2011: 600) who suggest that it would be rather unreasonable to expect a researcher to make a “substantive contribution and create a new method and convince reviewers of their methodology in a single study”. I believe the current study has put forward a provocative set of conceptual and theoretical propositions which can contribute to the scholarly debate. While it certainly does not provide the definitive account regarding foreign policy change, it does broaden our understanding of the problems and dynamic involved. And, as Guzzini (1994: 347) has acknowledged, “The first question of research is not what is the solution, but how do we understand the problem”.

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