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WHICH LESSONS MATTER?

DOMESTIC ANALOGIES, ANALOGICAL CHOICE

AND U. S. FOREIGN POLICY

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School

of Cornell University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Christopher M. Hemmer

May 1998

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Christopher Hemmer was born on May 16, 1969, in Staten Island, New York. He graduated summa cum laude from the State University of New York at Albany in 1991, with a B.A. in Political Science. He received his Ph.D. from the Government Department at Cornell University in 1998 with a specialty in International Relations.

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To My Father,

Who will never see it, but who means more to it than anyone can know

and

To My Mother,

Who somehow managed to hold everything together

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My first thank you belongs properly to my dissertation chair, Peter Katzenstein, who guided and encouraged me along every step of the way in the process of turning some vague ideas into a dissertation. He brilliantly performed the delicate balancing act of advising me and keeping the project on track, while still allowing me to explore the areas that interested me and insisting that I write the dissertation I wanted to. It was a great comfort to know that every time I handed him something I had written or spoke to him about problems I was encountering, he would invariably respond with incisive comments, unfailing encouragement, and unerringly accurate advice on how the project could be improved. However, more valuable that any of his individual comments was the power of his example, which provides me with an excellent model of what being a scholar and a teacher should mean. I can not envision how I could have completed this project without having him in my corner.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: DOMESTIC ANALOGIES, ANALOGICAL CHOICE AND FOREIGN POLICY

"[In the 1930's], the world had a chance to stop a ruthless aggressor and missed it. I pledge to you: we will not make that mistake again."

Since World War II, such statements have become commonplace. So common, that it would be difficult to guess with any degree of certainty who made this statement and in what context. It could be Harry Truman reacting to the invasion of South Korea; Anthony Eden talking about Egypt's seizure of the Suez Canal; Presidents Kennedy, Johnson or Nixon concerning the Vietnam War; Jimmy Carter responding to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; Ronald Reagan explaining his administration's policies towards the Sandinistas in Nicaragua; or Bill Clinton addressing the current civil war in Bosnia. While this specific allusion to the famous Munich analogy comes from a speech by George Bush concerning the Gulf War[1], it could have been uttered in any of these situations.

At the same time that Bush was invoking the lessons of the 1930's to explain why the U.S. must respond forcefully to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, he also invoked a second well-known historical analogy by

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[1]Quoted in Fred Barnes, "The Hawk Factor" *The New Republic* 204,4 (January 28, 1991), pp. 8-9. Barnes also quotes an aide to Bush declaring that the President was "totally into World War II analogies."

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insisting that his policy would not lead to another Vietnam. Indeed, if there is one historical analogy that has overtaken the Munich analogy in prominence it is the Vietnam analogy. Similar to the Munich analogy, it is easy to think of situations where the lessons of Vietnam were invoked to support particular policies. George Bush's invocation of these historical parallels is far from exceptional. The very prominence of these analogies demonstrates how often debates over foreign policy are conducted in terms of the lessons of history. Decision makers often turn to historical analogies for guidance when faced with a novel foreign policy problem, but to which analogies will they turn?

The vast number of possible historical parallels presents a problem--a problem not only for policy makers who must decide which lessons of history are most applicable, but also a problem for analysts who want to understand why decision makers select the policy options they do. This problem is not limited to the study of historical analogies, it is one that afflicts the entire literature on the role that ideas play in the making of foreign policy. While this literature has greatly advanced the understanding of international politics by examining the impact of particular beliefs on specific foreign policy decisions, it suffers from an embarrassment of riches:

> Ideas are a dime a dozen. For every idea that appears to play a major role in politics, tens of thousands play no role at all. Rarely do scholars explain why the idea they study had an impact when so many others did not.[2]

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[2]Geoffrey Garret and Barry R. Weingast, "Ideas, Interests and Institutions: Constructing the European Community's Internal Market" in Judith Goldstein and Robert Keohane, eds. *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions and Political Change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 203.

This dissertation attempts to address this gap by examining the critical questions of which ideas matter and why? Why does one idea have an impact on foreign policy decisions while many others are ignored?[3] While knowing which idea a policy maker sees as relevant may help explain decisions, it is also important to ask why that idea was seen as relevant rather than others.

For those interested in understanding the sources of foreign policy, the importance of studying the role of historical analogies in the decision making process lies in the fact that when analogies are used to help interpret a situation, they have a great effect upon a decision maker's choice. By providing a policy maker with information concerning the expected results of different policy options, analogies "introduce choice propensities into an actor's decision making: they predispose the actor toward certain policy options and turn him away from others."[4] The lessons of history help policy makers decide what specific policies will best further their interests by allowing them to form expectations regarding the likely consequences of different policy options. Thus, the analogical approach can provide a useful complement to the interest based approaches that dominate explanations of foreign policy: analogies explain how a policy maker's interests get translated into specific foreign policy decisions.

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[3]For similar projects from an international political economy and a norm-based perspective see, Ngaire Woods, "Economic Ideas and International Relations: Beyond Rational Neglect" *International Studies Quarterly* 39,2 (June 1995): 161-180 and Jeffrey W. Legro, "Which Norms Matter? Revisiting the 'failure' of Internationalism" *International Organization* 51,1 (Winter 1997): 31-63.

[4]This quote comes from Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at War: Korea, Dien Bien Phu and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 22. Here Khong is paraphrasing Alexander George, "The Causal Nexus between Cognitive Beliefs and Decision Making Behavior: The 'Operational Code' Belief System," in *Psychological Models in International Politics*, Lawrence Falkowski, ed., (Boulder: Westview Press, 1979), p. 112.

Still, despite the importance of the lessons of history for foreign policy makers, there are still key areas of this analogical reasoning process that are only dimly understood. More specifically, little is known concerning the impact of domestic political considerations on the analogical reasoning process and more importantly, too little attention has been paid to the vital question of what determines which specific analogies will be important for any particular decision.

First, consider the problem of neglecting domestic politics and focusing exclusively on what the lessons of history have to say about the international ramifications of different policies. While foreign policy makers do often search the lessons of history to determine what actions will maximize their state's international gains, that is only part of the story. Because foreign policy can affect domestic issues, policy makers are also concerned with the domestic impact of their foreign policy. Therefore, policy makers may seek domestic lessons from prior events that focus on the internal repercussions of different foreign policy stances, in addition to internationally focused ones. To clarify the terminology used here, an analogy or lesson is termed to be a domestic or an international one depending on the analogy's area of application, not its source. The terms "domestic analogies" and "domestic lessons" refer to historical lessons that give policy makers information concerning the domestic ramifications of their foreign policy options, regardless of whether these lessons are derived from previous domestic or international events. Conversely, "international analogies" and "international lessons" are ones that give policy makers information

about the international consequences of different policy options, regardless of the source of these lessons.

The Munich analogy is a good example of an internationally focused analogy. The lessons of Munich tell policy makers interested in protecting the interests of their state to oppose any form of aggression, no matter how slight, because appeasement only encourages future challenges and strengthens the aggressor. However, policy makers who are also interested in retaining their domestic political positions may seek guidance from the lessons of history that speak directly to their domestic concerns. For this purpose, the lessons of Munich might be less relevant than some form of the Vietnam analogy that warns policy makers of the electoral danger of involving their nation in a costly and prolonged conflict over peripheral interests.[5] Just as the Munich analogy could predispose a policy maker towards intervention, this domestically focused lesson of Vietnam could predispose a policy maker against intervention. Domestic analogies are just as capable of introducing "choice propensities" into the decision making process as their internationally focused siblings, but have so far been ignored.

The fact that different historical lessons can lead policy makers to pursue different policies, makes the question of which analogy matters a key element in explaining policy decisions. If a policy maker confronts

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[5] I use this as a lesson of the Vietnam analogy for illustrative purposes only, not to imply that this is the only possible lesson policy makers could derive from the U.S. experience in Vietnam or that the Vietnam analogy is solely a domestic analogy. Indeed, something as broad as the Vietnam analogy could contain many different lessons; some international and some domestic. For example, one international lesson of the Vietnam analogy could be that foreign involvement in a civil war is likely to harm a state's international position by leading the state to waste its resources in a costly and inconclusive conflict. For this reason, it is often more accurate to talk in terms of domestic or international lessons instead of domestic or international analogies because different domestic and international lessons may go under the same analogical name.

an unfamiliar situation, why is one analogy seen as more relevant than another? Why is one lesson of history applied while others are ignored? To understand a foreign policy based upon any particular historical analogy, these questions must be answered.

After elaborating on the role that historical analogies play in the formation of foreign policy, this chapter will address these problems by presenting a model of analogical choice that recognizes the interrelationship between international and domestic politics and helps answer the important question of why some historical analogies are seen as relevant for later decisions while others are ignored.

ANALOGIES AND FOREIGN POLICY

The analogical approach to decision making is part of a larger cognitive approach that stresses the importance of an individual's beliefs in the decision making process.[6] The fundamental starting point for

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[6]The seminal work of this field is Robert Jervis's, *Perception and Misperception In International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976). A few of the major works in this field include, Robert Axelrod, ed., *Structure of Decision: The Cognitive Maps of Political Elites* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976); Alexander George, "The Causal Nexus" and *Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy: The Effective Use of Information and Advice* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1980); Richard Ned Lebow, *Between Peace and War: The Nature of International Crisis* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981); Irving Janis, *Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascoes*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1982) and *Crucial Decisions: Leadership in Policymaking and Crisis Management* (New York: Free Press, 1989); John S. Odell, *U.S. International Monetary Policy: Markets, Powers, and Ideas as Sources of Change* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982); Deborah Welch Larson, *Origins of Containment: A Psychological Explanation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); Lloyd S. Etheredge, *Can Governments Learn? American Foreign Policy and Central American Revolutions* (New York: Pergamon, 1985); Richard Herrmann, *Perceptions and Behavior in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 1985); D. Michael Shafer, *Deadly Paradigms: The Failure of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); Judith Goldstein, "Ideas, Institutions and Trade Policy," *International Organization* 42,1 (1988): 179-218 and "The Impact of Ideas on Trade Policy: The Origins of U.S. Agricultural and Manufacturing Policies," *International Organization* 43,1 (1989): 31-72; Peter Hall, *The Political Power of Economic Ideas: Keynesianism Across Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); John P. Burke and Fred I. Greenstein, *How Presidents Test Reality: Decisions on Vietnam, 1954 and 1965* (New York: Russel Sage Foundation, 1989); Ernst Haas, *When Knowledge is Power* (Berkeley: University of California

much of this work is the assumption that human rationality is "bounded."[7] Humans have only limited cognitive capacities and have to deal with a potentially overwhelming amount of often ambiguous information. Given these limited capacities and unlimited amounts of available information, people are forced to adopt cognitive shortcuts when making decisions. This need may be especially acute for political decision makers given the complex, ambiguous, and highly changeable nature of most political contexts.[8] One important shortcut people use to deal with this information overload is to use their pre-existing beliefs as a guide in perceiving the environment, drawing inferences and making decisions.[9]

One way decision makers can use their pre-existing beliefs to help them comprehend the enormous amount of ambiguous information they are confronted with is through reasoning by analogy. The essence of analogical reasoning is the transfer of information from one situation (the base or source) to another situation (the target).[10] The process of

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Press, 1990); Yaacov Vertzberger, *The World in Their Minds: Information Processing, Cognition and Foreign Policy Decisionmaking* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990); Kathryn Sikkink, *Ideas and Institutions: Developmentalism in Brazil and Argentina* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); Peter M. Haas, ed., "Knowledge, Power and International Policy Coordination," special issue of *International Organization* on epistemic communities 46,1 (Winter 1992) and Judith Goldstein and Robert Keohane, eds., *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions and Political Change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993). For recent literature reviews on the cognitive approach to foreign policy see Jack S. Levy, "Learning and foreign policy: sweeping a conceptual minefield" *International Organization* 48,2 (Spring 1994): 279-312; John Kurt Jacobsen, "Much Ado About Ideas: The Cognitive Factor in Economic Policy," *World Politics* 47,2 (January 1995): 283-310; and David Yee, "The Causal Effects of Ideas On Policies" *International Organization* 50,1 (Winter 1996): 69-108.
[7]Herbert Simon, *Models of Bounded Rationality* 2 vols., (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982).
[8]George W. Breslauer and Philip E. Tetlock, "Introduction," in *Learning in U.S. and Soviet Foreign Policy*, George W. Breslauer and Philip E Tetlock eds., (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 3-4.
[9]Richard Nisbett and Lee Ross, *Human Inference: Strategies and Shortcomings of Social Judgment* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1980).
[10]See Mary Gick and Keith Holyoak, "Analogical Problem Solving," *Cognitive Psychology* 12,3 (July 1980): 306-355 and "Schema Induction and Analogical Transfer," *Cognitive Psychology* 15,1 (January 1983): 1-38; Dedre Gentner, "Structure Mapping: A Theoretical Framework For Analogy," *Cognitive Science* 7,2 (April-January 1983): 155-170; and Khong, *Analogies at War*, pp. 6-7.

reasoning by analogy has long been considered a key component of human intelligence[11] and pervasive in many decision making contexts.[12] The type of analogy most relevant to political decision making is the historical analogy. Historical analogizing consists of using a previous political event to help interpret a new situation. The importance of historical analogies for current policies can be seen not only in the sometimes heated debates over what the correct lessons of certain analogies should be,[13] but also in the extent to which historical analogies often pervade discussions of foreign policy issues. Historical analogies have been invoked to explain and predict events surrounding such varied issues as the future of security arrangements in Europe[14], the relative decline of the United States[15], the prospects for peace in the Middle

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[11]Mark T. Keane argues that analogies are "not just another tool in our cognitive luggage but rather the substrate of human cognitive abilities." *Analogical Problem Solving* (Chichester, England: Ellis Horwood Limited, 1988), p. 14. See also, Charles Spearman, *The Nature of "Intelligence" And The Principles of Cognition* (London: MacMillan, 1923) and Keith Holyoak, "Analogical Thinking and Human Intelligence" in *Advances in the Psychology of Human Intelligence*, R.J. Sternberg ed., (New Jersey: Erlbaum, 1984) vol. 2: 199-230.

[12]For an application of the analogical approach to legal studies see Richard A. Posner, *The Problems of Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 90-98 and for its use in the study of archeology see Ann Brower Stahl, "Concepts of Time and Approaches to Analogical Reasoning in Historical Perspective" *American Antiquity* 58,2 (April 1993): 235-260.

[13]For example, consider the continuing debate over what the correct lessons of Vietnam should be, see George C. Herring, "Vietnam, American Foreign Policy, and The Uses of History" *The Virginia Quarterly Review* 66,1 (Winter 1990): 1-16. For an interesting discussion of the lessons Soviet leaders did and did not learn from Vietnam see William Zimmerman and Robert Axelrod, "The Lessons of Vietnam and Soviet Foreign Policy" *World Politics* 34,1 (October 1981): 1-24.

[14]Gregory F. Treverton, "Finding an Analogy For Tomorrow" *Orbis* 37,1 (Winter 1993): 1-20.

[15]Joseph Nye, "The Analogy of National Decline" *Current* 323 (June 1990): 10-17 and Walt Rostow, "Beware of Historians Bearing False Analogies" *Foreign Affairs* 66,4 (Spring 1988), p. 863.

East[16], U.S. grand strategy in the post Cold War era[17], and the civil war in Bosnia[18].

Given this pervasiveness, students of politics have long shown an interest in exploring how historical analogies are used by politicians and what implications this has for the decision making process.[19] To understand how historical analogies can help policy makers deal with the condition of bounded rationality, consider Yuen Foong Khong's Analogical Explanation (AE) framework, a recent and enlightening attempt to apply the analogical approach to the study of foreign policy. Khong's AE framework consists of a list of six diagnostic tasks that are vital to the decision making process, which historical analogies can help policy makers perform. Historical analogies are cognitive shortcuts that:

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[16]Jeffrey LeFebvre, "Historical Analogies and The Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process: Munich, Camp David and Algeria" *Middle East Policy* 3,1 (1994): 84-101.

[17]Josef Joffe, "'Bismarck' or 'Britain': Toward an American Grand Strategy After Bipolarity" *International Security* 19,4 (Spring 1995): 94-117. Lawrence Korb has argued that a major reason why President Clinton's foreign policy plan is not clear is because he has not made it clear what historical analogies he is basing his foreign policy on. See, "Clinton's Foreign Policy Woes: A Way Out" *The Brookings Review* 12,4 (Fall 1994), p. 3.

[18]John Podhoretz, "The Amazingly Dumb Analogy" *Insight* 7,29 (July 22, 1991), p. 48.

[19]Again, the seminal work in political science is Jervis's, *Perception and Misperception*, especially pp. 217-282. The seminal work in diplomatic history is Ernest May's, *"Lessons" of the Past: The Use and Misuse of History in American Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973). See also, Lebow, *Between Peace and War*, pp. 112-147; Richard Neustadt and Ernest May, *Thinking in Time: The Use of History for Decision Makers* (New York: The Free Press, 1986); Vertzberger, *The World in Their Minds*, pp. 296-341; Alex Roberto Hybel, *How Leaders Reason: U.S. Intervention in The Caribbean Basin and Latin America* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1990), James Goldgeier, *Leadership Style and Soviet Foreign Policy: Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, and Gorbachev* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994); Michael Fry, ed. *History, The White House and The Kremlin: Statesman as Historians* (New York: Pinter Publishers, 1991); Richard Rose, ed. *Lesson Drawing Across Nations*, A Special Issue of the *Journal of Public Policy* 11,1 (January-March 1991); David Patrick Houghton, "The Role Of Analogical Reasoning In Novel Foreign Policy Situations," paper presented to the 1994 American Political Science Association meeting; Dan Reiter, "Learning Realism and Alliances: The Weight of The Shadow of The Past" *World Politics* 46,4 (July 1994): 490-526; and M.J. Peterson, "The Use of Analogies in Developing Outer Space Law" *International Organization* 51,2 (Spring 1997): 245-274. For a review of this literature see William Jarosz and Joseph Nye, "The Shadow of the Past: Learning From History in National Security Decision Making" in *Behavior, Society and International Conflict*, Philip Tetlock et al, eds., (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) vol. 3: 126-189.

1) define the nature of the current situation

2) assess the stakes involved

3) provide possible policy prescriptions

4) predict the likelihood of success of policy prescriptions

5) assess the moral rightness of policy prescriptions, and

6) provide warnings associated with certain policy options

To give a concrete example, consider the most famous historical analogy, the Munich analogy. Faced with the invasion of one country by another, the Munich analogy would: define this new situation in terms of the events of the 1930's and the failure of appeasement, assess the stakes involved in this new situation as potentially very high because the failure to stop aggression early then had led to a world war, recommend a policy of intervention to repel aggression, imply that such a policy would have a good chance of success if undertaken quickly and firmly, suggest intervention as the moral policy, and warn of the dangers of unchecked aggression.[20] By providing this type of information, historical analogies greatly simplify the decision making process by clarifying a complex and ambiguous reality and suggesting to decision makers what type of policy will best serve their interests.

The importance of studying reasoning by analogy is that when analogies are used to evaluate policy options in the ways indicated above, they will influence a decision maker's choice. The power of analogies to affect a decision maker's choice has received much empirical support. Much of this support comes from laboratory studies conducted by

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[20]Khong, *Analogies at War*, pp. 10 and 19-24.

psychologists interested in human cognition. For example, Gick and Holyoak have found that faced with identical problems, people will suggest different solutions depending on the analogy they use to interpret the problem.[21] Similarly, Gilovich found that subjects' recommendations concerning a hypothetical military crisis varied depending on whether this crisis was presented in terms of the Munich or the Vietnam analogy.[22] The power of analogies to guide policy choice is also shown in the findings that a reliance on an analogy can easily mislead a decision maker if the analogy is inappropriate in the new situation.[23]

In studies more directly relevant to this project, the ability of analogies to predispose decision makers towards certain choices has also been shown to be an important factor in the making of foreign policy. To illustrate how historical analogies can affect foreign policy decision making, consider the Munich analogy. Using the lessons of the thirties to interpret a new situation will clearly predispose a policy maker towards an aggressive policy, because all the information contained in that analogy reinforces the choice of an interventionist course. Previous work on foreign policy decision making has documented many instances where leaders have turned to historical analogies for guidance and those

[21]Gick and Holyoak, "Analogical Problem Solving, pp. 306-355; and "Schema Induction and Analogical Transfer," pp. 1-38. For similar findings see Mary Gick and Susan McGarry "Learning From Mistakes: Inducing Analogous Solution Failures to A Source Problem Produces Later Success in Analogical Transfer" *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory and Cognition* 18,3 (May 1992): 623-639.

[22]Thomas Gilovich, "Seeing The Past in The Present: The Effects of Familiar Events on Judgments and Decisions" *Journal Of Personality and Social Psychology* 40,4 (April 1981): 797-808.

[23]Rand J. Spiro, Paul Feltovich, Richard Coulson and Daniel K. Anderson, "Multiple Analogies For Complex Concepts: Antidotes for Analogy Induced Misconception in Advanced Knowledge Acquisition" in *Similarity and Analogical Reasoning*, Stella Vosniadou and Andrew Ortony eds., (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989): 498-531; and Miriam W. Schustack and John R. Anderson "Effects of Analogy to Prior Knowledge on Memory For New Information" *Journal Of Verbal Learning and Behavior* 18,5 (October 1979): 565-583.

analogies have helped shape their policies. For example, Ernest May explores how the lessons of the failed attempts to secure peace after World War One, the Munich analogy, and the lessons of the Korean War influenced U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War.[24] Richard Ned Lebow demonstrates how the German leadership in the July Crisis prior to World War One based their policy on the lessons they had derived from Russia's capitulation in an earlier crisis over Austria's attempt to annex Bosnia-Herzogovina.[25] Similarly, Khong demonstrates the importance of the lessons derived from the Korean War in shaping U. S policy towards the Vietnam War.[26]

ANALOGIES VERSUS INTERESTS: A FALSE DICHOTOMY

To better understand the place of these analogical explanations in the broader literature on foreign policy, it may help to examine a common criticism of the analogical approach; namely, that policy makers use historical analogies merely to justify their policy choices, and not to determine those policies. Thus, analysts who focus on analogies are criticized for being duped by the rhetoric of policy makers into mistakenly believing that analogies are anything more than useful propaganda devices invoked by policy makers to sell their policies. According to these critics, policy makers support the policies they do not because of their reading of the lessons of history, but because these policies further some conception of their objective interests. After

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[24]May, *"Lessons" of the Past.*
[25]Lebow, *Between Peace and War*, pp. 122-125.
[26]Khong, *Analogies at War.* For additional examples see the literature cited in footnote 19.

discussing the content of this criticism and some of its problems, this section will argue that the dichotomy between idea and interest based explanations is a false one and show how the two approaches are complementary. The analogical explanation offered here can provide a useful complement to the interest based approaches that dominate explanations of foreign policy by demonstrating how the lessons of history help translate a policy maker's interests into specific foreign policy decisions. This is not to argue that there is no difference between ideas and interests or that the distinction is not a useful one, but rather to argue that the two are not competitive explanations of behavior, but complementary ones.

Reviewing Ernest May's *"Lessons" of the Past*, Arthur Schlesinger criticized the analogical approach on the grounds that, "The past is an enormous grab bag with a prize for everybody" and that policy makers select analogies from this grab bag merely to justify their policies after they have been made, and not to analyze, evaluate and choose their policies. Schlesinger argues that "The issue of history as rationalization somewhat diminishes the force of the argument that history is per se a powerful formal determinant of policy" because one "can never be sure . . . to what extent the invocation of history is no more than a means of dignifying a conclusion already reached on other grounds."[27] In a

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[27]See his review of *"Lessons" of the Past*, in the *Journal of American History* 61,2 (September 1974): 443-444. What Schlesinger actually means by these "other grounds" is left vague in this short review and it is not clear that he is actually thinking about an interest based criticism, though that is how his argument is often taken. The precise nature of his criticism is somewhat difficult to determine because he later implies that these "other grounds" may be "unconscious", "historical" "generalizations of some sort". How this is different from the lessons of history is not clear. Here, Schlesinger may less be criticizing May's argument that policy makers use the lessons of history, but May's hope that how policy makers use history can be improved. For a review of May that specifically criticizes him on this ground see, Richard Merritt, in *American Historical Review* 80,1 (February 1975), p. 194.

recent statement of this criticism, Jack Snyder argues that, "statesmen pick and choose among the available lessons of history until they find one that fits the strategy they want, for other reasons, to adopt."[28]

For these critics, explanatory power lies in these "other grounds" or "other reasons" and not in the historical analogies leaders invoke to justify their policies. Such assertions lead naturally to the question of what are these "other reasons" that drive policy? Most often, these other reasons are the analyst's formulation of the policy maker's objective interests. The specific content of the objective interests that policy makers are looking to further can vary depending on the particular theory espoused by the analyst. For example, realists can talk about objective national interests, Marxists about objective economic interests, and theorists who focus on domestic politics can focus on an objective interest in retaining office. Regardless of the particular content of these interests, the logic of the critique of the analogical approach is the same: It is these objective interests that determine a policy maker's position, not the lessons of history that they invoke merely to rationalize and in some cases cloak their pursuit of that interest.

One problem with this criticism of the analogical approach is that it leads to a logical contradiction. On the one hand, these critics contend that historical analogies do not influence a decision maker's policy choice; those choices are based on the decision maker's objective interests, not her reading of the lessons of history. On the other hand, these critics argue that policy makers invoke historical analogies to convince others of the correctness of their favored policy. However, for

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[28]Jack Snyder, *The Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 14.

historical analogies to be effective justifications for policies, they must influence policy preferences. If the lessons of history did not influence policy preferences, they would be useless as propaganda tools. If everybody simply deduced their policy preferences from their objective interests, without any consideration of the lessons of history, then why invoke those lessons at all?

For a concrete example, consider Jack Snyder's *Myths of Empire*. Snyder's central interest is in explaining why overexpansion has been the fate of so many great powers. His explanation focuses on the coalition building and logrolling that takes place among domestic interest groups that have parochial interests in some form of expansion. To explain how this imperial coalition becomes capable of hijacking the state and using it for its parochial interests, Snyder argues that members of this coalition invoke what he calls the "myths of empire" to justify and gain support for their belligerent policies. For Snyder, historical analogies are one form of these myths of empire. For example, a policy maker interested in enhancing the prospects of re-election with a successful war may invoke the Munich analogy to help justify and drum up support for an aggressive policy. In this formulation, the Munich analogy does not lead this policy maker to favor an aggressive policy, it is only a convenient rationalization for a policy designed to further her objective interest in remaining in power domestically. This cloaking of parochial interests in the garb of the national interest through the medium of the Munich analogy allows the members of this imperialistic coalition to gain outside support and implement their policies.[29] Thus, Snyder finds himself

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[29]Snyder, *The Myths of Empire*, pp. 13-19 and 26-55.

caught in a contradiction. When discussing how members of the imperial coalition come to favor certain polices, historical analogies are irrelevant myths. However, when discussing how this group gains political support, suddenly these myths of empire have the power to influence policy preferences. If ideas, like historical analogies, are useful for influencing the policy preferences of others, what is the theoretical basis for the claim that the particular content of the ideas held by those voicing these myths of empire are irrelevant to the policy making process?[30] Why are ideas important for some people and not others? Paradoxically, the portion of the critic's argument that contends that historical analogies are mere justifications designed to drum up support, implicitly assumes the point they are ostensibly criticizing; that ideas like historical analogies can influence an individual's policy preferences.

In addition to this problem of logical coherence, dismissing the importance of ideas in the decision making process in favor of an exclusive focus on objective interests also leads to empirical problems. For example, in spite of Snyder's rejection of idea based explanations, he is often unable to explain many of the instances of overexpansion he finds without giving ideas/historical analogies an explanatory role independent of objective interests. To account for these cases where overexpansion can not be explained without reference to the ideas held

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[30]This is not to argue that all policy makers necessarily believe all the historical analogies they invoke. It is entirely possible that an individual could use an analogy that he does not believe in order to gain support. However, the conclusion one should draw from this is not that ideas like historical analogies are irrelevant in that individual's decision making, but only that that particular analogy was irrelevant. The critics are absolutely correct to caution against the disingenuous use of historical analogies, but incorrect to assert that such cases make the analogical approach irrelevant to the explanation of the decision of interest. Perhaps another analogy was behind that decision?

by policy makers, Snyder employs the concept of ideological 'blowback'.[31] Blowback refers to the phenomenon where domestic elites come to believe their own propaganda, forgetting the instrumental origin of these myths of empire. For Snyder, blowback could occur if "cynical, mobilizing elites inadvertently socialized successor elite generations to believe the imperial myths, failing to explain their instrumental origins," or if "as a result of some subconscious psychological process" these manipulative myth makers come to believe their own fictions.[32] Some form of ideological blowback occurs in a number of Snyder's cases. For example, Snyder is unable to explain Hitler's acute overexpansion based on objective interests and logrolling among expansionist groups. To account for Germany's behavior under Hitler, Snyder is forced to see ideas as more than mere justifying fictions. Snyder contends that the reason Germany chose such belligerent policies was that Hitler was a "true believer" in the myths of empire. Hitler had internalized certain of the myths of empire, and these beliefs led to Germany's overexpansion.[33] Similarly, in discussing the overexpansion of the U. S. in the 1960's, Snyder contrasts the policy makers of the early 1950's, who, he claims, used myths of empire like the Munich analogy and the related domino theory instrumentally, with

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[31]Snyder credits Stephen Van Evera for first coining this phrase for this context. For Snyder's discussion of blowback see, *Myths of Empire*, pp. 41-42.

[32]Snyder also discusses the possibility of elites becoming politically trapped by their own rhetoric even if they do not come to believe it. This non-psychological form of blowback can occur if failing to live up to those myths would jeopardize their hold on power, even though pursuing policies based on the myths will have negative effects. However, for the purposes of this argument, the psychologically based blowback is the important type, and it is this type of blowback that plays a key explanatory role in Snyder's cases. *Myths of Empire*, pp. 41-42.

[33]*Myths of Empire*, pp. 82 and 92-95.

the policy makers of the 1960's who were "true believers" in these myths of empire.[34]

Despite Snyder's attempts to treat blowback as merely an interesting anomaly that pops up in some of his cases, this phenomenon points to a serious problem for Snyder and for any theoretical approach that attempts to draw a direct link from objective interests to specific policy positions. Blowback brings this entire approach into question because it shows that ideas such as historical analogies are not mere rationalizations with no influence on a decision maker's choice, but can sometimes be a key determinant of a policy maker's choice. If the policy choices of the "true believers" are determined by their beliefs, how can the beliefs of the other decision makers Snyder examines be considered irrelevant to the policy making process? Again, why should ideas be seen as important for some people and not others? Instead of seeing "true believers" as anomalies whose beliefs impede the rational pursuit of their objective interests, as Snyder does, it would be more consistent to see all decision makers as dependent on their beliefs. If U.S. policy makers in the 1960's based their policies on a belief in the domino theory, but the policy makers in the early 50's did not believe the domino theory, what beliefs did they base their policies on? Instead of explaining the actions of the latter group as simply the pursuit of their objective interests, and explaining the actions of the former in terms of their mistaken beliefs in the myths of empire, it would be more consistent to view both groups as pursuing their objective interests, but

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[34]*Myths of Empire*, pp. 257, 299 and 302. Snyder also raises the possibility that the policy makers of the 1950's, like President Eisenhower, may have also become blowback victims by the end of their careers. For the role blowback played in the overexpansion of Japan see pp. 148-150, which combines considerations of psychological and political blowback.

differing in their beliefs concerning what policies will best realize their interests. This means that the key difference between the "true believer" and what Snyder considers to be the normal decision maker is not that for the former, beliefs matter, and for the latter they do not; the difference centers on the content of their beliefs. Blowback points to the limitation of a purely interest based analysis because it shows that given similar objective interests, policy makers can choose very different policies depending on the beliefs they hold. The recognition of this limitation leads to the central purpose of this section, which is to show how an analogical explanation of foreign policy can complement interest based explanations by examining the key role played by beliefs in the decision making process.

At its base, the debate between those who treat historical analogies as policy guides versus those who see them as mere propaganda tools is a debate over the role of ideas as a source of behavior versus the role of objective interests as a source of behavior. Where analysts such as Snyder explain foreign policy in terms of the objective interests of the actors, the analogical approach explains behavior in terms of the ideas that policy makers hold about the world around them. Unfortunately, these two approaches are too often treated as mutually exclusive competing approaches. Do ideas, such as historical analogies, determine foreign policy, or do interests determine foreign policy? The purpose of this section, and this dissertation as a whole, is to show why this phrasing of the question is not useful and to demonstrate the value of integrating insights from both approaches.

The main weakness of all interest based explanations is in specifying how an actor's interests lead to a preference for some policy over another. The logic of all such approaches is to deduce an actor's interests given that actor's place in a particular system and then assume that those interests give the actor specific preferences for some policies over others. It is in the latter step, the jump from an individual's objective interests to preferences for specific policies, where interest based explanations run into trouble; trouble that a focus on ideas like historical analogies can help alleviate. The link between objective interests and policy preferences is problematic, and policy makers will need devices such as historical analogies to tell them what particular policies will further their interests.[35] To clarify, the argument here is not that economic, political or bureaucratic factors do not endow an actor with objective interests; rather, the argument is that these interests alone can not explain what policies an actor will decide to adopt in pursuit of these interests. The office holder may well have a permanent and rational interest in holding his job, but his pursuit of this interest will be influenced by the ideas he holds concerning the likely consequences of various actions; information historical analogies can

[35]The distinction drawn here between an actor's interests and the actor's preferences for certain policies over others has a number of parallels in the literature on international relations. For example, Alexander Wendt makes a similar distinction between and actor's identity/interests and the actor's behavior in "Constructing International Politics" *International Security* 20,1 (Summer 1995), pp. 71-72. Robert Powell terms this distinction as one between preferences over outcomes versus preferences over actions or preferences over policies "Anarchy in international relations theory: the neorealist-neoliberal divide" *International Organization* 48,2 (Spring 1994), pp. 317-321. From the realm of game theory there is Peter Ordeshook's distinction between preferences over outcomes versus preferences over alternatives. Ordeshook is clear on this point and argues that even if you know the actor's preferences over outcomes (interests in my terminology) you can not know her preferences over alternatives (policy preferences) without knowing the actor's beliefs concerning the likely consequences of different actions. *Game Theory and Political Theory: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 4-11. In the literature on bargaining this distinction is often phrased in terms of an actor's interests versus that actor's position, see Roger Fisher and William Ury, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In* (New York, Penguin, 1991) 2nd. ed., p. 11.

give him. For example, positing that during a foreign policy crisis a leader will be driven by an interest in remaining in power does not answer the question of what policy this leader will favor. Would his interest in remaining in power be better served by compromising and facing the criticism of the hawks or by pursuing a policy of escalation that risked involving his nation in a bloody and prolonged conflict? Simply knowing his interests does not answer this question. The answer depends upon the policy maker's definition of the situation and his appraisal of the expected costs and benefits of the different options.

By giving policy makers this type of information, historical analogies can influence the decision making process by helping them decide what particular option will best further their interests. It is in illuminating this link between an actor's interests and policy preferences where a focus on historical analogies can provide a useful complement to interest based approaches. To continue with the above example, whether this hypothetical leader believed that escalation would lead to another "Vietnam" or a quick victory like the one achieved by the Thatcher government in the Falklands would certainly affect his estimation of what particular policy would be in his domestic interest. If he thought escalation would lead to another Vietnam, his interest in remaining in power would manifest itself in a conciliatory policy. However, if he believed that the current situation was more analogous to the Falklands war, his interest in remaining in power would manifest itself in an aggressive policy. Knowing an individual's interests does not tell you what policy he will favor, but combining these interests with a focus on the historical analogies the decision maker uses to define the situation

can tell you why a policy maker favors a particular policy. Thus, the dichotomy between ideas versus interests as a source of behavior is a false one, because people have ideas about what policies will further their interests.[36]

This section has focused on how analogical explanations of foreign policy can complement interest based explanations by explaining how policy makers translate their interests into specific policies. To further demonstrate the complementarity of these two approaches, the next two sections will show how a focus on interest can improve the analogical approach to foreign policy. These two sections will explore existing gaps in knowledge about the analogical reasoning process and discuss how an explicit concern for interests can help fill those gaps.

DOMESTIC POLITICS AND HISTORICAL ANALOGIES

"[Many analysts] treat the professional politicians involved in the making of foreign policy as though they were not politicians at all."[37]

Little is known about the impact of domestic political considerations on the analogical reasoning of foreign policy makers. Consider the absence of any concerns for domestic politics in the most commonly discussed analogies: the World War One analogy focuses on

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[36]This is a paraphrase of E. E. Schattschneider's argument that "It is futile to try to determine whether men are stimulated politically by interests or by ideas, for people have ideas about interests." *Party Government* (New York: Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, 1942) p. 37.
[37]Fred Harvey Harrington, "Politics and Foreign Policy" in Alexander DeConde ed., *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy: Studies of Principal Movements and Ideas* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978) vol. 3, p. 775.

the dangers of war started by inadvertent escalation spirals[38], the
Versailles analogy emphasizes how policy makers can avoid the mistakes
made by the peacemakers after the First World War that led to
disastrous international consequences like the great depression and
World War II[39], the Munich analogy concentrates on the international
dangers of letting aggressors go unchecked[40], the Korean analogy
centers on the international dangers of a peripheral war escalating due to
the intervention of another major power[41], and the Vietnam analogy
warns decision makers against the high international costs of getting
trapped in the quagmire of another state's civil war.[42] All these
analogies focus on the international consequences of various policies, not
their domestic consequences. Analogies are understood as road maps
that help policy makers maximize the national interest by guiding them
through unfamiliar and uncertain terrain by giving them information
about the international ramifications of particular policies.[43]

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[38]Miles Kahler, "Rumors of War: The 1914 Analogy" *Foreign Affairs* 58,2 (Winter 1979/1980): 374-396; and Neustadt and May, *Thinking In Time*, p. 15.

[39]For a discussion of the Versailles analogy that focuses more on the security implications of the analogy see May, *"Lessons" of the Past*, pp. 3-51, for more of a focus on the international economic implications of the lessons of Versailles see, William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (New York: Delta, 1962), pp. 202-276.

[40]Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*, pp. 218-221; May, *"Lessons" of the Past*, pp. 52-86; Neustadt and May, *Thinking in Time*, pp. 34-48; and Khong, *Analogies at War*, pp. 174-190.

[41]Khong, *Analogies at War*, pp. 97-117.

[42]For the lessons of Vietnam see, Herring, "Vietnam, American Foreign Policy, and The Uses of History," pp. 1-16 and Zimmerman and Axelrod, "The Lessons of Vietnam and Soviet Foreign Policy," pp. 1-24. While each of the analogies mentioned above are more complicated and nuanced than this quick presentation implies, this presentation does point to the central fact that all these analogies focus on international costs and benefits. Adding all the nuances would merely extend the presentation without changing the basic conclusion.

[43]The road map concept comes from Judith Goldstein and Robert Keohane, "Ideas and Foreign Policy: An Analytical Framework" in *Ideas and Foreign Policy*, pp. 13-17. There are a small number of exceptions to the almost total neglect of the role of analogies in giving information regarding possible domestic consequences of various foreign policies. Hybel starts down this road in *How Leaders Reason*. Hybel breaks the historical analogies he is concerned with down into a series of different lessons, and while the vast majority of these individual lessons focus on international consequences, a small number of them do deal with domestic politics. Also, Stephen R. Graubard in *Mr. Bush's War: Adventures In*

Interestingly, this focus on the international implications of historical lessons is even prevalent in studies of analogies and foreign policy that begin from the premise that most foreign policy makers start their career as domestic politicians. Starting from this premise, these authors argue that the relevant lessons for these individuals will not come from previous international events, but from the domestic events that were important during their rise to domestic prominence. The argument is that the lessons learned from these domestic events will be the ones turned to when these actors are later empowered to make decisions in the international arena.[44] However, these authors still neglect much of the importance of domestic politics by implicitly accepting the assumption that foreign policy makers are concerned solely with the international consequences of their actions. These authors focus on how the lessons learned in the domestic arena can be applied to advance the state's interests, and not how a policy maker can use historical analogies to determine which polices will best advance their domestic interests.

This is one area where a concern for the interests of foreign policy makers can help improve the analogical approach to foreign policy. The study of analogies and foreign policy has not completely ignored interests, but it has adopted a very restricted view of those interests. In essence, it has been assumed that a policy maker's sole

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The Politics Of Illusion, accuses President Bush of basing his Gulf War policy in part on the analogy to the enormous domestic triumph experienced by the Thatcher government in the Falkland's conflict, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), pp. ix-xi.

[44]For the best and most extensive example of this approach see, Goldgeier, *Leadership Style and Soviet Foreign Policy*. For shorter examples of this approach see Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*, pp. 283-287 and Larson's discussion of Harry Truman's application of the lessons learned from his experience with a local Missouri political boss to his dealings with Stalin, *Origins of Containment*, pp. 134, 178 and 197.

interest is in improving the international position of his state. Starting from the assumption that a decision maker's goal is to maximize his state's payoffs, historical analogies are invoked to explain why the policy maker believed a particular policy was the best way of pursuing the interests of his state.[45] This view of a foreign policy maker's interests is too limited because it does not consider that the individuals who make up the state and act on behalf of the state have interests that are separate from the interests of the state as a whole. In addition to seeking to advance the interests of the state internationally, policy makers also have an interest in maintaining and advancing their domestic political positions. This desire for political survival, combined with the observation that foreign policy choices often have domestic implications, leads to the conclusion that policy makers will naturally be concerned with the domestic impact of different foreign policy options. Therefore, studies of analogies and foreign policy can not neglect domestic politics. Besides internationally focused analogies, policy makers will also need analogies to help them determine which particular policies will further their domestic interests. Just as the internationally focused analogies can influence a decision maker's choice by giving the policy maker information concerning how different options will affect the interests of her state, domestically focused analogies can also "introduce choice propensities" into the decision making process by giving the policy maker information concerning how different options will affect her domestic interests. Thus, domestic interests and analogies may be just as

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[45]As argued above, this basic logic is the same regardless of whether policy maker's derive their analogies from the international or domestic sphere.

important in explaining foreign policy as international interests and analogies.

While there is a large literature within the field of international relations that does stress the impact of domestic politics and a decision maker's domestic interests on foreign policy, this literature shares the problem common to all interest based approaches to foreign policy that was discussed above; namely, it assumes that the translation of a decision maker's interests into specific foreign policy decisions is a straightforward and unproblematic process and ignores the key intervening role analogies play in this process.[46] Policy makers need analogical road maps to illuminate the links between their interests and specific decisions in the domestic arena, as well as the international one.

The argument of this section is not that internationally focused historical analogies are irrelevant to the decision making process, but that any theory of analogical reasoning in foreign policy that ignores the

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[46]For example, see Peter Katzenstein ed., *Between Power and Plenty: Foreign Economic Policies of Advanced Industrial States* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1978); James Rosenau ed., *Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy* (New York: The Free Press, 1967); Charles Kegley and Eugene R. Wittkopf eds., *The Domestic Sources of American Foreign Policy: Insights and Evidence* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988); Melvin Small, *Democracy and Diplomacy: The Impact of Domestic Politics on U.S. Foreign Policy, 1789-1994* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Richard Rosecrance and Arthur Stein eds., *The Domestic Bases of Grand Strategy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993); Snyder, *Myths of Empire*; Joe Hagan, *Political Opposition and Foreign Policy In Comparative Perspective* (Boulder: L. Rienner, 1993); Michael Barnett and Jack Levy, "Domestic Sources of Alliances and Alignments: the case of Egypt, 1962-1973" *International Organization* 45,3 (Summer 1991): 369-395; Miroslav Nincic, "U. S. Soviet Policy and The Electoral Connection" *World Politics* 42,3 (April 1990): 370-396; and James D. Fearon, "Domestic Political Audiences And The Escalation Of International Disputes" *American Political Science Review* 88,3 (September 1994): 577-592. For works that explicitly try to integrate international and domestic concerns and suffer from the same problem, see Robert Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: the logic of two level games" *International Organization* 42,3 (Summer 1988): 427-460; Peter Evans, Harold Jacobson and Robert Putnam eds., *Double-Edged Diplomacy: International Bargaining and Domestic Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); George Tsebelis, *Nested Games: Rational Choice in Comparative Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); G. John Ikenberry, David Lake and Michael Mastaduno, "Introduction: Approaches to Explaining American Foreign Economic Policy" *International Organization* 42,1 (Winter 1988): 1-14; and Michael Mastaduno, David Lake and G. John Ikenberry, "Toward A Realist Theory of State Action" *International Studies Quarterly* 33,4 (December 1989): 457-474.

domestic side of analogies is inadequate and that a complete analogical approach to foreign policy would include both domestic and international analogies. Sometimes internationally focused analogies will be the key factors in determining a state's foreign policy; sometimes domestically focused analogies will play that key role; and sometimes, a state's foreign policy will be influenced by both types of analogies and the tradeoffs they present to policy makers. Given this, an important question for those interested in explaining foreign policy is what determines which type of analogy will be important in any given decision making context? The purpose of the next section is to explore this question.

INTERNATIONAL THREATS, DOMESTIC THREATS, CAUSAL SIMILARITIES AND ANALOGY SELECTION

A second aspect of the analogical reasoning process that is not well understood is the question of what determines which specific analogy will be important for any particular decision. When a foreign policy maker has to choose a policy, why is one particular analogy seen as relevant to this decision while others are ignored? Without an adequate answer to this question there is no way to develop a complete analogical theory of decision making.[47] Any analysis that leaves this question unanswered can only provide explanations of decisions after the fact.

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[47]While answering this question is a necessary step in developing a complete analogical theory, it is not sufficient. For example, a complete theory of analogical reasoning would also have to answer the questions of what determines why policy makers learn the lessons they do from particular historical events and when they use analogies as opposed to other types of cognitive tools. These key questions have also been under-explored.

Knowing which analogies policy makers have seen as relevant, one can then use that information to explain their decisions. However, to develop a theory capable of generating falsifiable predictions, one would have to be able to explain which analogy a particular decision making environment is likely to produce. Unfortunately, most scholars interested in the process of analogical reasoning have spent little time on this issue, as the focus has been almost exclusively on demonstrating how analogies, once invoked, can influence a decision maker's choice. The result of this emphasis is that the selection of a source analogue remains the least understood step in the process of analogical reasoning.[48]

The argument of this section is that to adequately answer the question of why one analogy is seen as relevant while others are ignored, the focus must be put on the interests of the policy maker who is drawing the analogy. This is the second area where a focus on interests can contribute to a greater understanding of the analogical reasoning process. Knowing what a decision maker wants from an analogy will tell us a great deal about what analogy she will select as relevant.

This section's emphasis on analogical *choice* is a marked departure from the current literature on analogies and foreign policy, which tends to treat policy makers as virtual captives of their analogies. In this literature there is remarkably little choice in the analogue choice process. Analogies are viewed as forcing themselves upon unsuspecting policy makers who are helpless to resist the allure of a particular analogy and choose a different analogy to base their policy on. The policy maker is a prisoner to a particular analogy. In contrast, the

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[48]Keith Holyoak and K. Koh, "Surface and Structural Similarity in Analogical Transfer" *Memory and Cognition* 15,4 (July 1987), p. 332.

argument here is that it is more useful to view policy makers as conscious consumers and creators of analogies. While policy makers are constrained by their beliefs, in the model offered here, they are also capable of deliberately selecting a specific analogy from their personal repertoire of analogies, based on explicit judgments of which analogy holds the information that is most useful for them in the pursuit of their interests.[49] However, this analogical freedom of choice does not mean that the selection process is the purely instrumental process stressed by analysts such as Snyder where policy makers already know what policy they want to implement and then decide what analogy will be most effective in selling that policy. Instead, in the model offered here, while policy makers do know what interests they want to promote, they do not know what specific policy will further those interests, and they turn to historical analogies to get crucial information concerning what policy will best advance their interests. Before decision makers can advance their interests by determining which analogy will help them sell a particular policy, they need to determine which analogy will help them choose a particular policy.

A policy maker's interests will tell her what analogy is most relevant to her in two ways: First, those interests will tell the policy maker whether to look for an internationally focused analogy or a domestically focused analogy. Second, in choosing among different domestic or international analogies, a policy maker's interests will help

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[49]It is important to note that this judgment will be based on the policy maker's beliefs about the potential source analogues and his beliefs about the current situation, in addition to the policy maker's interests. This is what is meant by the statement that they are still constrained by their beliefs. I do not wish to replace the current orthodoxy that focuses solely on ideas, with an approach that focuses solely on interests. My motivation in bringing interests in is not to kick ideas out, but to explore how ideas and interests interact.

shape the analogical choice process by leading the decision maker to focus on causally relevant factors in those candidate analogies to determine which analogy is most relevant to the current problem. Both of these steps are explained in greater depth below. This section will begin with a discussion of the literature that currently exists on how policy makers choose the analogies they do and the strengths and weaknesses of that approach. Then it will discuss how the model of analogical choice offered here can contribute to a better understanding of the analogical reasoning process.

While the choice of a particular source analogue has not been a major focus for most of the theorists that focus on the role of analogies and foreign policy, most give some indication of the mechanism believed to underlie this choice process. In this literature, the starting point in determining why one analogy is chosen over another is what Kahneman and Tversky have called the availability and representativeness heuristics. First, the availability heuristic is the tendency for people to form judgments on the basis of events that are easily called to mind. One demonstration of this effect offered by Kahneman and Tversky is that subjects in their experiments judged that the number of words in the English language that begin with the letter r is greater than the number of words that have r as the third letter, even though the latter far outnumber the former. The reason for this, according to Kahneman and Tversky, is that it is simply easier for people to think of words that begin with r as opposed to words that have an r as the third letter, so people judge the former to be more prevalent. Second, the argument behind the representativeness heuristic is that when faced with a new

problem, people make judgments regarding how similar the current situation is to previous events that are stored in memory. [50]

The implication of the availability and representativeness heuristics for the analogical approach to foreign policy is that some analogies are simply brought to mind more easily or are seen as more similar to a current problem, and thus are more likely to be used as source analogues.[51] These analogies can be called salient analogies. Theorists interested in exploring why policy makers choose the analogies they do have taken two broad strategies in determining which analogies will be salient for particular policy makers. The first strategy is to limit the time frame from which a policy maker's salient analogies will be drawn and the second strategy is to limit the types of events that will be the sources for salient analogies. These two strategies have the same goal: They are both attempts to get at the issue of what analogy a policy maker will select by narrowing down the range of possible source analogues that a policy maker can choose from. Given the virtually infinite number of past events that a policy maker could potentially use as a historical analogy, knowing the time from which she is likely to choose and the types of events she is likely to choose from is a useful first cut at determining what particular analogy she is likely to select.

One way at getting at the question of why one analogy is selected as relevant while others are ignored is to restrict the time frame from which analogies are likely to be drawn. This strategy is taken by

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[50]Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, "Availability: A Heuristic For Judging Frequency and Probability," *Cognitive Psychology* 5 (September, 1973): 207-232. See also, Daniel Kahneman, Paul Slovic and Amos Tversky, *Judgment Under Uncertainty: Heuristic and Biases* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).
[51]Khong, *Analogies at War*, pp. 32-37 and 212-219.

theorists who stress the importance of recency in determining the salience of different events. All things being equal, more recent events will be easier to remember and therefore more likely to be used to interpret a new situation. This goes a long way in narrowing down the range of possible analogies because out of the entire universe of historical events, it means that only recent events, say those occurring within the policy maker's lifetime, are likely to be used as source analogues. This idea of recency is captured and refined by the concept of generational learning. Generational learning arguments combine the idea of recency with a primacy argument and assert that events that occur in the early years of a policy maker's political career, at a time when her basic political beliefs are being formed, will be especially salient and therefore likely to be used as source analogues.[52] Thus, entire generations of leaders are seen as predisposed to use the lessons of history based on events that occurred during their formative years. For example, the generation that came of age during World War II is expected to be more likely to see current events in terms of the Munich analogy, while the cohort of leaders that came of age in the 1960's and 70's in the United States is expected to be more likely to invoke the lessons of Vietnam when dealing with current foreign policy questions.

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[52]See Richard Ned Lebow, "Generational Learning and Conflict Management" *International Journal* 40 (Autumn, 1985): 555-585. Ole Holsti and James Rosenau, "Does Where You Stand Depend on When You Were Born? The Impact of Generation and Post-Vietnam Foreign Policy Beliefs" *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 44,1 (Spring 1980): 1-22, Michael Roskin, "From Pearl Harbor To Vietnam: Shifting Generational Paradigms and U.S. Foreign Policy" *Political Science Quarterly* 89,3 (Fall 1974): 563-588, Howard Schuman and Cheryl Reiger, "Historical Analogies, Generational Effects and Attitudes Toward War" *American Sociological Review* 57,3 (June 1992): 315-326, Goldgeier, *Leadership Style and Soviet Foreign Policy*, pp. 2-7, Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*, pp. 249-262, and Neustadt and May, *Thinking In Time*, pp. 157-180.

Generational learning narrows down the range of possible source analogues by limiting the time frame from which policy makers choose their analogies. Another way of narrowing this spectrum is to specify the particular types of events policy makers are likely to use as a basis for historical lessons. This strategy is taken by theorists who stress the importance of vividness in determining the salience of different events. Vivid analogies are those that are emotionally involving for the decision maker, such as analogies based on personally experienced events or events that have important consequences for the policy maker or his state.[53] One implication of the vividness hypothesis is that historical events in which the policy maker played a personal role are likely to be quite salient.[54] For example, Lyndon Johnson's view from Congress of the domestic beating that Harry Truman and the entire Democratic Party suffered after the Communists took over in China may have led him to use those events as a lens through which to interpret the situation he was facing in Vietnam in the 1960's. Thus, one reason why Johnson was willing to escalate the war in Vietnam was that he was determined not to have his domestic agenda and domestic political prospects destroyed by charges that he had "lost Vietnam."[55] A second implication of the

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[53]For a discussion of vividness and the role it plays in memory see, Nisbett and Ross, *Human Inference*, pp. 43-62; and Larson, *The Origins of Containment*, pp. 38-40.

[54]Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*, pp. 239-249.

[55]For the role played by the "loss of China" analogy in the Johnson's Vietnam decision making see Lyndon B. Johnson, *The Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency, 1963-1969* (New York: Rhinehart and Winston, 1971), p. 152, Larry Berman, *Planning A Tragedy: The Americanization of the War in Vietnam* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1982), pp. 131-132 and 145-147; and Doris Kearns, *Lyndon Johnson and The American Dream* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), pp. 251-253 and 282-283. Interestingly, Khong prefers to treat this explanation based on the loss of China analogy as a competing explanation for the analogical explanation he offers for Johnson's decision. While he admits that an "analogical explanation is not inherently incapable of including domestic politics in its explanatory scheme," he limits the analogical approach exclusively to international analogies because their role is easier to assess. The reason for this is that policy makers are more willing to admit the

importance of vividness is that events with important and far reaching consequences for a decision maker or his state, such as major wars or depressions, are also more likely than other events to be used as historical analogies later.[56]

In many cases the effects of recency, generational learning and vividness all interact to make certain analogies particularly salient. A good example of this is the often noted influence on policy makers of lessons derived from the last major war. Recency, generational learning, and vividness all help explain why, in the words of Robert Jervis, "generals are prepared to fight the last war, [and] diplomats are prepared to avoid it."[57] In summary, the first step that needs to be taken to determine what event a decision maker will use as a source analogue is to narrow the possibilities down from all historical events to a much smaller list of salient analogies. Other things being equal, more recent events, events that occur during the formative years of a policy maker's political career, and events that are emotionally involving because they were personally experienced or because they had important consequences for a policy maker or his state are more likely to be used as the basis for lessons of history.

Up to this point, the existing literature on analogies and foreign policy is on the right track. Not all historical analogies are created equal; some are more likely than others to be invoked. Using the ideas of recency, generational learning, and vividness; it is possible to construct a list of salient historical analogies for individual policy

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influence of international lessons on their policies than domestic lessons. *Analogies at War*, pp. 200-205. This issue is discussed below in the section on case selection.

[56]Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*, pp. 262-271

[57]Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*, p. 267.

makers from which they are likely to choose. Compiling this list is the first step towards determining why a specific policy maker chooses a certain source analogue. However, this narrowing down is only a first step; one is still left with a broad range of candidate analogies. Which analogy from this repertoire of historical analogies is the policy maker going to choose? After discussing the current answer given to this question and some of its problems, this section will demonstrate how a focus on a policy maker's interests can avoid these problems and offer a more satisfying account of why some analogies are accepted as relevant to the decision making process while others are ignored.

To account for a policy maker's selection of a particular analogy from her stockpile of historical lessons, analysts have naturally appealed to the concept of similarity. The argument is that the policy maker will use as a source analogue the historical event that is seen as most similar to the current situation.[58] Indeed, most theories of analogy that discuss the selection of a source analogue implicitly or explicitly rely on some notion of similarity to explain the selection process.[59] While this notion of a selection process based on similarity is intuitively plausible, it also poses theoretical and empirical problems. The biggest of these problems is the risk of tautology. Why was one analogy chosen over another? Because it was most similar to the current case. How do we know it was the most similar? Because of all the possibilities, it was the one that was chosen.

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[58]Khong, *Analogies at War*, pp. 215-219.
[59]Stella Vosniadou and Andrew Ortony, "Similarity and Analogical Reasoning: A Synthesis" in *Similarity and Analogical Reasoning*, Stella Vosniadou and Andrew Ortony eds., (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989): 1-17.

This is a real problem because many authors give no independent measure of similarity; they simply rely on the reader's intuitive agreement with their after the fact similarity judgments.[60] For example, consider Khong's discussion of why the Johnson administration chose the American experience in the Korean War as the relevant analogy to the deteriorating situation it was facing in Vietnam. To account for this choice, Khong proceeds inductively. By examining the public and private record in the months prior to the decisions of interest and counting the number of times an analogy is invoked by senior policy makers, Khong constructs a list of salient candidate analogies.[61] Then, after looking through the historical record and judging which analogy from that list proved to be most influential, Khong makes the argument that this analogy was also the most similar:

> For better or worse, Korea seemed to have the most surface similarities with Vietnam in the mid-1960's. The Korea-Vietnam similarities ranged from the nature of the challenge (communists bent on taking over a contiguous territory by military force) and its assumed sponsor (China), to the geographical location and its domino implications (East Asia, spreading into Southeast Asia). With so many plausible similarities . . . it should not be surprising that the Korean analogy came to occupy the place that it did in the official mindset.[62]

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[60]For an example of this type of criticism being launched against the psychological literature see Maya Bar-Hillel, "What Makes Samples Seem Representative?" *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance* 6,3 (August 1980): 578-589.

[61]Khong, *Analogies at War*, pp. 58-62.

[62]Khong, *Analogies at War*, p. 219.

While Khong is correct in noting the many similarities between these two cases, the argument that these similarities can explain the choice of the Korean analogy is unpersuasive. To see why, consider the case of Under Secretary of State, George Ball; who, as Khong and others have noted, objected to the use of the Korean analogy and argued that it was the French experience in Vietnam, most importantly their humiliating defeat and withdrawal from Dien Bien Phu, that was the relevant analogy.[63] Why was this analogy rejected by the majority of other senior policy makers? If similarity is the guideline for selection, a good case can be made for the Dien Bien Phu analogy. It too was a case of Western intervention against the same enemy, in the same country. Proponents of both the Korean and the Dien Bien Phu analogy could both plausibly argue that their analogy was more similar, and therefore more relevant to the situation at hand. One feels that if Dien Bien Phu had been the analogy used by most of the Johnson administration, Khong could have made an equally plausible case why that was the most similar analogy.

The point here is not to argue that, in fact, one of these analogies was more similar to the issue in question, but to demonstrate that invoking the vague concept of similarity invites tautology and does not offer a satisfactory answer to the question of why a policy maker selects any particular analogy. Similarity is simply too nebulous and malleable a concept to provide a sound basis for a theory of analogical choice. The problem is that there is no clear answer to the question of how similar one event is to another, because any two events can share a

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[63]See Khong, *Analogies at War*, pp. 148-162 and May, *"Lessons" of the Past*, pp. 94-95.

virtually unlimited number of similar facets (for example, event A is similar to event B because they both happened on earth). Yet, because the idea of a selection process based on similarity is so intuitively compelling, one is reluctant to abandon it entirely. Fortunately, there is another option. This option is to make similarity a useful concept by constraining it, and thus clearly defining it. This can be done by specifying what types of similarity are important and which are irrelevant in the analogue choice process.[64]

This is the direction that the psychological literature on analogical reasoning has taken. Unhappy with the vague notion of similarity, theorists of analogical reasoning have attempted to disaggregate the concept and specify which types of similarity affect the process of reasoning by analogy. Unfortunately, this potentially valuable work has been either ignored or misinterpreted by analysts interested in investigating the role of analogies in the making of foreign policy. The somewhat cursory handling the psychological literature on analogy selection has received is understandable given that students of foreign policy have been more interested in demonstrating how analogies, once invoked, can influence the decision making process and less interested in exploring the choice of any particular analogy. However, to develop a complete theory of analogical decision making and its effects on foreign policy, this neglected area must be explored.

Again, consider Khong's *Analogies at War*. While determining why the Johnson administration selected any particular analogy to base its policy on is not the main focus of the work, to its credit, it does

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[64]Douglas Medin, Robert Goldstone and Dedre Gentner, "Respects For Similarity" *Psychological Review* 100,2 (April, 1993): 254-278.

address the issue. Khong attempts to deal with the imprecision of the concept of similarity by focusing not on similarity in general, but on "surface similarities." Of all the possible similarities that could be imagined, Khong argues that it is only the "superficial," "mere appearance" matches that determine which analogies are seen as similar. In the course of explaining why the Johnson administration accepted the Korean analogy as the most relevant lesson of history, Khong argues that "only the most superficial attributes ... seemed to be used. That is precisely the point, for one of the most interesting findings of researchers working on analogical problem solving is that people pick analogies on the basis of superficial similarities between the prospective analogue and the situation it is suppose[d] to illuminate."[65]

There are two problems with this stance. First, because determining why any particular analogy is selected by the decision maker is only a peripheral interest of Khong, little time is spent on the issue. As a result, it is not clear what a superficial similarity is, or how it is any more definable a construct than similarity in general. Given this, it seems as if one way of improving the answer to the selection problem would be to give a clearer definition of what counts as a superficial similarity. However, the second problem with this approach makes it unlikely that this would be a fruitful course to pursue. The second problem with this approach is that it is based on a questionable reading of the psychological literature on analogical reasoning. A close reading of the more recent literature suggests that any focus on

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[65]Khong, *Analogies at War*, p. 217.

superficial similarities, no matter how clearly defined, would be entirely misplaced for students of political decision making.

In attempting to discover how decision makers select particular analogies, psychologists have found it useful to split this selection process into two steps. The first of these steps involves the retrieval of possible analogies from a decision maker's memory. This is simply a question of access; given a new situation, what analogies pop into the decision maker's head? The second, and more important step for those concerned with political decision making, is the actual application of a particular analogy. In this step, the decision maker judges the soundness of the various analogies that have been retrieved from memory and based upon that judgment decides which analogy or analogies to use to help solve the current problem.[66]

The clear consensus in this literature is that superficial similarity is the key feature only in the first stage of this selection process. When decision makers are presented with a problem and asked to think of possible analogies, the first ones accessed are those that bear a close superficial relationship to the current problem.[67] However, for those interested in explaining political decision making the key question is not, which analogies immediately pop into a decision maker's head? Instead,

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[66]This two step selection process has been called the MAC/FAC process for "Many Are Called (access)/Few Are Chosen (actual use)". For the clearest statement of this position see Dedre Gentner, Mary Jo Ratterman and Kenneth Forbus, "The roles of similarity in transfer: separating retrievability from inferential soundness" *Cognitive Psychology* 25,4 (October 1993): 524-575. For similar positions see, F.W. Hesse, "Search and Acceptance in Analogical Problem Solving" *Zeitschrift Für Psychologie* 199,2 (February, 1991): 235-242 and Charles M. Wharton, Keith J. Holyoak, Paul E. Downing, Trent E. Lange, Thomas D. Wickens and Eric R. Melz, "Below the Surface: Analogy Similarity and Retrieval Competition in Reminding" *Cognitive Psychology* 26,1 (February 1994): 64-101.

[67]In addition to the literature cited in the next footnote, see Vosniadou and Ortony, "Similarity and Analogical Reasoning: A Synthesis", pp. 7-8, and David Rumelhart, "Toward a micro structural account of reasoning", In Vosniadou and Ortony, *Similarity and Analogical Reasoning*, p. 303.

for students of politics, the crucial question is, after being presented with a number of possible analogies and given a chance to deliberate, what analogy does a policy maker judge as most sound and decide to apply to the issue at hand?

In this second stage of the selection process, where decision makers choose a particular analogy to apply to their current problem, surface similarities have proven to be much less relevant. A number of authors, representing different strands in the psychological literature on analogical decision making, have converged on the conclusion that the actual use of an analogy is determined not by the number of surface similarities shared by a candidate analogy and what is known about the situation at hand, but by the extent to which a candidate analogy is causally similar to the current problem. When decision makers are deciding which analogy to apply to a new problem, they judge the soundness of those analogies not on the basis of overall similarity or the number of surface similarities, but on the basis of similarity only in terms of causally relevant factors. A prior event will be seen as a relevant source analogue only if the factors that were seen as causally important in that case are also present in the current problem.[68] Rather

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[68]Most of the literature here focuses on both stages of the selection process, access and use. The clear consensus is that while superficial similarity determines access, actual use is determined by causal similarities. See Wharton, et. al. "Below the Surface"; Gentner, et. al. "The roles of similarity in transfer"; Hesse, "Search and Acceptance in Analogical Problem Solving"; Gentner, "The Mechanisms of Analogical Learning" in *Similarity and Analogical Reasoning*, Vosniadou and Ortony eds., pp. 199-241; Keith Holyoak and Paul Thagard, "A Computational Model of Analogical Problem Solving" also in *Similarity and Analogical Reasoning*; pp. 242-266; Holyoak and Koh. "Surface and Structural Similarity in Analogical Transfer," pp. 332-340; Dedre Gentner and Cecile Toupin, "Systematicity and Surface Similarity in the Development of Analogy" *Cognitive Science* 10,3 (July-September 1986): 277-300; Keith Holyoak, "The Pragmatics of Analogical Transfer" in *The Psychology of Learning and Motivation*, Gordon Bower ed., (New York: Academic Press, 1985) vol. 19: 59-87; Stephen Read, "Analogical Reasoning in Social Judgment: The Importance of Causal Theories" *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 46,1 (January 1984): 14-25; and Gentner "Structure-Mapping," pp. 155-170. For a literature review see Lauretta M. Reeves and Robert W. Weisberg, "The Role of Content and Abstract Information in Analogical Transfer" *Psychological Bulletin* 115,3 (May 1994): 381-400.

than focus on the general notion of similarity, or surface similarities, these studies suggest that causal relationships are at the core of the analogical selection process.

These findings from the psychology lab are consistent with the view of ideas, like historical analogies, as "causal road maps" that play an important role in the making of foreign policy because they clarify means-ends relationships.[69] If policy makers turn to analogies because they provide causal road maps, they should only be interested in similarities concerning factors that were causally relevant to the initial outcome. This, and the psychological literature discussed above, lead to

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Not only have causal similarities been shown to play the determining role in use of analogies, there is also some evidence that they also play a role in the access of those analogies. While some studies suggest that causal relations play the most important role in analogue retrieval, most studies suggest that causal similarities play only a supporting role in access. For a study that places causal similarities at the center of the retrieval process see Hollyn M. Johnson and Colleen M. Seifert, "The Role of Predictive Features in Retrieving Analogical Cases" *Journal of Memory and Language* 31,5 (October 1992): 648-667. For a study that places the role of causal similarities in a supporting role see Wharton, et. al., "Below The Surface". This supporting role in determining access is also supported by the Cased-Reasoning Literature, though here too, authors vary on their estimate of centrality of causal relations in access. For studies that view access to prior cases as determined by a variety of indices, including causal ones see Janet L. Kolodner, "From Natural Language Understanding to Case Based Reasoning: A Perspective of the Cognitive Model That Ties it All Together" in *Beliefs, Reasoning, and Decision Making: Psycho-Logic In Honor of Bob Abelson*, Roger C. Schank and Ellen Langer eds., (Hillsdale: L. Erlbaum, 1994), pp. 72 and 98; and Roger Schank, *Dynamic Memory: A Theory of Reminding and Learning in Computers and People* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982). For studies that place causal relations at the center of the retrieval process see, Stephen J. Read and Lynn Carol Miller, "Dissonance and Balance in Belief Systems: The Promise of Parallel Constraint Satisfaction Processes and Connectionist Modeling Approaches" in *Beliefs, Reasoning and Decision Making*, Schank and Langer eds., p. 214 and Christopher K. Riesbeck and Roger C. Schank, "Case Based Reasoning: An Introduction" in *Inside Case Based Reasoning*, Christopher Riesbeck and Roger Schank eds., (Hillsdale: L. Erlbaum, 1989), p. 32.

One consensus on this point is that as a decision maker's knowledge of a particular domain increases, so does the use of causal similarities in the selection process. For example, experts rely more on causal similarities than do novices, see Laura Novick, "Analogical Transfer, Problem Similarity and Expertise" *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory and Cognition* 14,3 (July 1988): 510-520. See also, Gentner et. al., "The roles of similarity in transfer," p. 566; Hesse, "Search and Acceptance in Analogical Problem Solving," p. 238 and Stella Vosniadou, "Analogical Reasoning as a Mechanism in knowledge acquisition: a developmental perspective" in *Similarity and Analogical Reasoning*, Vosniadou and Ortony eds., p. 434. Also, older children seem to be better able to access cases based on causal similarities than younger children, see Marvin W. Dahler and Zhe Chen, "Protagonist, Theme, and Goal Object: Effects of Surface Features on Analogical Transfer, *Cognitive Development* 8,2 (April-June 1993): 211-229.

[69]Goldstein and Keohane, "Ideas and Foreign Policy," pp. 13-17.

a perspective on the analogical selection process different from the view found in the existing literature on foreign policy decision making. Contrary to that literature, when faced with a number of possible source analogues, the policy makers will not judge the soundness of each as a guide to their current problems based on the sum of all similarities or surface similarities. Instead, this judgment will be based on the degree to which what is believed to have been relevant in causing the outcome of interest in the historical analogue is known to be present or absent in the current situation. While a vague, overall judgment of similarity may help get a specific analogy on a policy maker's historical repertoire during a particular crisis, only a judgment of causal similarity will help it get used as a source of lessons. Only the analogy whose causally relevant facets are best represented in what is known about the current situation will be adopted by decision makers as a basis for policy. In this stage of analogical choice, the policy maker's overall world view or ideology can play an important role by determining what cause and effect relations a decision maker will see as relevant for explaining the outcomes of the cases within his historical repertoire.

Placing causal relations at the center of the analogical reasoning process helps to clarify how a focus on a policy maker's interests will help determine what analogy that policy maker will see as relevant. Policy makers employ analogies because they give them causal information about the expected consequences of different courses of action. This causal information helps policy makers "determine which of many means will" allow them to "reach desired goals and . . .further

their objectives."[70]   An analogy that gives causal information that is unrelated to a policy maker's goal will be of no use to that policy maker. As Keith Holyoak argues, "an analogy is . . . ultimately defined with respect to the system's goals in exploring it."[71]

This emphasis on goals leads back to the earlier discussion of international versus domestic analogies. As argued above, in the literature on analogies and foreign policy, it is generally assumed that the policy maker is seeking a solution that will maximize some notion of the national interest. However, the fact that policy makers also have domestic interests makes this assumption problematic. One negative consequence of this assumption has been a neglect of how these domestic goals can influence the analogical choice process. In conducting a foreign policy, a decision maker can be trying to further international goals, domestic goals, or some combination of the two. Because decision makers are turning to analogies for information concerning what policies will help achieve their goals, those goals will determine what type of information a policy maker is looking for, and therefore will help influence what particular analogy is selected.

To determine which particular analogy a policy maker will select from her repertoire of historical lessons, the first question that needs to be asked is what objective is the policy maker trying to further? Is the

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[70]Goldstein and Keohane, "Ideas and Foreign Policy," pp. 13-14.

[71]Holyoak, "The Pragmatics of Analogical Transfer," p. 70. For other accounts of the analogical reasoning process that place the decision maker's goals at the center of that process see, Holyoak and Thagard, "A Computational Model of Analogical Problem Solving"; Colleen M. Seifert, "Goals in Reminding" in *Proceedings of A Workshop on Case Based Reasoning*, Janet Kolodner, ed., (San Mateo: Morgan Kaufmann, 1988), pp. 357 and 364; Roger C. Schank, "Goal Based Scenarios," in *Beliefs, Reasoning and Decision Making*, Schank and Langer eds., pp. 2-4; Mark Keane, "On Drawing Analogies When Solving Problems: A Theory and Test of Solution Generation in an Analogical Problem Solving Task," *British Journal of Psychology* 76,4 (November 1985): 449-458; and Keane, *Analogical Problem Solving*, pp. 57 and 70-72.

policy maker chiefly concerned with the international interests of her state? Or, conversely, is the issue more important domestically and as a result, is she more concerned with protecting her domestic goals? Or, are both types of goals important? The answers to these questions will help determine what particular analogy a policy maker will see as relevant. In those cases where a policy maker is facing an international issue that threatens the state's external goals, or poses an opportunity for the furthering of those international interests, she will want information about the international ramifications of different options. As a result, she will look through her cognitive reserve of historical lessons for an analogy that contains information about the international consequences of different foreign policies. Conversely, facing an internal threat or opportunity, the pertinent question for the foreign policy maker is, what are the domestic implications of different policies? Given the importance of her domestic goals in this case, the relevant analogies will contain information concerning cause and effect relationships in the domestic arena.[72] This discussion leads to a hypothesis that will be tested in the cases that follow; namely, that the relative level of international or domestic threat/opportunity present in any particular foreign policy situation will determine the relevance of one type of analogy (domestic or international) over another.

This conjecture brings us one step closer to answering the question of why policy makers choose the analogies they do. Instead of being

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[72]For some evidence that a policy maker's domestic goals can influence the analogical reasoning process see James Clay Moltz, "Divergent Learning and the Failed Politics of Soviet Economic Reforms" *World Politics* 45,2 (January 1993): 301-325. Moltz examines the process by which Soviet leaders derived lessons from international events. He finds that policy makers do learn new knowledge in this way, but that the type of lessons learned depended on their domestic/bureaucratic interests.

concerned with a decision maker's entire repertoire of historical analogies, a policy maker's goals make only a subset of that repertoire relevant. While this step by itself does not tell what particular analogy a policy maker will select as relevant, it does bring us closer to that goal by narrowing the possible number of relevant analogies. To reach the ultimate goal of narrowing this band down to one, this focus on international and domestic interests must be combined with the above discussion of analogies as causal road maps used by policy makers to determine what policies are in their interests. Whether a policy maker is looking to further domestic or international goals, his interests will be best served by getting the most accurate information concerning the possible consequences of different policies. This leads policy makers to focus on causal relations when selecting a relevant analogy. An analogy that is similar to a current issue in terms of factors that are not relevant in producing outcomes is unlikely to provide useful information, and as a result it is unlikely to be seen as relevant by a policy maker. In order for an analogy to help a policy maker realize his goals, there must be some basis for concluding that the cause and effect relations that were at work in the analogous situation tell the policy maker something about the cause and effect constraints he is currently operating under. This is why the selection of a historical analogue will be based on causal similarities. A policy maker's goals, be they international or domestic, tell the policy maker what subset of his stockpile of analogies may contain information pertinent to his current problem. The choice of a particular analogy from that subset comes down to a question of

determining which analogue's causally relevant factors are best represented in what is known about the current situation.

This does not require all policy makers to be perfectly rational reasoners who always interpret the causes of past events and their similarities to the current situation in an unbiased way. Like all humans, policy makers are subject to limitations that force departures from the ideal of pure rationality. The analogical selection process is not immune to such limitations. Cognitive biases stemming largely from a policy maker's pre-existing beliefs will influence the selection process. In addition, decision makers may also suffer from motivational biases as their desires to believe that a certain analogy is or is not applicable to the current problem can influence the selection process.[73] Evidence of these biases is not a failure of the model offered here because it does not show that policy makers are purely instrumental analogizers who pick analogies solely for their propaganda value, nor does it show that policy makers fail to make judgments about relative levels of international and domestic threats or causal similarities. Instead, due to the inherent limitations of human reasoning, the intrusion of cognitive and motivational biases in the analogical selection process should be expected, even when policy makers are doing their best to make honest and unbiased appraisals of analogical applicability.

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[73]Motivational bias, the tendency to see what we hope to see is examined in, Irving Janis and Leon Mann, *Decision Making: A Psychological Analysis of Conflict, Choice and Commitment* (New York: The Free Press, 1977); Janis, *Crucial Decisions*, pp. 65-85; Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*, pp. 356-391; Lebow, *Between Peace and War*, pp. 107-119; and Thomas Gilovich, *How We Know What Isn't So: The Fallibility of Human Reason in Everyday Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), pp. 75-87. For a discussion of the interaction of motivational and cognitive biases see Diane M. Mackie and David L. Hamilton, eds. *Affect, Cognition and Stereotyping: Interactive Processes in Group Perception* (San Diego: Academic Press, 1993).

In sum, the existing literature on historical analogies and their impact on foreign policy is wrong to treat policy makers as prisoners of particular analogies. Instead, policy makers should be seen as active choosers of analogies. Policy makers may be prisoners to the analogical reasoning process. They do need historical analogies to translate their interests into specific policy prescriptions, but they are not prisoners to any particular analogy. Their interests lead them to pick and choose among the available lessons of history based on an assessment of which analogy contains the information that is most useful to them. Useful not solely in the instrumental sense of what analogy will best help them sell a policy, but useful in the sense of what analogy will help them choose a policy that will advance their interests. First, whether a policy maker sees a current foreign policy question as more relevant to his international or domestic goals will lead him to choose an analogy that speaks to his particular goals. A historical event, no matter how recent, vivid, formative or traumatic for an entire generation of policy makers, will not be selected as a relevant historical analogue if the lessons it contains do not speak to the interests of the analogizer. Second, a policy maker's interest in basing his policies on the most accurate information will lead him to focus on the facets in the candidate analogies that were central in causing the outcome in those cases and choose the analogy whose causally relevant factors are most similar to what is known about the current problem. A historical event, no matter how similar to the current situation, will not be chosen as a relevant historical analogue if those similarities are limited to factors that are irrelevant in causing outcomes.

BEYOND RATIONALISM: ANALOGIES AND THE DEFINITION OF INTERESTS

The analogical approach to foreign policy differs from interest based approaches by maintaining that policy makers need cognitive devices such as historical analogies to translate their interests into specific policy prescriptions. Despite this difference, these two literatures share a common rationalist assumption that treats an actor's interests as exogenous to the actor and deducible from that actor's position in a certain material structure.[74] The model of analogical choice put forward here lies firmly within this rationalist framework. It treats interests as exogenous by positing the simple assumption that policy makers have two broad sets of interests; advancing the international position of their state and advancing their own political standing at home.

However, this rationalist assumption might unduly restrict the role that analogies may play in the formation of foreign policy. Specifically, it ignores the possibility that analogies may help certain actors define themselves as actors and thus how they define their interests. Analogies may do more than simply allow decision makers to figure out what specific policies will advance their pre-existing interests, they might also play a role in determining the interests themselves. Policy makers may take on certain interests as a result of lessons they draw from specific

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[74]On the relationship between idea based explanations and rationalism see Goldstein and Keohane, "Ideas and Foreign Policy," pp. 4-7.

historical events, a possibility that will be examined in the cases that follow.

While such use of historical analogies by policy makers would clearly lie outside the model of analogical choice presented here, it would also help advance the understanding of the role of analogies in foreign policy by demonstrating that the existing rationalist approach to the role of analogies and foreign policy may be too limited. In addition to being cognitive road maps that help policy makers determine what specific options would best further their interests, analogies may also at times play a role in determining what a decision maker in fact defines his interests as being.

CASE SELECTION

To test the hypothesis that it is the relative level of international or domestic threat/opportunity present in any particular foreign policy situation that determines the relevance of one type of analogy (international or domestic) over another, cases have been selected to ensure variance in the independent variable (the relative levels of international and domestic threats/opportunities), while holding constant as many other variables as possible.[75] For this reason, cases have been selected in groups. One group of cases focuses U.S. policy towards continental expansion prior to the Civil War and a second group of cases focuses on U.S. policy towards Iran and American hostages during the

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[75]For the rationale behind selecting cases in terms of variance on the independent variable see Gary King, Robert Keohane and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 115-149.

Carter and Reagan administrations. Each of these two groupings consists of cases that deal with a similar issue, but where the levels of international or domestic threats/opportunities vary.

In addition to providing variance in the independent variable, this grouped comparison approach offers two other advantages. First, keeping the cases within each group as similar as possible helps eliminate competing explanations by holding constant as many other variables as possible. Second, this grouped comparison approach eliminates the necessity of making comparisons between disparate cases concerning levels of international and domestic threats/opportunities. For example, what were the levels of international or domestic threats faced by President Jackson in his policies towards the annexation of Texas, relative to the levels of domestic or international threats faced by President Carter in his dealings with Iran over American hostages? The vast number of differences between these two cases makes such an assessment difficult. Fortunately, the grouped comparison approach makes such comparisons unnecessary. Selecting groups of cases dealing with the same issue, presents the easier task of having to show change over time in the relative level of domestic and international threats/opportunities. While comparing the absolute levels of international and domestic threats faced by President Jackson and President Carter is difficult if not impossible, it is far easier to demonstrate that Carter was facing a larger domestic threat regarding the hostages in Iran in March and April of 1980 than he had faced in November of 1979.

Within each case grouping, the hypothesis is that the importance of domestic or international analogies in the policy making process will vary along with changes in the relative levels of international and domestic threats/opportunities. Policy makers will select analogies appropriate to the changing levels of international and domestic threats/opportunities they face. For example, if a foreign policy issue becomes more threatening to a policy maker's international goals, then international analogies can be expected to increase in importance. Conversely, if a foreign policy issue becomes a grave threat to a policy maker's domestic interests, a domestically focused analogy can be expected to become more influential in the decision making process. Then, the candidate domestic or international analogies can be compared in terms of their similarity with regard to causally relevant factors to explain why one particular analogy is chosen over the others.

The first group of cases centers on U.S. policy towards continental expansion before the Civil War, especially U.S. policy towards the possible acquisition of Texas. The first case included in this group is an examination of the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819, in which the United States recognized Texas as Spanish and assumed responsibility for monetary claims held against Spain by U.S. citizens, in return for Spain's cession of Florida and Spain's resignation of its claims to the Pacific Northwest in favor of the United States. Then, this group of cases continues with an examination of U.S. policy towards the possibility of acquiring the newly independent Republic of Texas after Texas declared its independence from Mexico in 1836.

While both the Adams-Onís Treaty and the question of annexing the Republic of Texas involved the continental expansion of the United States, the political dynamic driving U.S. policy during these two periods was quite different as a result of the different analogies the policy makers of the day saw as relevant. At the time of the Adams-Onís Treaty, America had just barely avoided disaster in the War of 1812 and the opposition Federalist Party was crumbling at home. These two factors combined to make U.S. policy towards expansion more important for the international interests of the Monroe administration than its domestic interests. As a result, the administration searched for an international analogy and settled on the British invasion of Florida during the recent war as the most causally similar and thus the best guide to its current discussions with Spain regarding the south-west border of the United States. The central lesson of this analogy was that Florida was much more important to the security of the United States than Texas, so Monroe and his Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams, were willing to trade claims to Texas for rights to Florida as a way of creating secure boundaries for the United States by keeping European powers, especially Great Britain, a safe distance from the United States.

However, by 1836, the growing competitiveness of the developing second party system and America's increasing international strength combined to make the question of expansion more of a domestic issue than an international one. The central threat facing policy makers ceased being the danger of being boxed in by Great Britain, but the danger that the question of expansion would excite the sectionally divisive slavery issue and thus endanger the future of the existing

national party structures and possibly the Union. As a result, a domestic analogy came to the fore, and the policy makers of the day judged that the Missouri Crisis analogy, referring to the bitter debate over the admission of Missouri as a slave state and the resulting Compromise of 1820, to be the most causally similar and thus the soundest guide for action. The lesson learned from this experience, and the lesson that U.S. foreign policy makers used to determine their policy towards the possible annexation of the newly independent Republic of Texas, was that any discussion of the divisive extension of slavery issue threatened to overturn the existing national party structures in favor of sectional divisions. This was seen as a threat or an opportunity depending on a policy maker's position within those national political structures. Those with a stake in the continuation of that system saw it as a threat and endeavored to keep the Texas issue out of politics, and those whose careers could be advanced by upsetting those structures saw it as an opportunity, and endeavored to place the Texas issue on the political agenda.

Both the Adams-Onís Treaty and U.S. policy towards the Republic of Texas, can be subdivided into different cases. The bulk of the negotiations surrounding the Adams-Onís Treaty took place before the explosion of the Missouri Crisis debates, but due to delays over ratification in Spain, final ratification in the U.S. Senate does not come until after the Missouri Crisis. Thus, it is interesting to divide this case into two parts; the events that took place before the heat of the Missouri debates and the events that took place during and after these debates. The purpose of this division is to determine if the experience of the

Missouri crisis changed the terms of the debate over the merits of the treaty. Did policy makers alter their position on the treaty as a result of the experience of the Missouri Crisis and the lessons that debate taught them? If so or if not, what does that tell us about the analogical selection process? What determined whether the Missouri Crisis would or would not replace the Florida invasion as the dominant analogy?

American policy after 1836 can also be usefully subdivided. Here the division would center on the differences between the handling of this issue by the Jackson and Van Buren administrations versus the stance of the Tyler administration. This division is enlightening because while Jackson and Van Buren were leaders of an intersectional political party, Tyler, who rises to the Presidency after the death of President Harrison, was an outsider to the two dominant national political parties. Tyler finds himself a president without a party and his only chance of remaining in power after the next election is to disrupt the existing national coalitions. All three of these men accepted the lessons of the Missouri Crisis as the soundest base for policy towards expansion, but their different positions within the national political coalitions led them to very different policies. Jackson and Van Buren, to protect the stability of the national coalitions that put them in power, take the lesson of the Missouri Crisis as a warning to avoid any discussion of the Texas issue, while Tyler, a party outsider, sees raising the issue as an opportunity to better his future domestic standing by disrupting these coalitions.

This difference points out an interesting hole in the literature on analogies and foreign policy. Analogies are important in the policy

making process because they predispose decision makers towards a certain policy option. In the existing literature it is assumed that a particular lesson will predispose all policy makers to the same option.[76] However, the differences between the policies of the Jackson/Van Buren administrations and the Tyler administration show that this assumption is invalid; policy makers starting from the same lessons can arrive at different policy options because of the different domestic political positions they hold. This gap is a result of the assumption discussed earlier that all foreign policy makers are primarily concerned with maximizing their country's international gains. As a result of this assumption, all policy makers within a state are seen as being in the same basic political position. They all have an equal interest in improving the state's international position and any policy that furthers that interest for one of them, furthers that interest for all of them. However, because policy makers find themselves in different positions domestically, a policy that furthers one's interest in remaining in power may not further another's interest in remaining in power. In this case, Jackson and Van Buren's positions as leaders of a national party meant that their domestic interests were better served by a policy that avoided the disruption of their intersectional coalition, while Tyler's position as an outsider to those national parties meant that his domestic interests were best served by a policy that disrupted the existing intersectional coalitions. All three

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[76]It may be useful here to distinguish between particular lessons and what analogy name they go under. In this sentence I am referring to the actual lessons people have drawn, rather than the analogical name policy makers may give these lessons. Policy makers may disagree over what the true lessons of any particular event may be, and therefore they could come to different policies based on analogies with the same name. For example, two people could come to different policies based on the Vietnam analogy because they disagree over what the particular lessons of Vietnam are. In this case these people are merely calling different lessons the same name. What I am focusing on here is the possibility of two people agreeing on the same exact lessons, but still coming to different policy stances.

looked to the lessons of the Missouri Crisis to determine what type of policy would further their domestic interests. All three agreed that the central lesson of the Missouri Crisis was that a debate over of continental expansion would disrupt existing political coalitions. However, the different political positions they found themselves in ensured that this lesson would lead Jackson and Van Buren to different policies than Tyler.[77] This is a possibility that the existing literature has overlooked.

One benefit of this group of cases is that it explores a period in the history of U.S. foreign policy that is relatively neglected. This neglect is especially pronounced in the literature on historical analogies and foreign policy, which focuses almost exclusively on the post-World War II era. However, the primary benefit of this group of cases is that they provide an excellent opportunity to study a period where domestic political concerns were seen as somewhat more legitimate when dealing with issues of foreign policy than is usually the case. Domestic interests are normally denigrated as inappropriate motives for the conduct of foreign policy. However, in these cases, because the very future of the Union was seen as hanging in the balance, domestic interests were seen as more legitimate than is regularly the case.

This increased legitimacy is important for a study that focuses on the role of domestic analogies in determining a state's foreign policy.

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[77]While both Jackson and Van Buren were Democrats and Tyler was nominally a Whig, these different policy stances can be attributed to their respective positions as insiders and outsiders to the existing national coalitions rather than their partisan labels. Indeed if partisan affiliation has an influence on stances towards expansion, its influence would probably push in the opposite direction as proponents of expansion were more likely to be members of the Democratic party and opponents of expansion were more likely to be in the Whig party. The behavior of Whig leader Henry Clay also supports the argument that it is this insider/outsider status that was the key variable, not partisan identification. Clay, who, like Jackson and Van Buren was the leader of the national coalition, also attempted to protect his intersectional coalition by avoiding the question of the annexation of Texas.

To see why, consider the type of evidence an analyst needs to produce to effectively demonstrate the impact of historical analogies on a state's foreign policy. Any analysis that focuses on beliefs can rely on two different methods of building evidence in support of the assertion that a policy maker's ideas influence policy. These two methods are the congruence method and process tracing.[78] While the congruence procedure is relatively unaffected by the legitimacy or illegitimacy of different ideas, the same can not be said of the process tracing method. The process tracing method, because it relies heavily on the documentary record, is dependent on the willingness of policy makers to openly voice their concerns. As a result, the legitimacy or illegitimacy of different ideas can affect the results of the process tracing method.

The essence of the congruence method is to look for consistency between the content of a policy maker's beliefs and their actions. In the case of historical analogies, this means checking for consistency between the lessons of a historical analogy and the decision maker's policy choice. This consistency judgment can be made without reference to the documentary record. An analyst can judge whether a certain set of ideas was consistent with a certain policy without reference to what policy makers were saying or thinking. If this consistency exists, there is at least the possibility that the policy maker's ideas played a causal role. However, by itself, this consistency is insufficient as evidence that these historical analogies did play a causal role. The primary problem is the danger of spurious correlations. To guard against making faulty casual

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[78]On these two methods see, George, "The Causal Nexus," pp. 105-119, and Khong, *Analogies at War*, pp. 64-68.

claims based on spurious consistency, the congruence method can be supplemented with process tracing.

Alexander George defines process tracing as the "attempt to trace the process-the intervening steps-by which beliefs influence behavior."[79] To demonstrate the importance of analogies on foreign policy, an analyst must show more than that the policies chosen were consistent with the analogy. Through process tracing the analyst must also show that the analogy was on the mind of the decision maker, that the policy maker did define the current situation in terms of the analogy, and that the lessons he derived from the analogy did lead him to a particular option.

The only way an analyst can apply this process tracing method is to use the documentary record left by policy makers. What do their speeches, letters, memos, conversations, etc., tell us about the influence of a particular analogy on their decisions? Here is where a concern with the legitimacy of different ideas or arguments becomes crucial. If certain analogies or motives are considered illegitimate, policy makers are unlikely to voice them. The danger is that in cases where domestic concerns and domestic analogies were seen as illegitimate, they would not be as openly discussed as international ones. This would result in there being little evidence in the documentary record for the importance of illegitimate domestic concerns and analogies. This would give internationally focused analogies a clear archival advantage. If policy makers are unwilling to leave documentary evidence of the role that domestic analogies may have played in their decision making, anyone

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[79]George, "The Causal Nexus," p. 113. In addition see Alexander George and Timothy McKeown, "Case Studies and Theories of Organizational Decision Making," *Advances in Informational Processing in Organization* 2 (1985), pp. 34-41.

attempting to demonstrate the importance of these illegitimate concerns would be working under a severe handicap. In fact, Khong invokes this archival disadvantage as a reason why students of analogies and foreign policy should ignore domestic analogies and focus exclusively on international ones.[80]

While Khong is correct in noting this possible bias in any paper trail that is likely to be available, this is no reason to ignore the possible impact of domestic politics. Rather than ignore the possible role of domestic analogies in the policy making process because of this problem, the first group of cases studied here has been chosen to help alleviate this disadvantage. This group, which focuses on U.S. policy towards continental expansion before the Civil War, can help mitigate this documentary handicap because the domestic consequences of expansion at this time were so serious--involving the possible dissolution of the Union and Civil War--talking about the domestic consequences of different foreign policies was seen as legitimate. This legitimacy will help level the playing field between international and domestic analogies and thus make the role of domestic analogies in the policy making process easier to assess.[81]

The second group of cases focuses on the policy of the United States towards Iran and the issue of American hostages. The seizure of the American embassy in Tehran on November 4, 1979, presented an

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[80]Khong argues that the analogical approach should limit itself to international analogies because: "Until decision-makers are willing to leave behind records that indicate the true extent to which domestic politics permeate decisions. . . the role of international strategic considerations. . . will probably be easier to asses." *Analogies At War*, pp. 200-205.

[81]While this helps, it does not completely eliminate the handicap. For example, it was still easier for a policy maker to speak publicly about the future stability of the Union than it was for that policy maker to voice his worries about the future stability of the political party that he belonged to.

international threat to the United States and a domestic threat to the Carter Presidency. Failing to quickly secure the release of the hostages or being forced to give in to the terrorists would make the United States look weak internationally and Jimmy Carter look inept domestically. To figure out what policy would best protect the U.S.'s international interests and the administration's domestic interests, Carter and his associates turned to the lessons of the recent past that dealt with international hostage taking, such as the *Pueblo*, *Mayaguez* and Entebbe analogies. Throughout the crisis, the Carter administration relied on historical analogies when formulating its policy. However, the particular analogy the administration saw as relevant changed over time.

Carter's handling of the Iranian Hostage Crisis is divided here into four main sections corresponding to significant changes either in the information available to administration regarding the cause and effect relations that were currently operative or significant changes in the levels of international and domestic threats facing the administration. As expected by the model of analogical choice offered in this chapter, as the Carter administration learned more about the existing cause and effect relations and as the relative level of international and domestic threats varied, its judgment concerning what particular historical lesson provided the soundest basis for action changed and as a result Carter's policies changed. The chapter on the Hostage Crisis documents how and explains why the Carter administration, first saw the embassy seizure as analogous the earlier seizure of the Tehran embassy in February of 1979 and as a result adopted a policy of relying on the Iranian government to resolve the crisis, how it subsequently turned to the Angus Ward and

Pueblo analogies and adopted a policy of negotiation, how it later accepted the *Mayaguez* and Entebbe analogies as the soundest guide for action and decided to launch a military rescue attempt, and how finally, after the failure of the rescue attempt, it returned to the Ward and *Pueblo* analogies and was eventually able to negotiate an end to the crisis.

U.S. policy towards the Hostage Crisis provides further support for the model of analogical choice presented here by confirming: One, the importance of the international/domestic threat distinction as Carter's domestically focused advisers emphasized domestic historical lessons and Carter's internationally focused advisers focused on international analogies and: Two, the importance of causal relations and analogical freedom of choice, as the military planning for a rescue attempt centered on making the current situation more causally similar to the Israeli raid on Entebbe, so they could use that analogy as a valid guide for action.

Also studied in this group of cases on U.S. policy towards Iran and U.S. hostages held abroad is the Reagan administration's policy towards Iran regarding American hostages held in Lebanon, which culminated in the Iran-Contra affair. While this case does not support the model of analogical choice presented here, it does suggest that historical analogies may play an important role in the decision making process that has been altogether missed by the dominant rationalist approach to the lessons of history and foreign policy. This chapter demonstrates the limitations of the rationalist approach to analogies that treats the interests of the actors as exogenously given and sees historical analogies solely as cognitive devices that help translate these pre-existing

interests into specific policy decisions. In this case, a historical analogy did not simply tell Reagan what policy would help realize his pre-existing interests; instead it helped define what Reagan saw his interests as being. More specifically, Reagan defined his Presidency in opposition to what he saw as the failure of the Carter administration to quickly secure the release of the American captives during the Hostage Crisis, which led Reagan to define his interests in such a way that getting the hostages in Lebanon freed was more important than protecting the international standing of the United States or his own domestic standing. This analogy-induced definition of interests led the Reagan administration to the controversial and ultimately costly policy of trading arms for hostages.

CONCLUSION

When faced with a novel foreign policy problem, policy makers often turn to historical analogies for guidance. To better understand the sources of foreign policy, the role played by these historical analogies in the decision making process must be examined. The analogical approach provides a vital complement to the interest based explanations that dominate the study of the sources of foreign policy. These interest based explanations come in a number of different forms; realist explanations that focus on national interests, Marxist explanations that focus on economic interests, bureaucratic explanations that focus on organizational interests, and domestic explanations that focus on a policy maker's interest in remaining in power at home. The chief weakness of

all these interest based explanations is their inability to specify how an actor's interests lead to preferences for some policies over others. This is a problem that a focus on historical analogies can help solve. By themselves, a policy maker's interests do not directly give rise to specific policy preferences. Given the ambiguity and complexity of the policy making environment, it is often unclear what policy will, in fact, further a decision maker's interests. The particular option a policy maker will see as in her best interests depends not only on those interests, but also on her definition of the situation and her appraisal of the expected costs and benefits of different policy options. Analogies affect the decision making process by providing the policy maker with this type of information, which helps the policy maker decide what specific policy will best further her interests. Thus, the analogical approach taken here complements the dominant interest based approaches to foreign policy by demonstrating how an actor's objective interests get translated into specific policy preferences.

The vital role played by historical analogies in the policy making process leads directly to the central question addressed in this dissertation; namely, which analogies matter? As policy makers turn to historical analogies for guidance, to which analogies will they turn? Given the far-reaching impact that foreign policy questions often have domestically, as well as internationally, one main argument of this chapter is that the analogical approach to foreign policy can not ignore domestic politics. Policy makers will seek analogies that give them information regarding both the internal and the international repercussions of their policy choices. The cases that follow are attempts

to demonstrate the utility of viewing analogies from a domestic as well as an international perspective. Collectively, the cases show it is often impossible to explain a state's foreign policy without reference to the domestic interests of the policy makers and the domestic analogies they use to figure out what policies will best further those interests. Thus, domestic analogies certainly matter.

However, simply placing domestic analogies in the mix with international ones does not answer the question of which specific lessons of history a policy maker is likely to apply in any particular situation. To address this crucial question, this chapter has proposed a three step model of analogical choice.

The first step in this model consists of compiling a list of salient historical analogies that a policy maker is likely to be familiar with. This list represents a policy maker's mental reservoir of historical analogies from which he is most likely to draw particular historical lessons. The existing literature on analogies and foreign policy is useful in explaining how this list of salient historical analogies can be constructed. Other things being equal, this stockpile of historical analogies is likely to consist of recent historical events, events that occurred during the formative years of a policy maker's political career, and events that were emotionally involving because they were personally experienced or because they had important consequences for a policy maker or his state.

While compiling this list of salient historical analogies is a useful first step, it does not provide a complete answer to the question of which particular analogy a policy maker is likely to base his policies on. Any

such list is going to consist of a number of different candidate analogies--which analogy from this repertoire is the policy maker going to choose? Drawing on insights gleaned from the psychological literature on analogical reasoning and departing from the existing literature on analogies and foreign policy, the second and third steps in the model of analogical choice presented here answer this question by focusing on the interests of the decision maker who is drawing the analogy. Policy makers employ analogies as "road maps" that give them causal information regarding the expected consequences of different policies. This information allows decision makers to determine what particular policy will best further their interests. The model of analogical choice offered here exploits this fact by using the policy maker's interests to explain what analogy will be seen as relevant.

Step two, in the model offered here, consists of using the particular interests a policy maker is looking to advance to help explain the choice of a specific analogy. The interests a policy maker is looking to further will determine the type of information sought from an analogy, and therefore the particular analogy selected. In this model, policy makers are seen as having two broad sets of interests; international interests that center on improving the state's international status (the national interest), and domestic interests that center on advancing the policy maker's domestic political position. Whether a policy maker sees a current foreign policy question as more relevant to his international or domestic interests will help determine what analogy he will see as relevant. In those cases where a policy maker is facing a threat or opportunity to his international interests, he will look in his

repertoire for analogies that contain information about the international consequences of different foreign policies. Conversely, for a policy maker facing an opportunity or threat to his domestic interests, the pertinent question for him is, what are the domestic implications of the different options? As a result, only analogies that contain information about cause and effect relationships in the domestic arena will be relevant for him. Thus, the interests a policy maker is looking to further will narrow the range of relevant analogies. Instead of choosing from his entire stockpile of analogies, a policy maker will only choose analogies that speak to the particular interests he is looking to further.

The third step in the model presented here centers on how a policy maker selects a particular analogy from this subset of internationally or domestically focused salient analogies. Whether a policy maker is hoping to further his international or domestic interests, those interests will be best served by an analogy that gives him the most accurate information concerning the possible consequences of different policies. This will shape the analogical choice process by leading the decision maker to focus on the factors in the candidate analogies that were central in causing the outcomes in those cases, and base his policy on the lessons from the analogy whose causally relevant factors are most similar to what is known about the current problem he is facing. Such an analogy is going to be selected by the policy maker because only a historical event where similar cause and effect relations were operating is likely to provide the policy maker with useful information concerning the possible ramifications of his current policy options. Thus, from this subset of internationally focused or domestically focused analogies, the

decision maker is expected to apply the analogy whose causally relevant factors are best represented in what is known about the situation at hand.

The case studies that follow are attempts to assess the utility of the model of analogical choice presented here. Do policy makers choose their historical analogies from a relatively small set of salient analogies? Do policy makers select internationally or domestically focused analogies based upon the particular interests they are trying to further? Do policy makers choose particular historical analogies based on the similarity between what is known about the current situation and the factors that were seen as causally important in driving the outcomes of previous events? And most importantly, does the analogical approach offered here help explain foreign policy?

CHAPTER TWO
THE HISTORICAL REPERTOIRE: 1815-1845

One of the central questions that an analogical approach to decision making must answer is why do policy makers select the analogies they do? Out of an entire universe of possibilities, why do policy makers select particular historical events and lessons to base their policy on? The first step that needs to be taken in answering this question is to recognize that all historical analogies are not created equal; instead of choosing from the entire range of historical possibilities, policy makers are most likely to select their lessons of history from a much smaller collection of cases. The existing literature on historical analogies and foreign policy explains how these personal repertoires of historical lessons are constructed. As discussed in Chapter One, recent events, events that occur during the early stages of a policy maker's political career, and events that are emotionally involving because they have important consequences for a policy maker or his country are most likely to be used as a source of lessons.

The purpose of this chapter is to use these ideas to compile a short list of salient historical analogies for the policy makers charged with formulating U.S. policy towards western expansion for the thirty years between 1815 and 1845. This list represents the mental reservoir of historical analogies relevant to continental expansion from which policy makers are most likely to draw historical lessons. The four analogies

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examined here include two analogies, the Hartford Convention and the Missouri Crisis, that focus on the domestic ramifications of different policies related to western expansion; and two analogies, the Louisiana Purchase and the British invasion of Florida, that focus on the international repercussions of different policies related to western expansion. These four events all satisfy the conditions listed above for salient historical analogies. The list includes the most stunning foreign policy success of the young republic, two traumatic events from the recent War of 1812, and the most serious domestic crisis in the short history of the country. Moreover, many of the policy makers who would hold positions of power in the case studies that follow played prominent roles in these events.

THE LOUISIANA PURCHASE

"We did not, by our intrigues produce the [European] war; but we availed ourselves of it when it happened"

-Thomas Jefferson[1]

In the course of the western expansion of the young American republic, the acquisition of the Louisiana territory from France in 1803 eclipses all other events. With the purchase of the city of New Orleans and a vast extent of territory west of the Mississippi, the Jefferson administration doubled the size of the country, effected the withdrawal of France from North America, and secured U.S. control over the

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[1]Jefferson to Horatio Gates, July 11, 1803 in Paul L. Ford, ed., *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson* 10 vols. (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1892-1899) vol. 8, p. 250 (Hereafter: Ford, *Writings of TJ*).

Mississippi River and much of the interior of the continent.[2] Given the significance of the Louisiana Purchase, the policy makers who directed the foreign policy of the United States in the first half of the nineteenth century would certainly be familiar with it and the lessons it taught regarding the territorial expansion of the United States. This section briefly explores those lessons.

The immediate impetus behind the negotiations that resulted in the Louisiana Purchase were rumors that Spain had ceded many of its North American possessions to France, coupled with the temporary closure of the port of New Orleans. President Jefferson instructed the U.S. representatives in France and Spain to find out what they could about the cession and inquire into the possibility of acquiring New Orleans and West Florida.[3] While the Jefferson administration was content to see New Orleans and the lands bordering on the Mississippi remain in the hands of Spain, they viewed the transfer of those territories to the more powerful France as an ominous development.[4]

The importance of the Mississippi for the commerce of the United States made use of that port the overriding concern of the Jefferson administration throughout the negotiations. On all issues besides gaining access to New Orleans, the administration was willing to be patient.

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[2]For two excellent accounts of the Louisiana Purchase see, Alexander DeConde, *This Affair of Louisiana* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976) and Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson, *Empire of Liberty: The Statecraft of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 88-171. For an account that stresses the role of James Monroe in the negotiations see Henry Ammon, *James Monroe: The Quest For National Identity* (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1971), pp. 203-220.

[3]DeConde, *This Affair of Louisiana*, pp. 110-111 and Ammon, *James Monroe*, pp. 203-205.

[4]DeConde, *This Affair of Louisiana*, p. 84; Noble E. Cunningham, Jr. *In Pursuit of Reason: The Life of Thomas Jefferson* (Baton Rouge: The Louisiana State University Press, 1987), pp. 259-260; Merril D. Peterson, *Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation: A Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 745-746; and Dumas Malone, *Jefferson The President: First Term, 1801-1805* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1970) vol. 4 of *Jefferson and His Time*, pp. 249-250.

Though the administration was more than happy to buy New Orleans and the vast territory west of the Mississippi after France offered to sell it, that was not the primary goal of the administration. While the administration hoped to get as much as it could, in all likelihood, only the closing of the Mississippi to U.S. shipping would have pushed the administration to the immediate use of force.

Jefferson's strategy in the negotiations was to play for time. As long as New Orleans remained open to U.S. commerce, he believed that time was on the side of the United States and that therefore there was no pressing need to take any precipitate actions. With the growing power of the United States, the steady expansion of U.S. commerce and the press of U.S. citizens moving westward, Jefferson trusted that America only had to wait for troubles in Europe to arise in order to conclude an advantageous treaty. Once France again found itself embroiled in a serious European conflict, Jefferson maintained that France would be eager to befriend the United States by agreeing to a treaty favorable to America. The President saw no reason to make any significant concessions in the negotiations because he believed America could achieve its goals at a later time without such costly measures. The United States only had to wait for trouble in Europe and then be prepared to take advantage of it.[5]

Jefferson's strategy of delay worked and resulted in one of the most remarkable foreign policy successes in history. With war looming in Europe and Napoleon's dream of a North American empire

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[5]On Jefferson's strategy throughout the negotiations see Tucker and Hendrickson, *Empire of Liberty*, pp. 93, 114-122, 125-126 and 133; Cunningham, *In Pursuit of Reason*, pp. 264-265; Malone, *Jefferson The President*, pp. 286-287; and Peterson, *Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation*, pp. 748-754.

foundering as a result of a costly revolt in Santo Domingo, Napoleon was eager to mend his fences with a potentially valuable ally across the Atlantic by liquidating his possessions in America for cash that he desperately needed.[6] The agreement reached on April 30, 1803, gave the United States the entire Louisiana territory, whose exact boundaries would remain a source of controversy, in exchange for 15 million dollars.[7] Though this was a significant sum of money, the agreement was an astonishing victory for Jefferson's diplomacy. Without going to war, without allying with Great Britain or with France, and without making concessions regarding future expansion, Jefferson succeeded in gaining control of the Mississippi and doubling the size of the nation.[8]

What lessons would policy makers draw from this important foreign policy victory? When the successors of Jefferson faced decisions regarding an issue involving western expansion, what type of policy would the Louisiana Purchase analogy prescribe? Because Jefferson's triumph came not as a result of military force that the United States had applied (as opposed to merely threatened) nor from concessions that the United States was prepared to make, but as a result of seizing the opportunity offered by turmoil in Europe, the overriding lesson of the

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[6]On Napoleon's troubles see DeConde, *This Affair of Louisiana*, pp. 147-159.

[7]Only eleven and a quarter of a million dollars would go directly to France, the remainder of the money was used to cover American claims against France.

[8]If Jefferson was forced into significant concessions in acquiring Louisiana those concessions were not made to France but to his own political principles. In gaining Louisiana, Jefferson was forced to acquiesce in what he saw as a violation of the strict construction of the Constitution and of states rights. Jefferson saw the sacrifice as worth it because he believed this vast addition of available land would protect the republican experiment by allowing the United States to remain an agrarian and commercial nation and not an industrial one. On these points see Barry J. Balleck, "When The Ends Justify The Means: Thomas Jefferson and the Louisiana Purchase" *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 22, 4 (Fall 1992): 679-696; David A. Carson, "Blank Paper of the Constitution: The Louisiana Purchase Debates" *The Historian* 54,3 (Spring 1992): 477-490; Forrest McDonald, *The Presidency of Thomas Jefferson* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1976), p. 71; Drew R. McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1980), pp. 196-208; and Tucker and Hendrickson, *Empire of Liberty*, pp. 162-171.

Louisiana Purchase was that the United States need not pay any significant costs in its march westward. There was no reason to build a huge armed force, engage in costly military action, or make significant concessions to a foreign nation. The better policy, the one that had worked for Jefferson, was to simply bide time and wait for tensions in Europe to increase and then reap the benefits of the desire of the European powers to benefit from friendly relations with the growing power of the new world.

The Louisiana Purchase analogy supported the view that, in an image popular at the time, the western territories would eventually fall like ripe fruit into the hands of the United States. There was no need to make important concessions to foreign countries or expend resources on military measures to gain what would accrue to the United States in time at virtually no cost. In short, if policy makers followed the lessons of the Louisiana Purchase they would be unwilling to utilize military force or make significant concessions to reach an agreement that would allow the United States to expand its borders. They could afford to ask for much and offer little in their negotiations with foreign powers because, in time, conflict in Europe would force the European powers to court the United States.[9]

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[9]On the lessons of the Louisiana Purchase see Tucker and Hendrickson, *Empire of Liberty*, pp. 145-156.

THE BRITISH INVASION OF FLORIDA DURING THE WAR OF 1812

The second internationally focused analogy examined in this chapter focuses on British activities in Florida during the War of 1812. In the middle of 1812 and again in early 1813, the U.S. Senate refused to give the Madison adminstration authorization to occupy Spanish controlled Florida arguing that no immediate threat existed there. However, by the middle of 1814 the threat that the Senate had just, on two separate occaisions, decided did not exist, began to take shape just outside the southern border of the United States as Spanish Florida was to become an important British military base during the War of 1812.

Florida was to play a crucial role in British plans to reduce the entire southern and western portions of the United States. First, having military bases so close to the southern border of the United States gave the British the capability to arm native American tribes and escaped slaves in the vicinity of the southern frontier and direct them in battle against the United States. With the British providing them with needed supplies, such forces would present a serious threat to the entire southern frontier. Second, these bases in Florida could be used as launching points for the planned British attacks on New Orleans and the southern portion of the Atlantic coast.[10]

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[10]The following account of the British activities in Florida during the war relies most heavily on Frank Lawrence Owsley, Jr., *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands: The Creek War and the Battle of New Orleans, 1812-1815* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1981) and Robert Remini's research on General Andrew Jackson's role in the Creek War and the War of 1812 in *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Empire, 1767-1821* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977). See also Hubert Bruce Fuller, *The Purchase of Florida: Its History and Diplomacy* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press,

Great Britain's attempt to use Spanish Florida against the United States began on May 10, 1814, when British forces landed in Florida and took control of the area near the mouth of the Apalachicola River. Running short on supplies, the British forces moved westward towards Pensacola and by August 1814, British forces under the command of Major Edward Nicholls were in control of that city and the nearby forts. Spanish authorities were not happy with these British violations of their neutrality, but their relative powerlessness, their reliance on British assistance against France in Europe, and fears that the United States would soon invade the province left them little choice but to accept and at times welcome the British occupation.[11]

From Pensacola, Nicholls endeavored to create an imposing military force by recruiting and arming the native Americans and escaped slaves in the area and forming them into an army under British command. On August 29, 1814, Nicholls issued a proclamation welcoming any individuals disaffected with the United States to join him in his attack. Slavery and U.S. policy towards native Americans ensured a steady supply of disaffected individuals. Nicholls announced that he was "at the head of a large body of Indians, well armed, disciplined, and commanded by British officers" who, with the help of the British fleet, would soon invade the Southwest.[12] Nicholls also attempted to recruit

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1964), pp. 203-210; Owsley, "British and Indian Activities in Spanish West Florida During The War of 1812" *Florida Historical Quarterly* 46,2 (October 1967): 111-123; French Ensor Chadwick, *The Relations of the United States and Spain* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), pp. 116-119; and Robert Leckie, *From Sea To Shining Sea: From The War of 1812 to the Mexican War, the Saga of America's Expansionism* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), pp. 347-348, and 368.

[11]Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, pp. 104-107.

[12]Nicholls proclamation of August 29, 1814 can be found in the *Annals of the Congress of the United States*, (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1855) 15 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 2, pp. 1949-1950. (Hereafter simply *Annals*.) See also pp. 1948-1968 for other documents concerning Nicholls activities in Florida.

Jean Lafitte and his band of privateers/pirates to join the British cause.[13] By far, the largest number of recruits Nicholls was able to enlist in his army were members of the Creek nation who had fled to Spanish Florida to escape the army of General Andrew Jackson, which had just recently concluded the Creek War. The United States was fortunate that Jackson had been able to destroy much of the Creek nation before the British and their abundant supplies had arrived in Florida or else the it would have faced a far more formidable force in 1814.[14]

By September of 1814, Nicholls was ready to put his army in motion and with the assistance of the British fleet he launched a joint land and sea attack on Fort Bowyer, which guarded the city of Mobile. Nicholls's attack failed and he was forced to retreat to Pensacola. However, the attack was alarming enough to propel General Jackson into action against the no longer hypothetical threat of a British invasion from Florida.[15] In Jackson's explanation for his unauthorized decision to cross into Spanish Florida to drive the British from Pensacola can be seen an early version of what was to become the central lesson of the War of 1812 regarding the protection of the southern frontier: namely, that Florida in the hands of a foreign power will be a constant source of danger as it could easily be used as a base to incite the native Americans in the area to war and to launch attacks against the southern portion of the Union.

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[13]Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, pp. 107-109.

[14]Again, Owsley's *Struggle For The Gulf Borderlands* and Remini's *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Empire*, offer the best accounts of the Creek War. Both express a certain degree of doubt that the United States would have been able to withstand the combined efforts of the British and Creeks if Jackson had not largely destroyed the Creek nation before the British arrived, see Owsley, p. 190 and Remini, pp. 216 and 305.

[15]On the attack on Mobile, see Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, pp. 109-112.

As I act without the orders of the government, I deem it proper to state my reasons for it. I trust sir, that the necessity of this act, to the safety of this section of the Union; the hostility of the Governor of Pensacola--resigning his forts to the British Commander; thus assuming the character of a British territory: his permitting them to remain there, to fit out one expedition against the United States, return there and refit; now to be preparing another: added to this his having acknowledged that he has armed the Indians, sent them into our territory, capturing our citizens and destroying their property, and this too under a British officer, will be a sufficient justification in the eyes of my government.[16]

Jackson moved quickly and on November 7, 1814, he drove the British out of Pensacola and forced them back to the Apalachicola. The British destroyed the fortifications of the city and after driving the British away Jackson abandoned the now defenseless city and returned to Mobile. Jackson's victory was to have far-reaching consequences. Originally the British had planned on taking the city of Mobile and from there marching overland to New Orleans. However, the defeat of Nicholls's offensive and the reinforcements Jackson had placed at Mobile convinced the British to change their plans and opt for a direct assault on New Orleans.[17]

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[16]Andrew Jackson to James Monroe, October 26, 1814. In Harold D. Moser (chief editor) *The Papers of Andrew Jackson* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1991) vol. 3, pp. 173-174. (Hereafter simply Moser, *Papers of AJ.*)

[17]Owsley, *The Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, pp. 112-119, 124 and 134.

The decision to launch an amphibious assault directly on New Orleans did not mean that the British forces in Florida would sit this round out. Instead, Nicholls continued to use his base around the Apalachicola as a staging area for raids across the border and the British fleet used bases on the eastern coast of Spanish Florida to harass the southern portion of the Atlantic coast. The British hoped that these tactics would force the Americans to spread their forces across the frontier and therefore dilute the strength of the defenses around New Orleans.[18]

Following the British defeat at the hands of General Jackson in the famous Battle of New Orleans, Florida again took center-stage in the British war plans. Their defeat at New Orleans led them to return to their original plan of taking Mobile and then moving on to New Orleans. Nicholls continued to work from his base near the Apalachicola and was instructed to support a new attack on Mobile. The British did succeed in capturing Fort Bowyer outside Mobile, but news of the recently signed peace treaty ended any further assaults.[19] However, the peace treaty did not end all British activities in Florida. Even after the war was over Major Nicholls remained in Florida and continued to arm the Creeks and other tribes in the area, though the British government subsequently disowned his actions. When Nicholls finally departed from Florida he also left a large number of escaped slaves, who had joined him during the War, in charge of a well supplied and heavily armed fort on the Apalachicola. This position, soon to acquire the name of Negro fort,

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[18]Owsley, *The Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, pp. 134-136 and Fuller, *The Purchase of Florida*, pp. 205.

[19]Owsley, *The Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, pp. 171-177.

continued to exist long after the war as the Spanish were too weak to do anything about it.[20]

The experience of the War of 1812 profoundly affected how the United States thought about its security and more specifically how it viewed the role played by Florida in that security. As Samuel Flagg Bemis argues,

> too many spectacular events had attested to the strategical
> dangers of these collapsing Spanish provinces. . . .
> [Britain's] invasion of West Florida during the War of
> 1812, and alliance with the Indians there; the . . . designs to
> stir up a slave rebellion in the Southern states; and
> finally the military campaigns against the Mississippi Valley
> that ended in the Battle of New Orleans. Both Great Britain
> and France must be kept out of Florida. It did not need an
> Adams to see that. . . . The War of 1812 had demonstrated
> the vital danger of foreign intervention in that Spanish
> borderland.[21]

Policy makers use analogies to help them determine which particular policies will best further their interests. For those decision makers interested in protecting America's security, the lessons from the War of 1812 made one policy quite clear: It was vital for the security of the country that Florida be placed under the control of the United States. If Florida was allowed to remain in foreign hands, the southern portion

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[20]Owsley, *The Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, pp. 178-185 and Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Empire*, pp. 301-307.

[21]*John Quincy Adams and The Foundations of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949), p. 302. See also Owsley's, *The Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, where he maintains that "For several years as a result [of the war], British activities in Florida were viewed with much alarm in the United States," p. 183.

of the country would have to live under the constant threat of invasion by a foreign power and would be faced with a state of perpetual warfare with the native Americans in Florida.[22] The following chapter will demonstrate how this lesson helped determine U.S. policy towards Spain that resulted in the signing of the Adams-Onís Treaty.

THE HARTFORD CONVENTION

"The Hartford Convention is a perpetual *memento mori* [reminder of death] to every deliberate projector of disunion throughout this confederate republic"

-John Quincy Adams[23]

1814 was perhaps the bleakest year in the history of the United States. With Napoleon defeated in Europe, Great Britain was able to focus its entire energy on the war against its former colonies. With the national government teetering on the edge of bankruptcy, 1814 saw the entire coast blockaded by the most powerful navy in the world, parts of Maine under British occupation, British troops in Florida harassing the

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[22]As I mentioned in the first chapter, any historical analogy based on an event as broad as the War of 1812 is bound to contain many different lessons. This lesson is highlighted only because it bears directly on the question of territorial expansion. In addition to this lesson, policy makers also drew other lessons from the experience of the War of 1812 such as the need to maintain a larger standing army in peacetime and the need to have a fiscally sound national bank. On these lessons see, James Monroe to James Madison May 10, 1822 and Monroe to Andrew Jackson May 30, 1822 in Stanislaus Murray Hamilton, *The Writings of James Monroe* (New York: AMS Press, 1969) vol. 6, pp. 286-287 and 391-293; William Earl Weeks, *John Quincy Adams and American Global Empire* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1992), pp. 46-47; Noble E. Cunningham, Jr., *The Presidency of James Monroe* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996) pp. 13 and 82; and Robert V. Remini, *Henry Clay: Statesman For The Union* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1991), pp. 467.

[23]Reply to the Appeal of the Massachusetts Federalists, by John Quincy Adams in Henry Adams, ed., *Documents Relating To New-England Federalism: 1800-1815* (Boston: Little, Brown, And Company, 1877), p. 328.

entire Southern frontier and threatening New Orleans, and most disturbing of all, Washington D.C. had been captured and destroyed. By most measures, the War of 1812 seemed lost.[24]

It was during these dark days of 1814 that twenty-six New England Federalists, responding to public dissatisfaction towards the war, met in the city of Hartford to discuss ways of protecting New England from British attacks and altering the structure of the national government to ensure that the policies that had led to the current calamities would not be repeated.[25] Throughout the nation it was widely suspected that treason was the central item on the Hartford Convention's agenda. The aim of the Hartford Conventionists, it was feared, was to separate New England from the Union and conclude a separate peace with Great Britain. No matter how loudly the supporters of the Convention denied the accusations of disloyalty, the charge stuck. The epithet "Hartford Conventionist" would enter the American political lexicon to become a widely used term of reproach and the Hartford Convention would stand as a cautionary tale warning politicians of the dangers of placing sectional interests ahead of national ones.

The delegates who gathered at Hartford met amidst a background of strong sectional opposition to the Republican administrations of

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[24]James M. Banner, "A Shadow of Secession: The Hartford Convention, 1814" *History Today* 38 (September 1988), pp. 24-25. See also, Samuel Eliot Morison *The Life and Letters of Harrison Gray Otis: Federalist, 1765-1848* 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1913), vol. 2, pp. 96-97.
[25]On the background to the Hartford Convention see James M. Banner, Jr., *To The Hartford Convention: The Federalists and The Origins of Party Politics in Massachusetts, 1789-1815* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976). The best accounts of the convention itself can be found in Morison's *The Life and Letters of Harrison Gray Otis*, vol. 2, pp. 78-199 and his *Harrison Gray Otis, 1765-1848: The Urbane Federalist* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1969), pp. 353-399. For a more recent account of the Convention see Leckie, *From Sea to Shining Sea*, pp. 361-365. Theodore Dwight's *History of the Hartford Convention: With a Review of the Policy of the United States Government, Which led to the War of 1812* (New York: N & J White, 1833), written by the Secretary of the Convention is strikingly uninformative concerning the Convention itself and consists mostly of an indictment against what Federalists in New England saw as years of Republican misrule.

Jefferson and Madison. The war was only the latest and most damaging result of what New England Federalists saw as over a decade of Republican misrule. Even before the war, there was widespread opposition to the national government throughout the region as a result of the administration's maritime polices. Heavily dependent upon commerce, New England long felt victimized by Jefferson and Madison's restrictive trade policies. At the same time that New England was forced to bear the brunt of the costs of Jefferson's foreign policy, it also saw its voice in national affairs declining as a result of the Louisiana Purchase and other Jeffersonian policies that encouraged the growth of the West. The War of 1812, which they saw as a natural result of the misguided policies of Jefferson and Madison, only confirmed their opposition. With commerce destroyed as a result of the embargo and the war, parts of New England occupied by foreign troops, the threat of further invasions looming on the horizon, and little prospect for assistance from the national government, many New Englanders felt that the policies of the administration had ruined the economy, dragged them into a disastrous war, and then left them unprotected.[26]

The Hartford Convention was a result of a call issued by the Massachusetts legislature on October 17, 1814, to hold a convention of the New England states to respond to the war. The response of the other New England states to this call was mixed: Connecticut and Rhode Island agreed to send delegates to Hartford, but the legislatures of New Hampshire and Vermont decided to decline the invitation (although individual communities within those two states did decide to elect and

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[26]Morison, *The Life and Letters of Harrison Gray Otis*, vol. 2, pp. 80-99; Banner, *To The Hartford Convention*, pp. 84-121; and Dwight, *History of the Hartford Convention*, pp. 5-341.

send delegates to Hartford). However, interest in the convention was not limited to New England and news of the proposed assembly spread quickly throughout the country. If the reaction of New England to the call of the Massachusetts legislature was mixed, the same can not be said of the reaction outside New England. Throughout the rest of the nation, news of the convention was met with universal apprehension. Given the disheartening state of the war and the depth of New England's opposition to it, there was no telling how far the Convention might go. Fearing the worst, many believed that the Convention was a first step toward secession and a separate peace. These fears only increased as the delegates to the convention were invariably vague concerning what the ultimate aims of the convention were.[27]

The alarm that the news of the convention produced throughout the rest of the country is easy to understand. As Samuel Morison argues, given the disastrous course of the War of 1812, by "December, 1814, the Union was in danger, quite apart from any action that the Hartford Convention might take."[28] Moreover, even before the convention, evidence of New England's disaffection with the war was far from lacking. Segments of the population had been carrying out an illicit trade with the enemy throughout the war, there was strong resistance to the national government's attempts to amass funds through the raising of war loans, a number of the Northeastern states were continuing to refuse to put the state militias under national control, and there were a number of prominent newspapers and political figures

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[27]See J.C.A. Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War: Politics Diplomacy and Warfare in the Early American Republic, 1783-1830* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 472-479 and Morison, *The Life and Letters of Harrison Gray Otis*, pp. 126-128, and 110.
[28]*The Life and Letters of Harrison Gray Otis*, vol. 2, pp. 123.

throughout New England that were openly advocating the dissolution of the Union.[29] Events that were largely kept hidden from the public view also show that there was a solid basis for the fear that treason could be the outcome of the Hartford Convention. Harrison Gray Otis, the dominant figure at the convention, was being encouraged by prominent Federalists to consider secession at the convention, and the Governor of Massachusetts was in contact with British agents in Canada inquiring about the possibilities of a separate peace and British aid to New England in case of a dispute between New England and the rest of the United States.[30]

Concern over the course that the Hartford Convention would take reached the highest level of the U.S. government as both President Madison and Secretary of State James Monroe looked upon the proposed assembly with trepidation. The administration sent a special agent to Hartford to keep an eye on the convention's proceedings and made military preparations to insure that adequate forces would be on hand in case the Hartford Convention did issue a call for disunion.[31] Fortunately for the administration, these precautions proved unnecessary as the delegates to the Hartford Convention steered a moderate course. No secessionist plot was initiated and no overture to Great Britain for a

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[29]Irving Brant, *James Madison: Commander in Chief, 1812-1836* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company Inc., 1961), pp. 340-341 and 358-359; Morison, *The Life and Letters of Harrison Gray Otis*, vol. 2, pp. 97-98; and Morison's *Harrison Gray Otis*, pp. 364-367.

[30]On the approaches of Massachusetts Governor Caleb Strong to the British see J.S. Martell, "A Sidelight on Federalist Strategy During the War of 1812" *American Historical Review* 43,3 (April 1938), pp. 553-566; Robert Allan Rutland, *The Presidency of James Madison* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1990), pp. 183-184; Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War*, pp. 472-473; Morison, *The Life and Letter of Harrison Gray Otis*, vol. 2, pp. 119-123; and Morison, *Harrison Gray Otis*, pp. 363-364. On Otis's correspondence see, Morison, *The Life and Letters of Harrison Gray Otis*, vol. 2, pp. 84-85 and 117.

[31]Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War*, pp. 477-478 and 481-482; Ammon, *James Monroe*, p. 341; Brant, *James Madison*, pp. 359-360; and Morison, *The Life and Letters of Harrison Gray Otis*, vol. 2, p. 128.

separate peace was pursued. The delegates who went to Hartford did not represent the radical wing of the Federalist Party. These men maintained that everything that would be done at Hartford would be consistent with their duties to the Union and that one of the purposes of the convention was to restrain the popular outrage against the war and channel it into an acceptable direction.[32]

However, even though the moderate wing of the Federal Party had been able to control the convention and the report it issued, this moderation did little to dispel the conviction throughout the rest of the nation that the supporters of the convention were traitors. One reason why the Hartford Conventionists were unable to escape charges of disloyalty was that the report the convention issued, though moderate considering the current temper of much of the Federalist Party throughout New England, was still radical enough to frighten a nation involved in a struggle for its life. For instance, though the report issued by the convention did not call for an immediate break-up of the Union, the report did treat secession as a possibility and openly employed that possibility as a threat. After discussing some reasons why secession should be considered, the report argues that the time for secession is not immediately at hand. Instead, the delegates at Hartford decided to issue a series of demands to the Federal government, including seven Constitutional amendments, designed to provide for the immediate defense of New England and to protect and enhance the power of the

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[32]Banner, *To The Hartford Convention*, pp. viii, xiii-ix, 314-351 and 409; Banner, "A Shadow of Secession," pp. 27-30; Linda K. Kerber, "The Federalist Party" in Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., ed. *History of United States Political Parties*, vol. 1, 1789-1860 From Factions To Parties (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1973), pp. 23-24; Morison, *The Life and Letters of Harrison Gray Otis*, vol. 2, pp. 85-92, 110-112 and 130-146, Morison, *Harrison Gray Otis*, pp. 362 and 372-382; and Dwight, *History of The Hartford Convention*, pp. 380-381 and 401-405.

Northeast in the national government. The report concluded by threatening that if their recommendations were not adopted, "and peace should not be concluded, and the defence of these states should be neglected, as it has been since the commencement of the war;" then it would be expedient to hold another convention "with such powers and instructions as the exigency of a crisis so momentous may require."[33]

A second reason why the country continued to look upon the Hartford Convention as treasonous was the secrecy with which the delegates shrouded their discussions. All the debates of the assembly were held behind closed door and the delegates pledged not to reveal the proceedings of the convention. This secrecy convinced many that the delegates at Hartford did have something to hide and served to fuel the fear that the convention was indeed part of a clandestine plot to destroy the Union.[34]

Though the administration and most of the country were relieved that the convention did not go any further towards disunion than it did, this relief did not serve to decrease the disgust many felt towards the supporters of the Hartford Convention. Although the delegates did not push for an immediate dissolution of the Union or a separate peace, the mere holding of a convention in the darkest days of the war by representatives of disgruntled states who threatened secession and made demands upon the federal government, was evidence enough of disloyalty for many. For example, the agent sent by the Madison

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[33]For the text of the Hartford Convention's report see Dwight, *History of the Hartford Convention*, pp. 352-379. The quotes used here are from p. 378.

[34]Morison, *The Life and Letters of Harrison Gray Otis*, vol. 2, pp. 110 and 139-140; Morison, *Harrison Gray Otis*, p. 373; and John Quincy Adam's Reply to the Appeal of the Massachusetts Federalists, in Henry Adams, *Documents Relating To New-England Federalism*, pp. 259-260.

administration to keep an eye on the convention concluded that while there was no evidence of open rebellion, the convention possessed "all the moral qualities of treason and rebellion."[35] One historian did a good job of summing up the reaction of many of the observers of the convention when he argued that, "the leaders of the Hartford Convention were it is true temperate men, and their Report and Resolutions merely threatened rebellion if their recommendations were not complied with, but disunion is disunion no matter how mildly asserted."[36]

After the convention adjourned on January 5, 1815, the Massachusetts legislature appointed three men to go to Washington to negotiate with Congress on the recommendations made by the delegates at Hartford. However, the mission was doomed to failure because as the three representatives traveled to Washington they were greeted with news that a peace treaty had been signed and that Jackson had held off the British invasion of New Orleans. With the war suddenly ended on terms that were better than many had expected; the demands, threats and dire predictions of the Hartford Convention became objects of ridicule. The three envoys quickly left Washington, but continued to be "pursued by the gibes of their countrymen."[37] One New York newspaper even put out a lost and found ad looking for "Three well looking responsible men, who appeared to be traveling towards Washington" who had

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[35]Colonel Joseph Smith to James Monroe, December 31, 1814, quoted in Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War*, p. 378.

[36]George Dangerfield, *The Era of Good Feelings* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1952), p. 88. On the reaction of the administration and the rest of the country to the convention and its report see, Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War*, pp. 482-483; Ammon, *James Monroe*, p. 341; and Morison, *The Life and Letters of Harrison Gray Otis*, vol. 2, pp. 157-159.

[37]Dangerfield, *The Era of Good Feelings*, p. 98. See also, Morison, *The Life and Letters of Harrison Gray Otis*, vol. 2, pp. 160-173, and Morison, *Harrison Gray Otis*, p. 389-391.

"disappeared suddenly" after "they were observed to be very melancholy on hearing news of the peace."[38]

More important than any temporary embarrassment the envoys of the Hartford Convention may have felt from the taunts they had received as they journeyed home, is that, as George Dangerfield put it, "with them they carried the ruins of the Federalist Party."[39] The accusation that a significant portion of the Federalist Party had followed a treasonous course during the war, an indictment that was based primarily on the meeting of the Hartford Convention, would play a significant role in bringing about the collapse of the Federalist Party. Though the Federalists did not simply disappear as a political force after the War of 1812, the equating of the Hartford Convention with Federalism and with disloyalty did mark the beginning of the end of the Federal Party. Following the War of 1812, the Federalist Party would never again be a serious contender for power at the national level, and while for the next few years remnants of the party would remain strong in some localities; by the end of the decade, the allegation that the Federalists had pursued a treasonous course at Hartford would succeed in destroying the Federalists completely. By 1819, the Federalists were virtually extinct as a party everywhere outside of Massachusetts, and even that Federalist stronghold would not survive long into the 1820's.[40]

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[38]Quoted in Morison, *The Life and Letters of Harrison Gray Otis*, p. 167.

[39]Dangerfield, *The Era of Good Feelings*, p. 98.

[40]Shaw Livermore Jr.'s *The Twilight of Federalism: The Disintegration of the Federalist Party, 1815-1830* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962) offers the most complete account of the fate of the Federalist Party following the War of 1812. In addition to the crushing weight of the accusation of treason, Livermore also stresses how the co-optation of much of the Federalist agenda by the Republicans also helped bring about the collapse of the Federalists, see especially pages vii-viii, 11-20, 56, 118-120, and 265. On the political fate of the individuals who attended the convention see Morison, *The Life and Letters of Harrison Gray Otis*, vol. 2, pp. 203-204, and 243-244. Morison's account shows that while many of these men remained prominent on the state level, as national figures

"Under any other [government]," Thomas Jefferson wrote concerning the Hartford Conventionists, "their treasons would have been punished by the halter. We let them live as laughing stocks for the world, and punish them by the torment of eternal contempt."[41] Local and state elections in New England and the national races for the Presidency over the next ten to twenty years kept the memory of the Hartford Convention fresh in the minds of Americans as contending political factions would consistently seek to score political points by labeling their opposition as "Hartford Convention Federalists". A charge that if the frequency of its use is any indication, was often effective.[42]

Given the notoriety of the Hartford Convention and that it would remain "the target of national obloquy for the next thirty-five years," the policy makers of the era would certainly be familiar with the history of the Convention and its effects.[43] What lessons would policy makers draw from this experience? Faced with a foreign policy crisis, what type of policy would the Hartford Convention analogy prescribe? For policy makers who hoped to maintain or further their positions as national political leaders, the Hartford Convention contained a valuable negative lesson: to protect their positions as national political figures, it was vital that they avoid policies that could expose them to charges of

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they were ruined, and even at the local level their attendance at the Hartford Convention would be a "millstone" around their political necks (see his *Harrison Gray Otis*, p. 353 and 433.). See also Banner, "A Shadow of Secession" p. 30; Dangerfield, *The Era of Good Feelings*, p. 98 and Paul A. Varg, *New England and Foreign Relations* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1983) p. 74.

[41]Jefferson to Dr. Benjamin Waterhouse, October 13, 1815 in Ford, *Writings of TJ*, vol. 9, p. 533.
[42]See Morison, *The Life and Letters of Harrison Gray Otis*, vol. 2, pp. 246-248 and Morison, *Harrison Gray Otis*, p. 412.
[43]The quote is from Morison, *The Life and Letters of Harrison Gray Otis*, p. 82.

sacrificing the national interests of the United States in favor of the interests of any particular section.

Witnessing the dismal fate of the Federalist Party after the War of 1812, the policy makers of the day had seen, in the words of Samuel Flagg Bemis, how "the delegates from the Hartford Convention, the . . . defeatists of 1814 [had] slunk home in obscurity, speedily to become forgotten men." They had seen the charge of sectionalism devastate a party and that, "the future belonged to Adams, to Jackson, to Clay, to the new nationalists."[44] While Bemis can be criticized for slightly exaggerating the dismal fate of the Hartford Conventionists, many of whom would remain prominent in state politics for many years;[45] at the national level his characterization of their destiny is accurate. The Hartford Conventionists, and Federalists in general, were largely finished as national figures following the War of 1812. While the Hartford Convention analogy would warn national policy makers that their foreign policy could generate serious sectional grievances, the analogy also suggests that in the end, domestically, defending nationalism over sectionalism was the more rewarding policy. However, the next domestically focused analogy that will be explored here, the Missouri Crisis, questions the validity of this lesson.

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[44]*John Quincy Adams And The Foundations of American Foreign Policy*, p. 220.
[45]See Morison, *Harrison Gray Otis*, p. 433.

THE MISSOURI CRISIS

The Missouri Crisis consisted of a series of events surrounding Missouri's petition for statehood; a request that would ignite within Congress and the nation as a whole a bitter debate over the question of slavery and its extension. The crisis started innocuously enough on December 18, 1818, when Speaker of the House Henry Clay presented to Congress a petition from the legislature of Missouri requesting to be allowed to form a state government and enter the Union.[46] At this point in the debate, the question of slavery and its extension had not yet arisen. None of the petitions submitted on behalf of Missouri said anything about the subject; since slavery already existed in Missouri it was assumed that when Missouri entered the Union it would be as a slave state.[47]

However, this silence on the question of slavery did not last. When the House of Representatives opened up debate on the proposed Missouri bill, James Tallmadge, Jr. of New York offered an amendment, which would prohibit "the further introduction of slavery" into Missouri and require that the slaves already living in Missouri and their children be gradually emancipated.[48] This amendment sparked a debate over the extension of slavery that would dominate three sessions of Congress and threaten to divide the Congress and the nation on sectional lines. The

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[46]The account given here of the struggles in Congress surrounding Missouri's petition for statehood relies most heavily on Glover Moore, *The Missouri Controversy: 1819-1821* (Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1953).

[47]Moore, *The Missouri Controversy*, pp. 33-4.

[48]*Annals*, 15 Cong., 2 sess., pp. 1166 and 1170. See also Moore, *The Missouri Controversy*, pp. 33-41.

House eventually split the Tallmadge amendment into two clauses, the first banning the further importation of slaves and the second providing for the gradual emancipation of the children of slaves born in Missouri after its admission to the Union. Both clauses passed, by votes of 87-76 and 82-78 respectively, and the Tallmadge amendment was included as part of the Missouri bill in the House. The votes on both parts of the amendment showed a clear sectional flavor. The first clause was opposed by all the Members of Congress from slave-holding states, except one, and the second clause was opposed by all but two Southern members. In contrast, the free states, while not as united as the South, showed a clear preference in favor of both parts of the amendment. Approving the first clause by a vote of 86-10 and the second clause by a vote of 80-14.[49]

The Senate then took up consideration of the House Missouri bill including the proposed limitations on slavery. The South's relatively greater voting strength in the Senate, where they controlled almost half the seats in contrast to the disparity in the House[50]; the pro-southern sentiments of a small number of Northern Senators; and questions concerning the constitutionality of the gradual emancipation of slaves already in Missouri all led to the defeat of the Tallmadge amendment in that body. As in the House, Southern Senators voted as a unit and opposed the restrictive amendment without a dissenting vote, while the votes of the free states were more favorable towards the amendment. Senators from slave-holding states voted against both clauses of the Tallmadge amendment (17-0), and while constitutional questions led the

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[49]Moore, *The Missouri Controversy*, pp. 52-3.

[50]This disparity in voting strength in the House was not as drastic as it would later become, but it was still significant in 1819-1821. In the votes on the Missouri bill, the Northern states controlled approximately 3 seats for every two seats controlled by the South in the House.

Northern Senators to oppose the second clause of the Tallmadge amendment by a vote of 14-7, the Senators from the free states did approve the ban on the further importation of slaves into Missouri by a vote of 16-5.[51] The Senate's refusal to pass the Missouri bill with the restriction on slavery and the House's refusal to concur with the Senate bill without the Tallmadge amendment left Congress deadlocked and the Fifteenth Congress adjourned without any definitive action on the question of Missouri's admission.

When the Sixteenth Congress convened in December of 1819, two factors not present in the earlier debates on Missouri further complicated the issue. The first of these factors was the petition of Maine to be admitted as a (free) state after its separation from Massachusetts. Proponents of Missouri's admission without any restriction on slavery seized upon Maine's petition as a bargaining chip: unless Missouri's application would be approved without restriction, Maine would also be refused admission. To put this threat into effect, the Senate amended the Maine bill by including within it a section approving Missouri's request to form a state government without restriction.[52]

The second of these complicating factors was a proposal by Senator Jesse B. Thomas of Illinois to further amend the Maine-Missouri bill by including within it a provision that would prohibit slavery in all the unorganized territory left from the Louisiana Purchase north of the southern boundary of Missouri; 36° 30' (Missouri itself being excluded). This proposed prohibition of slavery in the territories north of 36° 30'

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[51]Moore, *The Missouri Controversy*, pp. 53-55.
[52]Moore, *The Missouri Controversy*, pp. 86-87.

was offered as an inducement to Northern Members of Congress to approve of Missouri's admission without any restriction on slavery. This amendment was approved and incorporated into the Senate bill.[53]

Again, Congress was deadlocked. While the Senate had combined the Maine and Missouri petitions in one bill, approved of Missouri's petition without restriction and passed Thomas's amendment prohibiting slavery north of 36° 30'; the House insisted on keeping the Maine and Missouri bills separate and retaining the slavery restriction on Missouri's petition. Rather than leave the issue unresolved, both branches agreed to create a joint conference committee to seek a compromise. This committee reached a consensus on what would eventually become known as the Missouri Compromise of 1820. The Maine and Missouri bills were to be divided, both Maine and Missouri's petitions were to be approved without any restriction on slavery in Missouri, and slavery was to be excluded in the Louisiana purchase north of 36° 30' with Missouri itself excluded. This compromise was eventually approved by both houses.

The key to the passage of the Compromise of 1820 in the House was the actions of a number of northern Members of Congress, mostly Democrats, who decided to reverse their votes on slavery restriction in Missouri and support the compromise. The vote on lifting the slavery restriction from the Missouri bill was passed in the House by a vote of 90-87 with fourteen Members of Congress from the North voting in favor of lifting the restriction and four absenting themselves from the House when the vote was taken.[54] The important question of why these

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[53]Moore, *The Missouri Controversy*, pp. 88-89.
[54]Moore, *The Missouri Controversy*, pp. 99-102.

men acted as they did will be discussed below in the section on the lessons of the Missouri Crisis.

The passage of the Missouri Compromise did not end the Missouri Crisis. The question of the extension of slavery in Missouri would also haunt the second session of the Sixteenth Congress. Under the Compromise of 1820, Missouri, unlike Maine, was not technically admitted as a state. Instead, Missouri was only given permission to write a constitution and form a state government. Missouri was only to be admitted after Congress approved of the constitution that Missouri was to write. Many considered this to be a mere formality as the only requirements that Congress put on the new constitution were that it was to be republican in character and not in violation of the federal Constitution. However, this loophole allowed the opponents of Missouri's admission as a slave state to once again agitate the question and fight against the extension of slavery.

Opponents of Missouri's admission as a slave state seized upon a clause in the proposed constitution that prohibited free Negroes and mulattos from entering Missouri. Since Negroes and mulattos were citizens in some states, this clause was held to be in violation of the U.S. Constitution's requirement that, "The citizens of each state shall be entitled to all privileges and immunities of citizens in the several states."[55] This dispute over the acceptability of Missouri's constitution prolonged the Missouri Crisis for another session of Congress and gave rise to the most heated debates that had yet taken place on the subject.[56]

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[55] Article 4, Section 2.
[56] James A. Woodburn, "The Historical Significance of the Missouri Compromise" *Annual Report of the American Historical Association For the Year 1893* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), p. 281.

The two houses of Congress again found themselves deadlocked over the Missouri issue as the House refused to accept Missouri's constitution and the Senate accepted the constitution but denied that this acceptance constituted approval of any provisions that could violate the Constitution. After a few attempts at compromise had failed, both branches agreed to accept Missouri's constitution provided that Missouri concede that the objectionable clause of the constitution would never be construed as authorization for the passage of any laws that would discriminate against the citizens of any state. With this final compromise, the Missouri Crisis was put to rest and Missouri was admitted to the Union as a slave state. While the Missouri Crisis itself had now ended, its impact on the politics of the United States was just beginning.

THE MISSOURI CRISIS AND PARTY POLITICS

To the participants in the Missouri Crisis, its most noteworthy aspect was not its length, even though it did stretch over three different Congressional sessions. More striking was the ability of this question to close off discussion of all other political questions, ignite bitter sectional debates, and divide the nation on a geographical basis.

For the three years in which the question of Missouri's admission to the Union was debated, this question was not simply just another issue in the political landscape. One aspect of the controversy that helped make it such a seminal event in American political history was that this question effectively shut off debate on other important issues. While the

debate over Missouri raged through Congress, Congress did little else but attend to it. Early in 1820, William Plumer Jr., a Member of Congress from New Hampshire wrote that the bitter debate over Missouri "engages all our attention, and indeed has for the whole of the session, to the exclusion of almost everything else."[57] Later in that session he wrote that "We are still so completely engrossed with the Missouri question as to be able to attend to nothing else" and that the Missouri debate "occupies the whole of our time and attention."[58] A year later, the fight over Missouri was still absorbing the attention of Congress and closing off debate on other questions as it "occupies us all the time, by night and by day."[59] Similarly, Speaker of The House Henry Clay wrote that, "at present Spanish affairs, manufactures, and every other matter of public concern have given way to the Missouri question, which engrosses the whole thoughts of the members, and constitutes almost the only topic of conversation."[60]

Another aspect of the Missouri Crisis that made it such a significant event was the animosity and furor that this question ignited between the North and the South. While sectional debates between the slave-holding states and free states were nothing new in American

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[57] William Plumer Jr. to William Plumer Sr., January 30, 1820, in Everett Somerville Brown, ed., *The Missouri Crisis and Presidential Politics 1820-1825: From the Letters of William Plumer Jr.* (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society, 1926), p. 3.

[58] William Plumer Jr. to William Plumer Sr., February 5, 1820 and February 12, 1820, Brown, *The Missouri Crisis and Presidential Politics*, pp. 6 and 8.

[59] William Plumer Jr. to William Plumer Sr., February 2, 1821, Brown, *The Missouri Crisis and Presidential Politics*, p. 36.

[60] Henry Clay to Adam Beatty, January 22, 1820 in James F. Hopkins, ed., *The Papers of Henry Clay* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1961) vol. 2, pp. 766-767. (Hereafter simply Hopkins, *Papers of HC*.) For similar sentiments on how the Missouri question came to dominate all others see Clay to Amos Kendall, January 8, 1820; Clay to John J. Crittenden, January 29, 1820, Clay to Jonathan Russel, January 29, 1820; Clay to Leslie Combs, February 5, 1820; Clay to Horace Holley, February 17, 1820; Clay's Remarks on Order of Business, March 2, 1820; Clay to Beatty, March 4, 1820; and Clay to Russel, March 24, 1820, pp. 752-753 and 768-770, 770-771, 774, 780-781, 787, 788 and 797.

politics, indeed they go back as far as the history of the nation,[61] the rage and animosity spawned by Missouri's petition took the leading politicians of the day by surprise. While they certainly knew that the North and South did not agree on the question of the extension of slavery, the potential explosiveness of this issue was not seen as terribly important politically. For example, when Louisiana applied for statehood in 1812 the question of slavery does not appear to have been raised.[62] Why would Missouri's admission be any different? Indeed, when the first petitions concerning Missouri's statehood reached the Fifteenth Congress during its first session in early 1818, the issue excited very little interest and virtually no debate. A Missouri Bill was sent to the Committee of the Whole and was then ignored. At the same time that this first Missouri bill was reported, one Congressman proposed a Constitutional amendment banning slavery in any future states that would eventually join the union. This proposal also excited no interest or debate.[63] If the question of the possible extension of slavery was met with such indifference during this session, why would the next sessions be any different? However, the next sessions and the question of Missouri's admission were to be very different.[64] They would be a "fire

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[61]See Robert W. Fogel *Without Consent of Contract: The Rise and Fall of American Slavery* (New York: Norton, 1989) and Roger L. Ransom, *Conflict and Compromise: The Political Economy of Slavery, Emancipation and the American Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
[62]Woodburn, "The Historical Significance of the Missouri Compromise," p. 253.
[63]See Floyd Shoemaker, *Missouri's Struggle For Statehood 1804-1821* (Jefferson City: The Hugh Stephens Printing Company, 1916), pp. 38 and 41; and *Annals*, 15 Cong., 1 sess., pp. 1672 and 1675-76.
[64]This raises the interesting question of why was Missouri's application different? Why did it precipitate a crisis? Two factors were probably paramount: First, Missouri was the first state located entirely west of the Mississippi to apply for admission. For the territories east of the Mississippi, the Ohio River had served as a clear and accepted boundary between slave and free portions of the Union; however, west of the Mississippi there was no obvious dividing line that could serve as a clear focal point for division. Thus, the fight over Missouri could easily be seen as a key precedent-setting measure for the eventual settlement of the entire West, which raised the political stakes involved in the

bell in the night" that startled the politicians of the day out of their complacency and "filled [them] with terror."[65]

The Missouri Crisis was so frightening because it suddenly showed that the extension of slavery was a question that could incite bitter sectional conflict and potentially split the Union in two. The acrimonious debates that shook Congress convinced many that the Union was in real danger. Congressman Plumer wrote that one could "hardly conceive of the rage and fury which prevailed here on this subject."[66] Henry Clay wrote that calls for civil war and disunion were spoken so often that they lost their emotional impact.[67] Two elder statesmen, whose active political experiences dated back to the Revolutionary War, agreed that the controversy over Missouri's admission was unlike anything they had seen before and presented a real danger to the political stability of the United States. Representative Charles Pinckey of South Carolina, who had served as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention of 1787, declared that "during the last three sessions" the Missouri Crisis

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debate well above the immediate outcome in Missouri. Second, Missouri applied for admission at a period when the Federalist Party was dying as a political force. As a party on the decline and virtually limited to the Northeast anyway, Federalists had nothing to lose by agitating the slavery issue, and could benefit from that agitation if it brought down their political opponents or improved their prospects in the North. Another possible explanation is that Missouri's application precipitated a crisis because its admission would upset the sectional balance in the Senate between the eleven slave and the eleven free states. While concern over the sectional balance in the Senate may be part of the explanation, I do not think it is a very significant part. If it was the predominant issue, the problem should have been solved by pairing Missouri with Maine, but that pairing did not end the Missouri Crisis. And as we shall see later, worries over the addition of Texas to the Union also could not be solved merely by proposing to admit states in pairs. On why Missouri's petition launched a crisis see, Remini, *Henry Clay*, p. 178; Glyndon G. Van Deusen, *The Life Of Henry Clay* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1937), pp. 134-135 and William H. Riker, *Liberalism Against Populism: A Confrontation Between the Theory of Democracy and the Theory of Social Choice* (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman and Company, 1982), pp. 215-219.

[65]Thomas Jefferson to John Holmes, April 22, 1820 in Ford, *Writings of TJ*, vol 10, p. 157.

[66]William Plumer Jr. to William Plumer Sr., March 4, 1820, Brown, *The Missouri Compromise and Presidential Politics*, p. 14.

[67]Henry Clay to Adam Beatty, January 22, 1820 and Clay to Horace Holley, February 17, 1820 in Hopkins, *Papers of HC*, vol. 2, pp. 767-767 and 780-781.

had "shaken the Union to its very foundation."[68] In a similar vein, Jefferson declared that the Missouri Crisis was "the most portentous one which ever yet threatened our Union. In the gloomiest moments of the revolutionary war I never had any apprehension equal to what I feel from this source."[69] In a letter to John Adams, Jefferson argued that other controversial issues were "nothing" compared to the danger of the Missouri Crisis and that, "from the Battle of Bunker's Hill to the Treaty of Paris, we never had so ominous a question."[70] At his most pessimistic Jefferson averred that his only consolation was that he would not live to see an issue like the Missouri Crisis destroy the Union.[71]

It is impossible to overemphasize the peril that this type of sectional conflict represented to the political system of the United States. By arraying the North against the South, the slavery issue raised the twin specters of disunion and civil war. In 1820, the prospect that sectional coalitions would become the dominant form of political organization was a very real possibility. The Missouri crisis occurred when the party system of the United States was in a state of flux. The first party system, which had pitted the Hamiltonian Federalist party against the party of Jefferson was nearing its end with virtual dominance of Jefferson's Republican Party.[72] The Republican Party had held the presidency since 1801 and by 1819, only fifteen percent of the House was held by the Federalists.[73] With the decline of their enemy, the Republican Party had

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[68]Quoted in Woodburn, "The Historical Significance of the Missouri Compromise," p. 275.
[69]Thomas Jefferson to Hugh Nelson, February 7, 1820 in Ford, *Writings of TJ*, vol. 10, p. 156.
[70]Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, December 10, 1819 in Ford, *Writings of TJ*, vol. 10, pp. 151-154.
[71]Thomas Jefferson to Adams, December 10, 1819 and Jefferson to John Holmes, April 22, 1820 in Ford, *Writings of TJ*, vol. 10, pp. 151-154 and 157-158.
[72]See Richard McCormick, *The Second American Party System: Party Formation in the Jacksonian Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), pp. 20-31.
[73]Riker, *Liberalism Against Populism*, p. 217.

a difficult time retaining any semblance of party discipline and it too declined as a political force. In an insightful discussion of the political atmosphere of the capital at the time, James Sterling Young argues that given the weakness of the political parties of the era, Congress should be seen as "a legislature ever on the verge of group anarchy, awaiting only the catalyst of . . . [a] deeply divisive issue."[74] The Missouri Crisis was one such catalyst, and in 1820, it was unclear what would replace the now defunct first party system. However, the Missouri crisis served as a warning that national parties based upon political principles were certainly endangered by the slavery question and could be replaced by a sectional division between the slave and free states. As John Quincy Adams explained, the debate had "disclosed a secret: it revealed the basis for a new organization of parties. . . Here was a party really formed. . . terrible to the whole Union."[75]

In fact, many prominent Republicans interpreted the entire Missouri Crisis as an attempt by the dying Federalist Party to regain influence in national affairs by forming a northern party that could defeat a Republican Party splintered over the slavery issue.[76] Thomas Jefferson saw the Missouri Crisis and the agitation of the slavery issue as "a mere party trick" designed by the defeated Federalists "to effect a division of parties by a geographical line," which they hope will give

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[74]James Sterling Young, *The Washington Community, 1800-1828* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), p. 142. Using Jefferson's metaphor of parties as a "rope of sand", Young argues that "all signs indicate the weakness" of parties and that the key political unit of the time was what Young calls the boarding-house fraternities. These informal groupings of legislators who boarded together also tended to reinforce regional differences. See pp. 97-102, 111-112, 130, and 137

[75]Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, Comprising Portions of His Diary From 1795 to 1848* 12 vols., (New York: AMS Press, 1970) (February 20, 1820) vol. 4, p. 529. (Hereafter, simply *Memoirs of JQA*.)

[76]Homer C. Hocket, "Rufus King and the Missouri Compromise" *Missouri Historical Review* 2,3 (April, 1908): 211-220.

them "the majority they could never obtain on the principles of Federalism."[77] In the Missouri Crisis, Jefferson saw the possible destruction of the party he had done so much to build; a destruction at the hands of his worst political enemies: "Nothing has ever presented so threatening an aspect as what is called the Missouri question. The Federalists, completely put down and despairing of ever rising again under the old division of Whig and Tory, devised a new one of slave-holding and non-slave-holding states . . . calculated to give them ascendancy."[78]

A number of young, but rising, statesmen agreed. Martin Van Buren of New York, the future head of the Democratic Party, argued that the "moving springs" of the movement against the extension of slavery were "political rather than philanthropical."[79] Henry Clay, the future head of the Whig Party argued that if the Missouri controversy was not settled soon it would "lead to the construction of the worst of all parties {sectional parties}."[80] Thomas Hart Benton, who would become a prominent Democratic Senator from Missouri argued that the agitation was started by the Federalists, but "soon swept both parties into its vortex. . . . The formidable Missouri question threatened the total

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[77]Jefferson to Charles Pinckney, September 30, 1820, in Ford, *Writings of TJ*, vol. 10, pp. 161-163.
[78]Thomas Jefferson to Albert Gallatin, December 26, 1820, in Ford, *Writings of TJ*, vol. 10, pp. 175-178. On this point see also; Jefferson to David Bailey Warden, December 26, 1820; Jefferson to Marquis De La Fayette, December 26, 1820; Jefferson to La Fayette, October 28, 1822; and Jefferson to La Fayette, November 4, 1823, pp. 171-173, 179-181, 227-234, and 279-283.
[79]John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Autobiography of Martin Van Buren*, published as the *Annual Report of the American Historical Association For 1918*, vol. 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1920), p. 140. See also pp. 99-100 and 137-138.
[80]Clay to Leslie Combs, February 5, 1820 in Hopkins, *Papers of HC*, vol. 2, p. 774. See also, Clay to Martin D. Hardin, February 5, 1820, p. 775.

overthrow of all political parties based on principle, and the substitution of geographical parties"[81]

This was also the interpretation given to the Missouri Crisis in newspapers across the country. The paper of the dominant Jeffersonian party in New York declared that the Federalists were trying to "make Missouri a sectional question" and "convert the unhappy controversy respecting the state of Missouri, into a foundation for organizing a northern confederacy."[82] Another New York paper decried the plot that they saw behind the controversy over Missouri for "the erection of a northern party, the triumph of federalism, or the separation of the Union."[83] A New Hampshire paper argued that the agitation of the Missouri question was designed "not so much to put a stop to slavery, as it is to create a Northern and a Southern interest; not so much to further the Union and happiness of this Republic, as to effect sinister and party purposes."[84]

This interpretation was not unique to proponents of the Republican Party. Members of the opposition Federalist party also saw in the Missouri Crisis the threat that the slavery extension issue posed to national parties. However, as their national party was dying and confined to the North anyway, they saw the crisis as an opportunity to be exploited, rather than as a danger to be lamented. Senator Rufus King of New York, a prominent Federalist, made it clear that he welcomed

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[81]Thomas Hart Benton, *Thirty Years View: or a History of the Working of the American Government for Thirty Years, from 1820 to 1850*, 2 vols. (New York: Appleton, 1854-1856) vol. 1, pp. 5 and 10.
[82]*The Albany Argus*, January 28, 1820 and March 23, 1821. Cited in Moore, *The Missouri Controversy*, p. 192.
[83]*The National Advocate*, August 24, 1820. Cited in Moore, *The Missouri Controversy*, p. 69.
[84]*New Hampshire Patriot & State Gazette*, February 15 and 29, 1820. Cited in Moore, *The Missouri Controversy*, p. 187.

the debate aroused in Congress over the extension of slavery and hoped that it would lead to a political realignment that would bring to power a northern party closer to his political views than the dominant Jeffersonian party.[85] One Federalist newspaper in Boston was elated by "the new weapon, which has at length placed itself in our hands" and "the new parties which this question is likely to produce."[86]

Contrary to the fears of the Republicans and the hopes of some Federalists, the Missouri Crisis did not lead to the creation of sectional parties. In addition, the Missouri Crisis did not push the nation into a civil war. Instead, policy makers used the lessons they drew from the Missouri controversy to, at least temporarily, avoid these outcomes and stabilize the Union. To borrow a metaphor from Thomas Jefferson, while the Union would ultimately fail to avoid facing a "final sentence" for the crime of slavery, using the lessons of the Missouri Crisis, policy makers did succeed in greatly extending the length of the "reprieve."[87] The following section focuses on the content of the lessons that policy makers derived from the Missouri Crisis.

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[85]For an account of the role played by King in the Missouri Crisis and his views upon the subject see Hocket, "Rufus King and the Missouri Compromise," pp. 211-220. See also Charles King, ed., *The Life and Correspondence of Rufus King*, vol. VI, 1816-1827 (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1899), pp. 278-280, 287-288, 300-303, 324-326 and 501.

[86]*Boston Daily Advertiser*, March 2, 1820. Cited in Moore, *The Missouri Controversy*, p. 183.

[87]Jefferson to John Holmes, April 22, 1820 in Ford, *Writings of TJ*, vol. 10, p. 157.

THE LESSONS OF THE MISSOURI CRISIS

"I take it for granted that the present question is a mere preamble--a title page to a great tragic volume"

-John Quincy Adams[88]

That Missouri's request to join the Union would launch a sectional conflict of unprecedented bitterness came as a shock to most of the politicians of the day. Whether this event was viewed with apprehension or as a pleasant surprise varied depending on the political position of the observer. However, what was common to all observers was the sense that the Missouri Crisis disclosed an important lesson about the future of American politics.

The drawing of political lessons from the Missouri controversy began in the very midst of the crisis. In fact, the lessons drawn from the first stages of the crisis played an instrumental role in its resolution. As discussed in the previous section, a key step in the termination of the crisis was the vote by the House of Representatives to admit Missouri without any restriction on slavery. When this issue came to a vote, fourteen Members of Congress from the North broke sectional lines and voted to strike the slavery restriction and four other Northern Congressmen were absent when the vote was taken. As the votes (or non-votes) of these eighteen Congressmen provided the margin of victory in a close vote, they were seen as responsible for the lifting of

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[88] *Memoirs of JQA,* (January 10, 1820) vol. 4, p. 502.

the slavery restriction and the eventual settlement of this issue in
Congress. In a speech discussing the actions of these men, John
Randolph added a new phrase to the American political lexicon: the
dough face. Though it is unclear what exactly Randolph meant by this
term, this epithet came to be applied to all the Northerners who voted
with the South to admit Missouri without any restriction on slavery.
This label captured the negative image of these men as weak,
unprincipled, easily molded and susceptible to pressure from the
South.[89]

What was the motivation of the dough faces? Why did they break
sectional lines and acquiesce in the extension of slavery into Missouri?
The most plausible explanation for their votes is the lessons they had
learned from the early stages of the crisis concerning the danger of this
question and their desire to put the issue to rest. Viewing the sectional
schism produced in Congress, they voted to lift the restriction on slavery
in the hope that this would end the controversy that threatened to destroy
existing political alignments and possibly disrupt the Union. The dough
faces were afraid that the dying Federalist party would use the
controversy the slavery question produced to split the dominant
Republican party and rise to power at the head of a sectional northern
party, which had ominous implications for the future of the United
States.[90] For these men, partisan and national interests coincided to lead
them to oppose the further agitation of this question because such
agitation could lead not only to the splintering of the Republican party

[89]See Frank H. Hodder, "Dough-Faces" *The Nation* C 1915, p. 245 and Moore *The Missouri Controversy*, pp. 103-104.
[90]Moore, *The Missouri Controversy*, pp. 104-107 and Hocket, "Rufus King and the Missouri Compromise," pp. 211-220.

and the victory of their political enemies, but also to the eventual dissolution of the Union.

One of the dough faces, Henry Meigs of New York, argued that the controversy over Missouri showed that the question of slavery clearly had the potential of dividing the country sectionally and for that reason, the question must be laid to rest. While slavery had been an issue in American politics before, he maintained that the Missouri crisis had brought this debate to new heights of sectional enmity. He argued that the question of the extension of slavery had now generated a "keen controversy which now enlists us in masses against each other on the opposite side of the line of latitude." He also expressed the belief that this sectionally divisive question must be set aside for the good of the Union: "Our free Constitution was made by men who were wise enough to know the danger of sectional division . . . If we, sir, shall be unhappily so unwise to forget this, nothing will be left for us . . . but awful combats at parallels of latitude."[91] Similarly, James Stevens, a dough face from Connecticut, asserted that he had "listened in pain to the very long protracted debate" and that "Few gentlemen have risen in debate on this question, without deeply lamenting (and I think with great reason) the existence of parties designated by geographical lines."[92]

While Meigs and Stevens stressed the sectional dangers of the crisis, others emphasized the partisan dangers of the fight over Missouri. Fellow dough face, John Holmes of Massachusetts, suspected that some were using the divisive issue "as the last resort, the forlorn hope of an expiring party" and feared the partisan implications of the question:

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[91]*Annals*, 16 Cong., 1 sess., vol. 1, pp. 943 and 946

[92]*Annals*, 16 Cong., 1 sess., vol. 2, pp. 1583-1584.

"Ambitious, desperate men may take advantage of the popular excitement, and, after all other schemes have failed them, succeed by producing the worst of all, a geographical division of party and rise to power under its banner."[93] Equally troubled by the partisan implication of the debates, Charles Kinsey of New Jersey suspected that motives of "political ascendancy" and "lurking ambition" were behind the agitation of this question, which had paralyzed the American government.[94]

In the explanations of these men concerning their votes, we see the genesis of the central lesson of the Missouri Crisis: all discussion of the sectionally divisive slavery issue must be avoided if national political alignments and the Union itself were not to be overturned in favor of sectional divisions. Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri expressed the kernel of the lesson learned from the Missouri Crisis when he argued that once the Republican party saw the sectional division this question produced, it "became alarmed, and only wanted . . . to take the first opportunity to get rid of the question by admitting the State, and re-establishing party lines upon the basis of political principle."[95] In a similar vein, Jeremiah Mason, a prominent Federalist from Massachusetts, explained the lesson by stating that the Missouri Crisis had frightened the Republican Party and that "The true cause of the alarm is a fear that a schism may be produced in the party. The leaders are constantly recommending a peaceable acquiescence in the decision that Congress has made, and a careful abstaining from whatever may cause irritation, provoke local jealousies, etc."[96]

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[93]*Annals*, 16 Cong., 1 sess., vol. 1, pp. 966-967 and 988.
[94]*Annals*, 16 Cong., 1 sess., vol. 2, pp. 1580 and 1582.
[95]Thomas Hart Benton, *Thirty Years View*, vol. 1, p. 10.
[96]Quoted in Moore, *The Missouri Controversy*, p. 188.

Henry Clay, who played an instrumental role in resolving the Missouri Crisis, also derived such lessons from the experience. Early in the crisis he came to see the question of the extension of slavery as an "alarming" issue that could "disturb the peace of the Union" and he hoped that Congress could "forever settle this distracting question."[97] Looking back on the crisis immediately following its resolution, Clay argued that:

> The moral of that agitating drama, of which, for more than two years past, our country has been the theatre, is that, . . . there are delicate subjects, exclusively appertaining to the several states, which cannot be touched but by them, without the greatest hazard to the public tranquillity. They resemble those secluded apartments in our respective domiciles, which are dedicated to family privacy, into which our nearest and best neighbors should not enter.[98]

After the Missouri Crisis, Clay believed that enlightened statesmanship required doing anything possible to avoid such dangerously divisive debates.[99]

This lesson of the Missouri Crisis was also expressed and disseminated in the papers of the day. The *National Intelligencer*

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[97]See Clay's speech on the Admission of Maine, December 30, 1819, his Speech on the Missouri Bill, February 8, 1820 and his Remarks and Motion on the Missouri Question, January 30, 1821 in Hopkins, *Papers of HC*, vol. 2, pp. 740-748 and 776-777 and vol. 3, p. 20.

[98]Clay's Resolution of Thanks to The Speaker (John W. Taylor), March 3, 1821 in Hopkins, *Papers of HC*, vol. 3, pp. 57. While Clay was Speaker in the first stages of the Crisis, he resigned as Speaker on October 28, 1820 to give himself more time to concentrate on private matters. He retained his seat in the House and continued to play a prominent role in the settlement of the Missouri Crisis, arguably playing a greater role after he resigned as Speaker. For an account of the Missouri Crisis that focuses on Clay see Remini, *Henry Clay*, pp. 172-173 and 177-184.

[99]Henry Clay to Langdon Cheves, March 5, 1821 and Clay's Toast and Response at a Public Dinner, May 19, 1821 in Hopkins, *Papers of HC*, vol. 3, pp. 58-59 and 79-82.

published letters warning that the Missouri debate could lead to "the most dangerous political consequences" and that what was behind this controversy was "a combination to divide, not the Union, but the great Democratic family of the Union [as the Republican Party was then also known as]." Philadelphia's *Franklin Gazette* agreed and argued that while Federalists may continue to agitate the controversy, "the republicans of Pennsylvania, New York and New Jersey have unequivocally demanded its being put to rest forever."[100]

To be more concrete concerning the content of the lessons policy makers derived from the Missouri Controversy, consider Khong's Analogical Explanation (AE) framework. According to this framework, historical analogies can be seen as diagnostic tools that help policy makers by:

1) Defining the nature of the situation

2) Assessing the stakes involved

3) Providing possible policy prescriptions

4) Predicting the likelihood of success of these policy prescriptions

5) Assessing the morality of these policy prescriptions, and

6) Providing warnings associated with certain policy options.[101]

Any particular analogy can be defined by the way it handles these tasks. Using this framework, the Missouri crisis can be defined as follows: Faced with an issue that could lead to a debate over slavery, the

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[100]*Daily National Intelligencer*, March 5, 1821 and the *Franklin Gazette*, March 3, 1821. Quoted in Moore, *The Missouri Controversy*, pp. 162-3.
[101]Khong, *Analogies at War*, pp. 10 and 20-22.

Missouri analogy would: First, define this new issue in terms of the events surrounding the fight to restrict slavery in Missouri and the sectional bitterness that debate evoked. Second, it would assess the stakes involved in this new issue as very high, given the threat to national political alignments and the Union that were present in the Missouri Controversy. Third and fourth, it would recommend a policy of evading any discussion of the issue and imply that such a policy of avoidance would provide the best chance of dodging the dangers of sectional divisions.

As for the fifth task, assessing the morality of the prescribed policy option, the Missouri Crisis analogy is somewhat ambivalent. Avoiding issues of great national import for partisan purposes was clearly seen as morally damnable; however, taking conciliatory steps to help assure that the government remained in the hands of those who could be counted on to pursue the best policies for the country and avert a disastrous civil war was clearly seen as a morally praiseworthy act. This ambivalence would be even greater for a policy maker who believed slavery to be a moral wrong. This decision maker would be faced with the dilemma of determining which would be the lesser of two evils: advocating strong anti-slavery measures with the hope of ending the evil of slavery but at the risk of dividing his party and starting a civil war, or remaining silent on the issue, which would decrease the chance of any sectional divisions, but perhaps prolong the evil of slavery.

Last, the Missouri analogy would warn of the dangers of political outsiders agitating the question to help bring down the dominant political coalitions that have shut them out of power and frustrated their political

ambitions.[102] This struggle between party insiders who wished to avoid the slavery issue and the party outsiders who wished to agitate the question is a central thread that runs through much of ante-bellum politics in America.[103] The chapters that follow explore the impact that the Missouri Crisis analogy had on the course of American politics, especially U.S. foreign policy regarding the possible annexation of Texas.

CONCLUSION

When policy makers search the historical record for lessons to assist them in formulating policy, they are most likely to select lessons from a relatively small collection of recent events that have had important consequences for their state and their personal political careers. The four events discussed in this chapter represent what such a repertoire of historical lessons would look like for the foreign policy makers of the United States in the years between 1815 and 1845.

The Louisiana Purchase, the Hartford Convention, the British invasion of Florida during the War of 1812, and the Missouri Crisis were important events not only for the United States as a whole, but also for the post-revolutionary war generation of decision makers who would come to dominate the making of foreign policy in the period examined

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[102]The Missouri Crisis analogy can also be stated in converse form for political outsiders. While tasks 1-3 and 5 would be largely the same, the policy prescription for an ambitious political outsider would be to agitate the slavery question and therefore break up the existing political coalitions and would warn against the attempts by party leaders to squelch any discussion of the slavery issue.

[103]For an excellent study that examines this dynamic at a state level see Kinley J. Brauer, *Cotton Versus Conscience: Massachusetts Whig Politics and Southwestern Expansion, 1843-1848* (Lexington: University Of Kentucky Press, 1967).

in the following chapters: Future President James Madison was selected by Thomas Jefferson to be his special envoy to France in the negotiations that culminated in the Louisiana Purchase and Madison was the Secretary of State and the Secretary of War during most of the War of 1812. Future Secretary of State John Quincy Adams's support for President Jefferson's foreign policy, including most notably the acquisition of Louisiana, would cost the then young Senator from Massachusetts the first elective office he had attained and a few years later Adams would be one of the chief American negotiators that concluded the peace treaty that ended the War of 1812. Future President Andrew Jackson first came to national prominence as the "Hero of New Orleans" who had successfully fought off the British assault on the southwestern portion of the Union. Future Whig Party leader Henry Clay and future Secretary of State John C. Calhoun entered the national arena as the two most prominent "war hawks" of 1812, and Clay also helped negotiatate the peace treaty to that war. Finally, future Presidents Martin Van Buren and John Tyler would join these prominent individuals to take part in the debate over Missouri's admission as every one of these men would experience that struggle firsthand either as members of Congress or members of the administration.

The three chapters that follow are an attempt to assess the utility of the model of analogical choice presented here. When the policy makers of the United States confronted issues of continental expansion between 1815 and 1845 did they select their historical lessons from the small set of salient analogies presented in this chapter? Did they choose one of the domestically focused analogies (the Hartford Convention or

the Missouri Crisis) or one of the internationally focused analogies (the Louisiana Purchase or the British invasion of Florida) based upon whether they were primarily trying to further their domestic or their international interests? From the set of internationally or domestically focused analogies did they select a particular analogy based on the similarity between what is known about the current situation and the factors that were seen as causally important in driving the outcomes of the four events explored in this chapter? Finally, and most significantly, do these four historical analogies and how the policy makers of the time selected among them help explain the foreign policy of the United States regarding western expansion between 1815 and 1845?

CHAPTER THREE

A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO RATIFICATION: THE ADAMS ONÍS TREATY OF 1819

"General Jackson came to my house this morning and I showed him the boundary . . . which we proposed to offer. . . . He said there were many individuals who would take exception to our receding so far from the boundary of [Texas] . . . but the possession of the Floridas was of so great importance to the southern frontier of the United States, and so essential to their safety, that the vast majority of the nation would be satisfied with the western boundary as we propose, if we obtain the Floridas. He showed me on the map the operations of the British force during the late war, and remarked that while the mouths of the Florida rivers should be accessible to a foreign naval force there would be no security for the southern part of the United States"

-John Quincy Adams, February 3, 1819[1]

"I could never see why Texas was quietly surrendered to spain by the negotiation at Washington unless it was the jealousy of the rising greatness of the south and west, and the fear of loosing [sic] the political asscendency [sic] in the north"

-Andrew Jackson, February 9, [12], 1843[2]

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[1] *Memoirs of JQA*, vol. 4, p. 239.
[2] Jackson to Aaron V. Brown, February 9, [12], 1843, in John Spencer Bassett, ed., *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson* 7 Vols. (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1926-1935) vol. 6, p. 202. (Herafter simply Bassett, *Correspondence of AJ*). When Jackson turned against the Adams-

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When Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, in February of 1819, first presented to the nation the results of his three-year long negotiations with Spanish Minister Luis De Onís, the terms of the treaty they had produced were greeted with universal acclaim within the United States. Under this treaty, variously called the Adams-Onís Treaty, the Florida Treaty, or the Transcontinental Treaty; Spain ceded Florida to the United States and transferred to the United States any rights it possessed in the southern portion of the Northwest territory. In return, the United States recognized a western boundary for the Louisiana Purchase that left Texas within the hands of Spain and agreed to assume responsibility for all U.S. claims against Spain for a sum not to exceed five million dollars.[3]

As the Senate unanimously gave its consent to the treaty a mere two days after it had been informed of its contents, there was no hint of the controversy that would later erupt concerning the territorial terms

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Onís Treaty he would claim that above selection from Adams's diary was a fabrication. However, as will be discussed below, the accuracy of Adams's account is corroborated by other contemporary documents which clearly demonstrate Jackson's support of the treaty.

[3]For the complete terms of the treaty see "Treaty of amity, settlement, and limits, between the United States of America and His Catholic Majesty, February 22, 1819" in Walter Lowrie and Walter S. Franklin, eds., *American State Papers: Foreign Relations* (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1834) vol. 4, pp. 623-625 (hereafter referred to as *ASP: FR's*). The name of this treaty varies depending upon the part of the treaty any particular writer wants to stress. For example, those like Bemis and more recently Weeks, who see the most important facet of the negotiations to be the discussions over the Oregon territory, which resulted in the recognition by Spain of a border with the United States that stretched to the Pacific Ocean prefer to call it the Transcontinental Treaty. See Bemis, *John Quincy Adams And The Foundations of American Foreign Policy*, pp. 317-340 and Weeks, *John Quincy Adams and American Global Empire*. Others, like Dexter Perkins who stress the importance of the acquisition of Florida prefer to call it the Florida Treaty. See Dexter Perkins "John Quincy Adams" in Samuel Flagg Bemis, ed., *The American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1928) vol. 4, pp. 7-35. Given the importance I put in this chapter on the trade of Texas for Florida, I prefer the Florida Treaty over the Transcontinental Treaty but am willing to follow the lead of Philip Brooks and compromise on the more neutral Adams-Onís Treaty. See Philip Coolidge Brooks, *Diplomacy And The Borderlands: The Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819* (Berkeley: University Of California Press, 1939), pp. vi.

of the treaty. Fifteen to twenty-five years after the signing of the treaty, when the issue of the annexation of Texas erupted onto the political agenda in the United States, the Adams-Onís treaty came under severe criticism for having given up U.S. rights to Texas. The belated critics of the treaty certainly had a point; in it the United States had abandoned the claims to Texas it possessed as a result of the Louisiana Purchase. Why? What persuaded John Quincy Adams to negotiate, President Monroe to approve, the Senate to ratify, and the nation to applaud a treaty that left Texas in the hands of Spain?

Given the importance of the Adams-Onís Treaty in the territorial expansion of the United States, the crucial role played by U.S. concessions regarding Texas in those negotiations, and the controversy that later arose concerning the relinquishment of U.S. claims to Texas, this question has received relatively little attention. While there are a number of excellent studies that investigate the course of the negotiations and follow Adams and Onís as they trace and retrace boundary lines across the continent,[4] a surprisingly small amount of time is spent discussing the motivations of the United States in making the concessions it did. This aspect of the negotiations is not only under-explored, but also, when it is addressed, the answer typically given is incorrect.

Perhaps the first to offer an account of the administration's motives in giving up the U.S. claim to Texas were the above-mentioned

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[4]The two most comprehensive studies of the negotiations are Brooks, *Diplomacy and The Borderlands*, pp. 81-98, 132-148 and 154-165; and Weeks, *John Quincy Adams And The American Global Empire*, pp. 59-84, 119-126, 135-138 and 149-165. For other extended treatments of the negotiations see Fuller, *The Purchase of Florida*, pp. 271-309; Bemis, *John Quincy Adams And The Foundations of American Foreign Policy*, pp. 318-334; Charles Carroll Griffin, *The United States And The Disruption Of The Spanish Empire 1810-1822* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937), pp. 69-96, 180-182 and 184-187; and Chadwick, *The Relations Of The United States And Spain*, pp. 121-125 and 138-139. The course of the negotiations can also be followed in *ASP: FR's*, vol. 4, pp. 422-626.

critics of the treaty who surfaced in the late 1830's and early 1840's during the debates over the possible annexation of Texas. For these critics, the key to the administration's motives is to be found in the debates over Missouri's admission, which exploded onto the political scene at the time that the Adams-Onís Treaty was before the nation. The administration, these critics argued, was eager to give up Texas to appease the opponents of the extension of slavery who were unwilling to see the further growth of slave territory and simultaneous increase in the political power of the South and West.

Andrew Jackson, who initially supported the treaty, was one such critic. Despite his earlier approval of the terms Adams had negotiated and the large role he played in bringing the treaty about, he later denounced the treaty as a deplorable surrender of the interests of the South and the West to the jealousy and hostility of the Northeast.[5] As one of his correspondents put it, the administration gave up Texas to Spain because "this Treaty was negotiated at the very time of the Missouri difficulty" and "the Senators from the non-Slave-holding states would not consent that Florida should be added to the Southern States unless Texas was given up."[6] A similar analysis was given by Thomas Hart Benton who saw the administration's fear of Northern opposition as "the secret reason for ceding Texas."[7]

This explanation of the administration's motives in negotiating the Adams-Onís Treaty has also been accepted by many historians. For

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[5]See Andrew Jackson to Colonel Anthony Butler, October 7, 1830; Jackson to Aaron V. Brown, February 9, [12], 1843; and Jackson to Francis P. Blair, October 24, 1844. In Bassett, *Correspondence of AJ*, vol. 4, pp. 183-184; and vol. 6, pp. 201-202 and 325-327.

[6]Major William B. Lewis to Andrew Jackson, January 4, 1845. See also Francis P. Blair to Jackson, October 19, 1838. Both are in Bassett, *Correspondence of AJ*, vol. 6, p. 360 and vol. 5, pp. 567-568.

[7]Benton, *Thirty Years View*, vol. 1, pp. 14-19.

example, Richard Sternberg argues that Adams knew that he could have gained Texas for the United States if he demanded it of Onís, but that the experience of the Missouri Crisis convinced Adams of the wisdom of limiting any territorial advancement in the Southwest.[8] In a recent restatement of this argument, William Weeks maintains "that Monroe's willingness to concede the claim to Texas stemmed from his fears of adding more potential slave territory to the Union, not as a prerequisite for securing the Floridas from Spain."[9]

This explanation for the territorial limits accepted by the United States in the negotiations with Spain is mistaken. Texas was not given up to Spain because the administration feared the domestic consequences of expansion but because it was the only way to conclude a treaty that secured Florida for the United States. Texas was given up to Spain because the administration and the Senate feared the international consequences of Florida remaining in the hands of a foreign power. In short, with eyes fixed upon the security of the nation, the United States decided to trade Texas for Florida. The administration decided and the Senate agreed that the possession of Florida was vital to the national security of the United States but that the possession of Texas was not. In a popular image that took advantage of the peculiar shape of the territory in question, Florida was likened to a gun that had "its muzzle pressed against the nation's life artery, the Mississippi River."[10] "People used to say that whoever possessed the Floridas held a pistol at the heart

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[8]Richard R. Sternberg, "The Boundaries Of The Louisiana Purchase" *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 14, 1 (February 1934), p. 54.
[9]Weeks, *John Quincy Adams and American Global Empire*, pp. 168.
[10]Bemis, *John Quincy Adams and the Foundations of American Foreign Policy*, p. 302.

of the Republic."[11] The administration and the nation as a whole were happy to give up Texas to take this powerful weapon out of the hands of a foreign power.

However, merely saying that the United States was willing to trade Texas for Florida to protect the security of the nation is at best a partial answer. It tells us what interest the United States was looking to further, but it does not explain why the Monroe administration and the treaty's supporters believed that the acquisition of Florida would best protect that interest. What led them to believe that the best way to protect the nation's security was to acquire Florida, even if that meant relinquishing the country's claim to Texas? A focus on interests alone can not answer that question.

The argument advanced in this chapter is that an understanding of the historical analogy policy makers derived from the recent experience of the War of 1812 is a necessary component of any explanation of why the United States made the treaty it did in 1819. British activities in Florida during that war convinced many in the United States that the acquisition of Florida was vital to national security. As discussed in Chapter Two, after seeing the British use Florida as a launching pad for invasion and as a base from which to encourage and arm attacks on the southern frontier of the United States, many Americans came to the conclusion that the security of the country required that Florida be taken out of foreign hands. By sacrificing U.S. claims to Texas to acquire Florida, supporters of the Adams-Onís treaty were simply following the lessons of the War of 1812.

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[11]Dangerfield, *The Era of Good Feelings*, p. 127.

Other analogies were available and would have led the United States to different negotiating stances. For example, had the administration selected the Louisiana Purchase analogy as the relevant guide it would have eschewed making any significant concessions in Texas and would have opted to wait until increased U.S. settlement and increased European troubles made Spain less demanding. However, the administration's judgments regarding the relative levels of international and domestic threats they were facing and their assessments of causal similarities led them to see the British invasion of Florida as the most apt analogy, which led them to the conclusion that the immediate acquisition of Florida was vital to the security of the United States.

After exploring U.S. policy towards Florida prior to the War of 1812, this chapter then discusses why the British invasion of Florida, rather than other possibilities, was accepted as the relevant analogy and how the lessons of that experience helped determine the actions of the United States regarding the negotiation and ratification of the Adams-Onís treaty.

EARLIER MOVES ON FLORIDA

The U.S. desire for Florida did not originate during the Monroe administration or during the War of 1812. In fact, even before the United States had achieved its independence, acquisitive colonists had at various times set their sights on wresting Florida from the hands of Spain.[12] However, it was only after the formative experience of

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[12]Fuller, *The Purchase of Florida*, p. 16.

watching the British use Florida as a military base during the War of 1812 that the acquisition of Florida for security reasons was placed on the top of the political agenda in the United States.

Aspirations for Florida sprang from a variety of sources: First, commercially Florida was seen as valuable because the rivers that ran through it provided an essential outlet to the sea for U.S. products. Second, taking Florida would also increase the amount of land available to U.S. settlers. And finally, at least some Americans viewed Florida as significant for security reasons. Speaking of the Floridas as early as 1776, Benjamin Franklin maintained that "It is absolutely necessary for us to have them for our own security"[13] However, before the War of 1812, few agreed with Franklin and America's policy towards Florida was dominated by the U.S.'s agrarian and commercial desires. Only after the War of 1812 demonstrated the dangers of leaving the "Florida pistol" in foreign hands did the security argument come to the fore.[14]

The first concerted effort by the United States to acquire Florida took place under the administration of Thomas Jefferson. In the talks that would eventually result in the Louisiana Purchase, the U.S. negotiators were instructed not to buy Louisiana, but to purchase New Orleans and as much of Florida as possible.[15] The desire of the United States to take possession of Florida at this time had little to do with security. Instead, the administration was primarily motivated by commercial and agrarian concerns.[16]

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[13]Quoted in Julius W. Pratt, *Expansionists of 1812* (New York: Peter Smith, 1949), pp. 17-18.
[14]On the U.S.'s desire for Florida prior to 1812 see Pratt, *Expansionists of 1812*, pp. 12 and 60-67.
[15]See Tucker and Hendrickson, *Empire of Liberty*, pp. 87-171; Deconde, *This Affair of Louisiana*, pp. 134-136; and Ammon, *James Monroe*, pp. 203-224.
[16]Tucker and Hendrickson, in *Empire For Liberty*, stress the agrarian motive (pp. 157-162) and Chadwick, in *Relations of The United States and Spain*, stresses the commercial motive (pp. 35 and 40-

When rumors surfaced that Spain had ceded Florida to France, Secretary of State Madison instructed the U.S. Minister to France to try to obtain Florida, "or at least West Florida, through which several of our rivers, particularly the important river Mobile, empty themselves into the sea."[17] James Monroe, who was sent as a special envoy to negotiate for the acquisition of New Orleans and Florida, was instructed that if he could not gain the territory, he should work on at least securing commercial rights for the United States in those areas.[18]

The purchase of Louisiana in April of 1803 did not end U.S. efforts to acquire Florida, it only made the future discussions between Spain and the United States over the control of Florida more complicated. The source of these complications was the ambiguous terms of the Louisiana agreement, which left the borders between United States and Spanish territory vague in both Florida and Texas. Regarding Florida, the United States claimed a large chunk of the Spanish province of West Florida maintaining that Louisiana included all the territory from the Iberville River (near New Orleans) to the Perdido River (which today is the western boundary of the State of Florida); a claim that Spain denied.[19] To the west, the United States claimed that the Louisiana Purchase extended all the way to the Rio Grande; a claim that Spain also denied. These contradictory claims produced a mountain of correspondence between the United States and Spain and the issues

41). Both discredit the security motive. James R. Sofka also stresses the commercial motive, but places commercial concerns at the center of Jefferson's overall national security concerns, "The Jeffersonian Idea of National Security: Commerce, The Atlantic Balance of Power and the Barbary War, 1786-1805" *Diplomatic History* 21,4 (Fall 1997): 519-544, see especially, p. 520.

[17]James Madison to Robert Livingston, September 28, 1801 in *ASP: FR's*, vol. 2, pp. 510-511.

[18]James Madison to Monroe, February 17, 1803 in *ASP: FR's*, vol. 2, pp. 532-533.

[19]The division between the Spanish provinces of East and West Florida was Apalachicola River.

involved would not be settled until Adams and Onís signed their treaty in 1819.[20]

Following the Purchase of Louisiana, James Monroe traveled to Madrid to fix a boundary with Spain that would secure Florida for the United States. At this point commercial concerns still dominated U.S. thinking. Monroe saw no military threat from Florida and was willing to drop the claims to the territory in West Florida, provided that Spain gave the United States full rights to navigate the rivers of Florida. These negotiations failed as Spain was unwilling to part with Florida, and the Jefferson administration, satisfied with the acquisition of New Orleans, was unwilling to put its full weight behind the negotiations.[21]

If there were a few prescient individuals who were convinced that Florida could "serve as a convenient base of operations against the United States" and that Florida "while in alien hands, presented a menace of possible invasion"[22]; their numbers were certainly small. Satisfied with the commercial benefits offered by New Orleans, the Jefferson administration was content to see Florida remain Spanish. While the United States continued to argue that much of West Florida belonged to it as a result of the Louisiana Purchase, the Jefferson administration did nothing to evict the Spanish from the disputed territory in West Florida

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[20]On the issue of the contradictory territorial claims arising out of the Louisiana Purchase see, Deconde, *This Affair Of Louisiana*, pp. 169-171, 213-219, and 227; Tucker and Hendrickson, *Empire of Liberty*, pp. 139-144; Wanjohi Waciuma, *Intervention in Spanish Floridas 1801-1813: A Study in Jeffersonian Foreign Policy* (Boston: Branden Press, 1976) pp. 24-30, 33-37, 40-56, 84, and 103; Sternberg, "The Boundaries of The Louisiana Purchase," pp. 32-64; Brooks, *Diplomacy and The Borderlands*, pp. 38-43; Fuller, *The Purchase of Florida*, pp. 126-145; Weeks, *John Quincy Adams And American Global Empire*, pp. 25-26; Ammon, *James Monroe*, pp. 213-214; Chadwick, *Relations Of The United States And Spain*, pp. 64-69; and Griffin, *The United States and the Disruption of the Spanish Empire*, pp. 21-22.
[21]Ammon, *James Monroe*, pp. 236-243; Waciuma, *Intervention in Spanish Floridas*, pp. 41-42; Brooks, *Diplomacy and the Borderlands*, pp. 6-8.
[22]Pratt, *Expansionists of 1812*, pp. 67-68.

or to secure the acquisition of East Florida. It would take a war and a British invasion to make the acquisition of Florida a top priority.

One person who probably deserves credit for a certain degree of foresight in seeing the danger Florida presented to the United States even before the British had used it as a military base during the War of 1812 was James Madison, who succeeded Jefferson in the White House.[23] As the possibility of war with Great Britain grew, the President directed a number of attempts to acquire Florida. However, his efforts were only partially successful. Between 1810 and 1813 the administration did succeed in taking control of the portion of West Florida claimed by the United States, but Madison's efforts to attain the eastern part of Florida in order to keep it out of the hands of the British failed. While Congress was willing to go along with Madison when his efforts were limited to the portion of Florida most important to the commerce of the Western States and an area that America had claimed since the Louisiana Purchase, it was unwilling to sanction the administration's provocative efforts to take the rest Florida from Spain. As long as the British threat to the United States through Florida remained merely hypothetical, the United States failed to put its full weight behind the efforts to get all of Florida, and as a result, all of Florida east of the Perdido remained in the hands of Spain.

Madison's first move came in 1810 following a rebellion in West Florida launched, with U.S. assistance, by a number of the inhabitants of the area, most of whom were immigrants from the United States. Given

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[23]According to Paul Varg, "James Madison lived in fear that the Florida's would serve as a strategic area from which some powerful European nation could attack the United States." See *United States Foreign Relations 1820-1860* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1979) p. 11.

the importance of that portion of Florida for the commerce of the West and the fact that the United States had claimed that territory since the Louisiana Purchase, Madison was able to authorize the occupation of all the territory west of the Perdido River without the need for any further Congressional authorization. U.S. troops quickly took control of most of West Florida, although the Spanish were not driven out of their stronghold at Mobile until 1813 and West Florida from the Perdido to the Apalachicola remained under the sovereignty of Spain.[24]

Madison did not intend to stop at West Florida, but hoped to take all of Florida from Spain. However, his efforts to add any of the territory east of the Perdido were frustrated by a Senate that feared a war with Spain and did not accept the administration's arguments about a pending British threat to the United States through Florida. The furthest Congress was willing to go was to pass a secret resolution authorizing the President to take the rest of Florida provided that the local authorities agreed to hand it over to the United States or if the territory was in danger of falling into the hands of a foreign power. This resolution did not state that such a threat existed, it only authorized the president to occupy Florida if such a threat could be shown to exist.[25]

Unwilling to wait for the British threat to materialize, the administration hoped to repeat the success they had experienced west of

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[24]On the acquisition of this portion of West Florida see Isaac Joslin Cox, *The West Florida Controversy, 1789-1813* (Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins Press, 1918); Waciuma, *Intervention In Spanish Floridas*, pp. 139-195; Brooks, *Diplomacy and the Borderlands*, pp. 34-37; Fuller, *The Purchase of Florida*, pp. 182-186; Pratt, *Expansionists of 1812*, pp. 63-65 and 72-73; Chadwick, *Relations Of the United States and Spain*, pp. 112-114; Griffin, *The United States and the Disruption of the Spanish Empire*, pp. 28-30; and Remini, *Henry Clay*, pp. 64-67.

[25]Act of January 15, 1811, *Annals*, 15th Cong., 1 sess., pp. 2601-2602. See also Waciuma, *Intervention In Spanish Floridas*, pp. 201-212; Fuller, *The Purchase of Florida*, pp. 186-188; and Pratt, *Expansionists of 1812*, pp. 73-81.

the Perdido River by tacitly authorizing a special agent to foment rebellion in the rest of Spanish Florida. This agent, General George Mathews, did succeed in initiating a quasi-rebellion in the northern section of East Florida and taking control of much of the Spanish territory. Under Mathews's direction, a "rebel" force, composed mainly of members of the Georgia militia and other citizens of the United States, with the assistance of the U.S. military, took possession of a number of Spanish positions in East Florida and then handed the territory over to the U.S. forces following in its wake. Mathews maintained that his actions were within the law claiming that the largely American rebel force he had helped to create was the "local authority" in Florida and that the secret resolution of 1811 therefore gave him the power to receive Florida from them.[26]

Embarrassed by the extent to which Mathews had directly involved the United States and its armed forces in the "revolution" in East Florida, the administration disowned the General's actions and dismissed him from service. However, the administration was unwilling to part with the fruits of his labors when a war with Great Britain was looming on the horizon. Thus, while the administration censured Mathews for his actions, it also delayed handing the territory back to Spain and worked for a Congressional resolution authorizing the

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[26]On Mathews' efforts in East Florida and the administration's tacit approval of them see Rufus Kay Wyllys, "The East Florida Revolution of 1812-1814" *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 9,4 (November 1929): 415-445; Waciuma, *Intervention in Spanish Floridas*, pp. 212-285; Pratt, *Expansionists of 1812*, pp. 72-108; Brooks, *Diplomacy and the Borderlands*, pp. 30-34; Fuller, *The Purchase of Florida*, pp. 190-196; and Ammon, *James Monroe*, pp. 306-307.

occupation. The declaration of war against Great Britain on June 18, 1812 only solidified the administration's intent to hold on to Florida.[27]

During the war with Great Britain the administration tried on two separate occasions to get a Congressional resolution authorizing the occupation of Florida as a war measure necessary to keep the territory out of the hands of the British. The administration even went so far as to assemble three separate bodies of troops and prepare them for an invasion of Florida that they expected to launch right after receiving Congressional authorization. The first attempt to get Congress's blessing was made in July of 1812 and the second attempt was made in January and February of 1813. Both attempts failed. Even in the midst of a war, too many members of the Senate simply did not share Monroe's fear that the country was in serious danger of a British invasion through Florida.[28] Following its defeat in the Senate, the administration dismissed the troops it had planned to use in the invasion (except those that were used to finally evict the Spanish from Mobile) and ordered the withdrawal of the troops already within Florida, which was completed by the end of May 1813.

In attending to these military moves, Madison did not neglect the possibilities diplomacy held for the achievement of his ends in Florida. The administration initiated attempts in Washington, in Madrid, and at

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[27]On the administration's reaction to Mathews and attempts to delay a U.S. withdrawal see Pratt, *Expansionists of 1812*, pp. 108-119 and 189-195; Waciuma, *Intervention in Spanish Floridas*, pp. 286-289 and 303-335; Wyllys, "The East Florida Revolution of 1812-1814," pp. 439-445; Fuller, *The Purchase of Florida*, pp. 196-197; and Ammon, *James Monroe*, p. 307.

[28]See Pratt, *Expansionists of 1812*, pp. 150-151 and 219-235; Waciuma, *Intervention in Spanish Floridas*, pp. 347-359; Ammon, *James Monroe*, pp. 307-309; Fuller, *The Purchase of Florida*, pp. 200-202; Brooks, *Diplomacy and the Borderlands*, pp. 36-37; Wyllys, "The East Florida Revolution of 1812-1814," pp. 442-445; Griffin, *The United States and the Disruption of The Spanish Empire*, p. 30; and Chadwick, *Relations of the United States and Spain*, p. 116. Pratt's excellent discussion of these failures in the Senate also stresses the role played by sectional and party politics in these votes.

the peace negotiations for the War of 1812 to try to gain Florida through negotiations. These efforts also failed.[29] Thus, by the end of 1813 the administration had succeeded in taking the parts of West Florida claimed under the Louisiana Purchase, but had failed to wrest the remaining portions of Florida from the hands of Spain. With a Senate that did not see the occupation of Florida as necessary for the security of the country and an administration unwilling to risk crossing Congress on this issue,[30] most of Florida continued to lie outside the control of the United States. Thus, the situation with regard to most of Florida remained largely what it had been since 1803 and the Louisiana Purchase: the United States still coveted Florida and continued to expect that someday Florida would belong to the United States, but at the same time the United States felt no sense of urgency regarding its acquisition.[31] The status quo was acceptable.

However, from the standpoint of the United States this status quo soon became untenable. The British use of Florida as a military base from which to attack the United States made Spain's continued sovereignty over Florida unacceptable to the United States. As was discussed in Chapter Two, the experience of the British invasion taught the United States that it was vital for the security of the country that Florida be taken out of foreign hands. The following section illustrates

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[29]On these negotiations see Brooks, *Diplomacy and the Borderlands*, pp. 22-25; Pratt, *Expansionists of 1812*, pp. 70-71, 195-196, 210-211, 215 and 235-236; Waciuma, *Intervention in Spanish Floridas*, pp. 359-362; and Griffin, *The United States and the Disruption of the Spanish Empire*, pp. 32-33.

[30]Contrast the negative reception given by the Madison administration to Mathews's invasion of Florida with the strong support the Monroe administration would give to Jackson's invasion of Florida in 1818, which is discussed below.

[31]DeConde, *This Affair of Louisiana*, p. 178 and Tucker and Hendrickson, *Empire of Liberty*, pp. 138 and 145-148.

how this lesson drove U.S. foreign policy towards Spain and resulted in
the signing of the Adams-Onís Treaty.

TRADING FLORIDA FOR TEXAS

"For territory ceded by Spain other territory of great value, to which
our claim was believed to be well founded, was ceded by the United
States"

-James Monroe[32]

Though the negotiations that resulted in the Adams-Onís treaty
dealt with a number of issues, stripped to its essentials, the treaty was
basically an exchange of territories. In return for gaining Florida from
Spain, the United States agreed to give up the debatable claim to Texas it
had acquired as a result of the Louisiana Purchase. As critics of the
treaty have since pointed out, in some ways this trade was very
disadvantageous to the United States: Texas was close to twice the size
of Florida and it possessed much richer farm land. Why did the United
States make this trade? The argument offered here is that having
learned the lessons of the War of 1812 regarding the importance of
Florida for the security of the United States, the country was willing to
trade the non-vital territory of Texas for the essential territory of
Florida. Had the administration used a different analogy to determine
what policies would best advance America's interests, U.S. policy would

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[32]Third Annual Message, December 7, 1819 in James D. Richardson, ed., *A Compilation of The
Messages and Papers of the Presidents* (New York: Bureau of National Literature, 1897), vol. 2, p.
624. (Hereafter simply *Messages and Papers*).

have been different. For example, had Adams and Monroe seen the Louisiana Purchase analogy as relevant, they would have not have made significant concessions in Texas, as that analogy would have recommended a policy of waiting for a more favorable opportunity.

Onís, who was naturally proud and defensive of the treaty he had produced, resented that the agreement he had spent close to three years negotiating was sometimes portrayed as a treaty of cession. He denied that he had ceded Florida to the United States and asserted that he had traded "one small province, for another of double the extent, richer and more fertile." Onís regretted that the language of the treaty itself was not more explicit regarding the exchange of territories, but after maintaining for years in his arguments with Adams that Texas already belonged to Spain, he found himself unable to reverse his stand on Texas at the last moment.[33]

Under the influence of the 1812 analogy, the United States entered the negotiations with Spain determined to possess Florida, but, in the words of the British Minister, "really indifferent" regarding the Western boundary.[34] To ensure that these negotiations succeeded and that Florida would come under the control of the United States, Adams was willing to make concession after concession in Texas. Maintaining that all of Texas belonged to the United States by rights gained in the Louisiana

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[33]Luis de Onís, *Memoir upon the negotiations between Spain and the United States, which led to the treaty of 1819: with a statistical notice of that country accompanied with an appendix, containing important documents for the better illustration of the subject*, Tobias Watkins, trans., (Washington D.C.: E. De Krafft Printer, 1821), pp. 146-147. Onís was apparently not the only one who resented this impression, for in an edition of Fuller's *The Purchase of Florida* that was sponsored by the State of Florida (Gainseville: The University of Florida Press, 1964), the editors include a preface denying that Florida was purchased from Spain (an impression arising from the fact that the United States agreed to pay a maximum of five million dollars to liquidate all financial claims held against Spain by U.S. citizens), but was instead traded for Texas, pp. xi-xiii.

[34]Charles Bagot, quoted in Weeks, *John Quincy Adams and American Global Empire*, p. 78.

Purchase, Adams used concessions in Texas to make the loss of Florida palatable to Spain. To entice Spain to cede Florida, Adams slowly gave up more and more of Texas. First he agreed to relinquish the U.S. claim to all the land between the Rio Grande and the Colorado River, later he agreed to move the boundary further east to the Trinity River, and finally by the end of the negotiations Adams ceded all of Texas (agreeing to the Sabine river as the boundary between U.S. and Spanish possessions). In this way, Texas was traded for Florida.[35]

Why make these concessions? As Spain was unwilling to cede Florida without a favorable agreement regarding Texas, why not use the strategy that Jefferson had adopted with regard to the Louisiana Purchase and simply wait for troubles in Europe to worsen and Spain to become more forthcoming? The reason such a strategy was not adopted was because the Monroe administration did not see the Louisiana

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[35]Adams's concessions in Texas during the negotiations can be followed in any of the works cited above in footnote number four. The most important aspect of the treaty that the quick sketch offered here omits is a discussion of the role played in the negotiations by the territory of Oregon, a role some analysts have seen as quite important. For example, in *John Quincy Adams and American Global Empire*, Weeks argues that Texas was traded for Oregon and not Florida: "the point to be emphasized is that conceding the claim to Texas was not necessary to obtain the Floridas. Acquisition of the Floridas was assured as of Onís's offer of 24 January 1818. The concession of Texas was first proposed in July 1818 in exchange for a transcontinental boundary." (p. 167; see also p. 25). However, I do not think that this claim can be sustained. The offer of January 24, 1818, referred to by Weeks did not simply offer to cede Florida to the United States for nothing; instead, Onís offered to cede Florida only if the United States gave up all of Texas (and a small part of Louisiana and much of the Mississippi and Missouri river valleys). So in no way was the acquisition of Florida, without the cession of Texas, assured in January of 1818. In fact, throughout the entire negotiations, Spain was absolutely unwilling to consider ceding Florida without a favorable resolution regarding the U.S.'s western border. At no point in the negotiations could Adams have gotten Florida without significant concessions in Texas (although Onís was permitted to accept less of Texas than Adams eventually offered, naturally Adams did not know this.) For this reason, and Adams's willingness to eventually cede Texas I think it more accurate to see the treaty in terms of a trade of Texas for Florida and not a trade of Texas for Oregon. In fact, although Weeks does a good job of documenting "the secretary of state's tenacious struggle for every square inch and every watercourse in the Northwest" (p. 167) his account also makes it clear that Adams did make some concessions with regard to Oregon and that the only area where Adams refused to make any territorial concessions was Florida. For other accounts that agree with the contention offered here that Texas was traded for Florida and not Oregon, see, Brooks, *Diplomacy and the Borderlands*, pp. 156 and 162; and Bemis, *John Quincy Adams and The Foundations of American Foreign Policy*, p. 340.

experience as a valid guide. A crucial causal factor in America's success in 1803 was that United States could afford to wait for France to offer a favorable deal. This causal factor was now absent, the Monroe administration believed that it could not afford to wait. This crucial causal difference between the current situation and the one faced by Jefferson made the Lousiana Purchase an unattractive source of historical lessons for Monroe and Adams. The British attacks on the United States from Florida during the War of 1812 convinced them that Florida must be acquired as soon as possible. The national security interests of the United States mandated it, even if it meant making significant concessions in Texas.

Direct negotiations with Spain began soon after the end of the War of 1812, though those negotiations were delayed for some time by the civil war in Spain resulting from the Napoleanic wars and the failure of the United States to recognize Luis de Onís as the legitimate representative of Spain.[36] Immediately following his recognition, the Spanish Minister got a good taste of what the next few years held in store; in his first official exchange of correspondence with the United States, Onís was greeted with an appeal for the cession of Florida and a statement of the lessons of the War of 1812. James Monroe, who was then Secretary of State, wasted no time calling for Spain to give Florida to the United States and complaining of:

> the breaches of the neutrality of the Spanish, which her
> Government permitted, if it did not authorize, by British

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[36]Onís was in the United States close to six years before he was officially recognized in December of 1815, though he did engage in informal discourse with the administration before that time. Onís, *Memoir upon the negotiation*, pp. 11-17.

troops and British agents in Florida, and, throughout that province with the Creeks and other Indian tribes, in the late war with Great Britain to the great injury of the United States.[37]

Onís, who did not yet have the power to negotiate a treaty that would entail the relinquishment of Florida, could only claim that if the British had used Florida to injure the United States, they had done it against the will of Spain.[38] Unwilling to let Onís's lack of powers to negotiate a treaty come between the United States and Florida, Monroe instructed and empowered the U.S. Minster to Spain, George Erving, to begin negotiations for Florida in Madrid. This shift in location for the negotiations did not diminish America's desire for Florida or the influence of the 1812 analogy. When Erving announced to the Spanish Foreign Minister that he had be given the power to negotiate a comprehensive settlement with Spain, he too opened the negotiations with a call for the cession of Florida, which he considered especially important given what happened during the War of 1812. Erving's call for Florida was supported by the following complaints:

> 1st. The encouragement which was given by the Spanish authorities in East Florida to the Indian tribes in Georgia, and generally on the southern frontier to make war on the U.S.
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> 2d. The aid given to them in that war
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> 3d. The aid afforded to Great Britain, by permitting supplies to be sent through East Florida to the Indian tribes;

[37]Monroe to Luis de Onís, January 19, 1816, in *ASP: FR's*, vol. 4, p. 425.
[38]Luis de Onís to James Monroe, February 22, 1816, in *ASP: FR's*, vol. 4, pp. 426-429.

and afterwards by allowing her to establish a place of arms
in that province, for the purpose of encouraging and
supporting the Indians in their savage war.[39]

The talks in Madrid lasted only a short time and in a move
designed to delay the negotiations, Spain shifted them back to the United
States.[40] At this time there was a brief lull in the negotiations as Onís
waited to receive his orders and the recently elected James Monroe
formed his cabinet. Under Monroe, chief responsibility for the Florida
negotiations fell upon the shoulders of the newly appointed Secretary of
State, John Quincy Adams. Adams, who had been one of the U.S.
representatives at the peace negotiations that had ended the War of 1812
and who had most recently been the U.S. minister to Great Britain,
where he had complained to the London government regarding hostile
British actions in Florida,[41] was well versed in the lessons of the late
war. Like Monroe and Erving, the experience of the war played a large
role in his thinking and the lessons of that war continued to loom large
in the negotiations with Spain.

Adams too saw the acquisition of Florida as necessary for the
security of the country and in his negotiations with Onís he attempted to
persuade the Spanish to yield this vital province. In his view, the
experience of the War of 1812 should be enough to convince anyone,
even the Spanish, that the United States needed to control Florida.
Adams explained to Onís that well before the War of 1812, some in the

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[39]George Erving to Pedro de Cevallos, August 26, 1816, in *ASP: FR's*, vol. 4, p. 434.

[40]Pedro de Cevallos to George Erving, September 15, 1816 and Erving to James Monroe, September 27, 1816, in *ASP: FR's*, vol. 4, pp. 435 and 437.

[41]Bemis, *John Quincy Adams and The Foundations of American Foreign Policy*, pp. 228-229 and 303-304.

United States had warned Spain that in the event of war, Florida "will be much exposed to the danger of being taken possession of by some foreign power." "You know sir," Adams continued, "how far the events, thus anticipated, ... have been realized. Pensacola has been occupied by another Power, for the purpose of carrying on war from it against the United States."[42] What may have been debatable before the war was no longer in question after the war; Florida must belong to the United States.

The belief that at the War of 1812 demonstrated that the possession of Florida was necessary for the security of the United States was not limited the Monroe administration. Instead, this belief permeated the entire government and population of the country. One person who perhaps most closely felt the effects of the 1812 analogy on the United States was the Spanish Minister, who had to find some way of dealing with this overwhelming demand for Florida. Sensing the effects of the analogy Onís expressed a certain sense of fatalism as he argued that "it is irrevocably decided in their politics that these provinces [Florida] must be theirs, amicably, or forcibly: and there is nothing at present to prevent it; locked up and surrounded as they are by the territory of the Union, with ten millions of inhabitants so disposed as to prevent any foreign nation from setting foot in them."[43]

To satisfy this sweeping demand that Florida be added to the United States, Adams was willing to go further than just offering to trade Texas for Florida, he was also willing to apply diplomatic and

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[42]John Quincy Adams to Luis de Onís, March 12, 1818. See also Adams to Onís November 30, 1818, both in *ASP: FR's*, vol. 4, pp. 478 and 545-546.

[43]Onís, *Memoir upon the negotiations*, p. 82.

military pressure to coerce Spain.[44] During discussions with the Spanish Minister, Adams urged Onís "to come to an early conclusion of the Florida negotiations," threatening that if he did not, then "Spain would not have the possession of Florida to give us."[45] To persuade the Spanish to take his warnings seriously, Adams backed up his ominous threats with a program designed to exert military pressure on Spain on a number of fronts.

Latin America was one of the fronts of Adams's diplomatic assault. At the time of the Florida negotiations, Spain was embroiled in a campaign to win back many of its colonies throughout the hemisphere who had taken advantage of Spain's recent domestic and international turmoil by declaring independence. To compel the Spanish to become more forthcoming regarding the cession of Florida, Adams hinted that if Spain was not cooperative, the United States would make the task of regaining these colonies far more difficult by recognizing the insurgents. In addition to this diplomatic threat, Adams also applied direct military pressure on Spain throughout the Americas by doing very little to stop the many filibustering campaigns that were being supplied and launched from within the United States.[46]

However, the front where Adams exerted the most pressure was in Florida itself. The military moves taken by the United States within

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[44]On Adams's strategy of pressuring Spain during the negotiations see Weeks, *John Quincy Adams and American Global Empire*, especially pp. 53-54.

[45]*Memoirs of JQA*, January 14, 1818, vol. 4, p. 42. See also John Quincy Adams to Luis de Onís, January 16, 1818, in *ASP: FR's*, vol. 4, pp. 463-464.

[46]*Memoirs of JQA*, July 22, 1818; December 11, 1818; December 28, 1818; January 2, 1819; and January 3, 1819, vol. 4, pp. 115-116, 190, 198-200, 204-207, and 208-210. See also Waciuma, *Intervention in Spanish Floridas*, pp. 99-102; Griffin, *The United States and the Disruption of the Spanish Empire*, pp. 183-184; and Bemis, *John Quincy Adams and The Foundations of American Foreign Policy*, pp. 305-306.

Florida during the negotiations certainly buttressed the administration's threat that if Spain did not give up Florida soon, the territory would not be its to give. The administration's first move into Florida, the occupation of Amelia Island, was a relatively modest one. Amelia Island, located off the Atlantic coast of Florida just south of the border of Georgia, was nominally under the control of the Spanish Governor of East Florida. However, in June of 1817, the island was taken over by a band of pirates/privateers acting in the name of the insurgent Latin-American republics. As the Spanish forces in the area were too weak to regain the island, the Monroe administration decided to take advantage of this opportunity to increase the pressure on Spain by evicting those that had run the Spanish off the island, occupying the island, and keeping it for bargaining leverage. On December 23, 1817, U.S. forces occupied the island and by January the administration publicly announced the seizure and their decision to hold onto the island.[47]

The administration's determination to take the island by force and Congress's acceptance of that decision clearly show the influence of the experience of the British activities in Florida during the late war. President Monroe defended the legality of his action based upon the law of January 15, 1811, that authorized the President to take over any portion of Florida in danger of passing into the hands of a foreign power and he announced that "care will be taken that no part of the territory contemplated by the law of 1811 shall be occupied by a foreign

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[47]On the administration's decision to take and hold Amelia Island see *Memoirs of JQA*, October 30, 1817, November 14, 1817, December 26, 1817, January 6, 1818, January 9, 1818, May 13, 1818, vol. 4, pp. 15, 20-21, 31-32, 35-37, and 91-93; Weeks, *John Quincy Adams and American Global Empire*, pp. 56-58 and 62-67; Ammon, *James Monroe*, pp. 412-414 and 417-418; and Chadwick, *Relations of the United States and Spain*, pp. 125-127.

government of any kind."[48] Unlike the reaction accorded to Mathews's seizure of Amelia Island and other parts of East Florida in 1812, this time Congress did not question whether there was a foreign threat to Florida that the United States had to be on guard against. The Committee that the House of Representatives commissioned to investigate Amelia's seizure commended the administration and argued that if any part of Florida:

> had been permitted to pass into the hands of such a power, the committee are persuaded it is quite unnecessary to point out to the discernment of the House the pernicious influence which such a destiny of the territories in question must have on the security, tranquillity, and commerce of this nation.[49]

The seizure of Amelia Island was a mere prelude to a far more ambitious assault on Florida that would soon put much of Spanish Florida under the control of the U.S. military. While Adams and Onís were negotiating in Washington, a war was raging on the border between the United States and Spanish Florida. The combatants in this war were not the United States and Spain, but the United States and the Seminoles. What started as a series of small skirmishes and attacks escalated quickly as every attack was followed by a spiraling series of reprisals. The Seminole War was bound to lead to a dispute with Spain as many of the Seminoles crossed the border into Spanish Florida in search of a safe haven from the U.S. attacks. Unwilling to let the

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[48]Monroe's Message of January 3, 1818, in *Annals*, 15 Cong., 1 sess., vol. 1, p. 113.
[49]House Committee Report on Amelia Island, January 10, 1818 in *Annals*, 15 Cong., 1 sess., vol. 1, p. 648. Adams was consulted by this committee and helped draft the report. See, Worthington Chauncey Ford, ed., *The Writings of John Quincy Adams* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1916) vol. 6, pp. 286-288.

Seminole forces retreat safely into Florida any time they were threatened by U.S. forces, the administration gave the local commander, General Gaines, the authority to cross into Florida in pursuit of the Seminoles provided he did not attack any Spanish posts.[50]

One individual who was eager to protect the West by chastising the Seminoles and ultimately forcing the Spanish out of Florida was General Andrew Jackson, who during the War of 1812 had done so much to frustrate the plans of the British in Florida. In December of 1817, Jackson wrote to the Department of War recommending an invasion of Florida because "the protection of our citizens will require that the wolf be struck in his den." He argued that the failure of the Spanish to restrain the Seminoles was a good enough reason for war and that the "frontier can not be protected without entering their country."[51] A few weeks later Jackson wrote directly to President Monroe to argue against putting any restraints on the army regarding Florida. Jackson asserted that "the arms of the United States must be carried into any point within the limits of East Florida" and recommended that all of East Florida be seized by the United States: "This done, it puts all opposition down, secures to our citizens a compleat indemnity, & saves us from a War with Great Britain, or some of the Continental Powers combined with Spain." Jackson argued that he could accomplish this without implicating the administration. All the General wanted was a covert sign

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[50]John C. Calhoun to Edmund Gaines, December 9, 1917 and December 16, 1817, in W. Edwin Hemphill, ed., *The Papers of John C. Calhoun* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1963) vol. 2, pp. 9 and 20-21. (Hereafter simply Hemphill, *Papers of JCC.*)
[51]Andrew Jackson to George Graham (John C. Calhoun) December 16, 1817, Moser, *Papers of AJ*, vol. 4, p. 161.

from the administration "that the possession of the Floridas would be desirable to the United States, & in sixty days it will be accomplished."[52]

Before Jackson's letters had reached Washington, the administration had already decided to place the "Hero of New Orleans" in charge of the troops prosecuting the Seminole War and Jackson was given a broad mandate "to adopt the necessary measures to terminate" the war.[53] While it is doubtful that, as Jackson later claimed, he ever got the covert authorization to take Florida that he had asked for, this is probably a case of silence equalling consent. The administration gave the General very broad orders and after being fully informed of Jackson's plans, the administration did nothing to restrain the General.[54]

With the administration approving, or at least looking the other way, Jackson began his campaign to drive the Spanish out of Florida. With a force of 5,000 men Jackson marched across the Florida border and down the Apalachicola River to occupy the site of the old Negro fort and build a U.S. garrison there. Jackson then moved eastward to take the Spanish fort of St. Marks and then marched another 100 miles to the east to destroy some Seminole settlements near the Suwannee River. Jackson then returned to St. Mark's, marched his troops approximately 250 miles towards the west and captured Pensacola, the capital of Spanish West Florida, and its surrounding forts. Still not content, Jackson then ordered General Gaines to capture St. Augustine, the

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[52]Andrew Jackson to James Monroe, January 6, 1818, Moser, *Papers of AJ*, vol. 4, p. 167.

[53]John C. Calhoun to Andrew Jackson, December 26, 1817, Moser, *Papers of AJ*, vol. 4, p. 163.

[54]As with most of the events of this period dealing with Andrew Jackson the best source is Remini's *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Empire*, see pp. 346-350. On the question of Jackson's orders see also, Weeks, *John Quincy Adams and American Global Empire*, pp. 106-109; Cunningham, *The Presidency of James Monroe*, pp. 57-58 and 67-68; Ammon, *James Monroe*, pp. 414-417; and Fuller, *The Purchase of Florida*, pp. 238-243.

capital of East Florida. However, before this order was carried out the administration stepped in and overruled Jackson's order. Jackson's invasion of Florida resulted in the capture of very few Seminoles, but it did succeed in wresting hundreds of miles of Florida from Spanish control.[55]

Jackson's defense of his invasion was suffused with the lessons of the War of 1812. Before the seizure of St. Marks, Jackson had written to Secretary of War Calhoun to explain his plans to take the fort. He argued that St. Marks had to be taken if the frontier was to be defended and if the war with the Seminoles was to end.[56] Elaborating on the motives behind his invasion after the capture of St. Mark's, Jackson argued that he was compelled to take the fort because the Seminoles in the area had been supplied and incited to attack the United States by British agents and the Spanish were too weak to do anything but cooperate in these attacks:

> No security can be given to our Southern frontier without
> occupying a cordon of Posts along the Sea Shore--The
> Moment the American Army retires from Florida, The War
> hatchet will be again raised. . . . So long as the Indians
> within the territory of Spain are exposed to the delusions of
> false prophets, and the poison of foreign intrigue; so
> long as they can receive ammunition, munitions of war &c

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[55]On the course of Jackson's invasion see Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Empire*, pp. 351-366; Weeks, *John Quincy Adams and American Global Empire*, pp. 110-112; Brooks, *Diplomacy and the Borderlands*, p. 139-141; Fuller, *The Purchase of Florida*, pp. 244-256; and Chadwick, *Relations of the United States and Spain*, pp. 127-132.

[56]Andrew Jackson to John C. Calhoun, March 25, 1818, *Annals*, 15 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 2, p. 2010.

from pretended Traders, or Spanish commandants it will be impossible to restrain their outrages.[57]

Before the occupation of Pensacola, Jackson wrote to the Governor of West Florida demanding the surrender of the city. Referring to the War of 1812, Jackson explained that this was not the first time that the United States had been compelled to take Pensacola and that the United States could not protect itself "if the Floridas are to be free to every enemy & on the pretext of policy or necessity Spanish fortresses are to be opened to their use."[58] After seizing Pensacola, Jackson justified his actions to the President and the Secretary of War as a step that was "absolutely necessary" to protect the country.

> As long as a cordon of military posts is maintained along the Gulf of Mexico, America has nothing to fear from either foreign or Indian hostilities. Indeed sir, to attempt to fortify or protect an imaginary line, or to suppose that a frontier on the thirty first degree of latitude [the northern border of Spanish Florida], in a wilderness can be secured . . . while the Floridas lay open to an enemy, is visionary in the extreme.[59]

Jackson's invasion presented the Monroe administration with a choice similar to the one faced by the Madison administration after Mathews's invasion of Florida. Should the General and his provocative actions be disowned, as Madison had done, or should the administration

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[57]Andrew Jackson to John C. Calhoun, May 5, 1818, Moser, *Papers of AJ*, vol. 4, p. 200. See also Jackson to Calhoun, April 8, 1818, vol. 4, pp. 189-91.

[58]Andrew Jackson to Jose Masot, May 23, 1818, Moser, *Papers of AJ*, vol. 4, p. 208.

[59]Andrew Jackson to James Monroe, June 2, 1818, Moser, *Papers of AJ*, vol. 4, pp. 213-214; Jackson to John C. Calhoun, June 2, 1818, in *Annals*, 15 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 2, pp. 2078-2079.

approve of the seizure of the Spanish posts? Facing this choice, the Monroe administration decided to reverse the precedent of its predecessor by refusing to censure the General. Having learned during the War of 1812 the importance of Florida for the security of the country, the administration was willing to risk a war with Spain and domestic criticism in order to use this invasion to strengthen its position in the negotiations for Florida.

At first the administration was divided over what to do about Jackson's invasion. Secretary of War Calhoun and the Secretary of the Treasury William Crawford came out strongly for censuring the General for exceeding his orders and violating the Constitution by carrying out a war against a state with which the United States was at peace; while Secretary of State Adams vehemently defended the General and his invasion on the grounds that Jackson's actions were necessary for the defense of the country and that to censure the General would only confirm Spain's determination to hold on to Florida. Monroe pursued a course that put him much closer to the views of his Secretary of State.[60] First, Jackson was not reprimanded. While the administration was willing to admit that Jackson had exceeded the letter of his orders, they did not censure him for doing so. Instead, the administration expressed its confidence that Jackson had done what he believed was in the best interest of the nation based upon the information he had at the time. Second, the administration refused to automatically hand the forts back to the Spanish. Having defended Jackson's actions as a necessary move

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[60]On the cabinet debates over Jackson's invasion *Memoirs of JQA*, May 4, 1818, June 18, 1818, and July 15-July 21, 1818, vol. 4, pp. 87, 102, and 108-115. See also Remini, *Andrew Jackson and The Course of American Empire*, pp. 366-370; Ammon, *James Monroe*, pp. 421-425; and Weeks, *John Quincy Adams and American Global Empire*, pp. 114-117.

of self defense, the administration decided to hold on to some of the positions he had taken until Spain could send enough reinforcements to adequately defend those forts.[61]

Like Jackson, Monroe and Adams viewed the events in Florida in terms of the lessons they had gathered from the War of 1812 and they were determined to use Jackson's invasion to their advantage in the negotiations for Florida. Monroe agreed completely with Jackson that the problems on the southern border were caused by "the agents of foreign powers" and the weakness and complicity of Spain.[62] Moreover, he saw in Jackson's invasion an excellent opportunity to secure the country from future threats by tightening the screws on Spain and forcing Madrid to cede Florida. By demonstrating "the incompetency of Spain to maintain her authority," Jackson had provided "a strong inducement to Spain to cede the territory"; which gave the United States a bargaining edge that Monroe refused to throw away by censuring the General. Gaining possession of Florida was too important.[63]

Adams's defenses of Jackson invariably referred to the British actions in Florida during the late war and Spain's acquiescence in those actions. The Secretary of State gave his most ardent defense of the General in a letter to George Erving where Adams instructed the U.S. Minister on how the complaints of Spain were to be answered. Adams

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[61]For the administration's defense of Jackson see most importantly, John Quincy Adams to George Erving, November 28, 1818. See also Adams to Luis de Onís, July 23, 1818, and Adams to Onís, August 24, 1818. All three are in *ASP: FR's*, vol. 4, pp. 539-545, 497-499 and 508-509. Monroe's position can be seen in James Monroe to Andrew Jackson, July 19, 1818, in Hamilton, *The Writings of James Monroe*, vol. 6, pp. 54-61.

[62] James Monroe to James Madison, July 10, 1818, in Hamilton, *The Writings of James Monroe*, vol. 6, pp. 53-54.

[63] James Monroe to Andrew Jackson, July 19, 1818, in Hamilton, *The Writings of James Monroe*, vol. 6, p. 58. See also Monroe to Thomas Jefferson July 22, 1818, and Monroe to James Madison, February 7, 1819, pp. 62-64 and 87-89.

wrote that he believed it was necessary to remind Spain of the causes of the problems the United States was having on its southern border. Adams dates the source of the troubles to 1814 and the British invasion of Florida. England's army:

> at a thousand miles or an ocean's distance from any British territory, landed in Florida, took possession of Pensacola and the Fort of Barrancas, and invited by public proclamations, all the runaway negroes, all the savage Indians, all the pirates and all the traitors to their country, whom they knew or imagined to exist within reach of their summons, to join their standard, and wage an exterminating war against the portion of the United States immediately bordering upon this neutral and thus violated territory of Spain.

Adams then recounts the exploits of Nicholls and his troops during and after the war, at the same time denouncing the Spanish for assisting them or at least doing nothing to stop them.

> What then was the character of Nicholls's invasion of his Majesty's territory? and where was his Majesty's profound indignation at that? Mr. Pizarro says, his Majesty's forts and places have been violently seized by General Jackson. Had they not been seized upon, nay, had not the principal of his forts been blown up by Nicholls, and a British fort on the same Spanish territory been erected during the war, and left standing as a negro fort, in defiance of Spanish authority, after the peace? Where was his Majesty's

> profound indignation at that? . . . But against the shameful
> invasion of the territory; against the violent seizure of the
> forts and places; against the blowing up of the Barrancas,
> and the erection and maintenance, under British banners, of
> the negro fort on Spanish soil . . . --if a whisper of
> expostulation was ever wafted from Madrid to London, it
> was not loud enough to be heard across the Atlantic.

Adams closed his defense of Jackson with a threat: if Spain could not protect the Florida border from foreign agents and the native Americans in the area, then the United States would take Florida again, only next time, they would not give it back.[64]

Andrew Jackson, after completing his second invasion of Florida was not even willing to give the forts back this time. Jackson worried that if the United States was to return these positions to the Spanish, "we will soon see our frontier deluged with blood, and Pensa[cola] garrisoned by Brittish [sic] troops."[65] He trusted that the administration would "never jeopardize the safety of the Union or the security of our frontier by surrendering those posts." The behavior of the Spanish since the beginning of the War of 1812, Jackson wrote, offers convincing proof that the United States could not be secure as long as Florida remained outside the control of the United States.[66]

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[64]John Quincy Adams to George Erving, November 28, 1818, in *ASP: FR's*, vol. 4, pp. 539-545. See also Adams to Luis de Onís, July 23, 1818 and August 24, 1818, pp. 497-499 and 508-509; and *Memoirs of JQA*, November 24, 1818, vol. 4, pp. 179-180. On Jackson's invasion and Adams's defense of it see James Chace and Caleb Carr, "The Odd Couple Who Won Florida and Half the West" *Smithsonian* 19,1 (April 1988): 134-160.

[65] Andrew Jackson to Richard Keith Call, August 5, 1818, Moser, *Papers of AJ*, vol. 4, p. 230.

[66]Andrew Jackson to John C. Calhoun, August 10, 1818, Moser, *Papers of AJ*, vol. 4, p. 231. See also Jackson to Calhoun, November 28, 1818, pp. 251-253.

Hoping that Florida would remain under U.S. control, Jackson commissioned Captain James Gadsen to prepare a report on how the existing fortifications in Spanish Florida needed to be improved and what additional forts needed to be built by the United States. The report Gadsen issued offers an excellent illustration of the impact that the lessons of the War of 1812 had on American thinking. The main conclusion of Gadsen's report is that it would be impossible to protect the southern portion of the United States with Florida in foreign hands. He supports his conclusion by arguing that, "This vulnerable point of our country did not escape the attention of the British during the late war." Gadsen then outlines the actions that the British did take in Florida during the war, explains the danger these actions presented to the country, and intimates that this danger remains alive as long as Spain controls Florida. However, the solution to this danger was as clear as the threat itself: "The possession of the Floridas removes all these fearful anticipations."[67]

Although the administration's decision to restore the posts was done against Jackson's advice, in virtually every other way the administration supported the General. They not only refused to criticize or censure him, but they also publicly applauded and defended his actions. However, the administration was not the sole judge of the General's actions. Congress too would have to decide whether to support the invasion or not. As was discussed above, in the midst of the

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[67]"The Defenses of The Floridas- A Report of Captain James Gadsen, Aide de Camp to General Andrew Jackson," August 1, 1818, *Florida Historical Quarterly* 15,4 (April 1937), pp. 245-246. For Jackson's comments on the report see Andrew Jackson to John C. Calhoun, August 10, 1818, Moser, *Papers of AJ*, vol. 4, pp. 231-232 and Andrew Jackson to James Monroe, August 10, 1818, in Bassett, *Correspondence of AJ*, vol. 2, p. 387.

war with Great Britain, but before that power had invaded Florida, the Congress, on two different occasions had refused to sanction the seizure of Florida. Now that an American commander had conquered Florida without Congressional authorization, how would the legislators react? Had the lessons of the War of 1812 penetrated the Capitol? Would the experience of a British invasion convince them of the need to possess Florida and thus lead them to sanction the General's action as the administration had?

The debate in Congress over Jackson's seizure of Florida began on January 12, 1819, when the House Committee on Military Affairs presented a majority and minority report to the House regarding the invasion. The majority report limited its focus to only one aspect of the invasion, namely, General Jackson's execution of two British subjects, Robert Ambrister and Alexander Arbuthnot, that he had found among the Seminoles during the Florida campaign.[68] The Committee's report condemned the General for his decision to execute these two men, but said nothing regarding the larger question of the invasion itself. The committee's minority did not limit themselves in this way, but instead presented a report approving of the invasion and Jackson's decision to execute Ambrister and Arbuthnot. A week later, Thomas Cobb of Georgia proposed a resolution disapproving of the entire invasion as an unconstitutional attack on the right of Congress to declare war.[69]

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[68]On the case presented to Congress against these two men, see the *Annals*, 15 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 2, pp. 2012-2063, 2081-2101, and 2136-2139.
[69]The majority report was presented by Mr. Nelson and the minority report was presented by Mr. Johnson, on January 12, 1819. Cobb's resolutions were proposed on January 18, 1819. *Annals*, 15 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 1, pp. 515-518, 518-527 and 583-597.

Cobb's resolution launched the longest debate that the House had ever seen up to that point, and for the next few weeks, the discussion of Jackson's invasion dominated the business of the House.[70] This debate provides a unique glimpse into the thinking of the legislature regarding Florida and its importance to the security of the United States at the time that the Adams-Onís Treaty was signed. The debate that the Senate conducted a month later on the treaty itself was held in secret session, and as a result, there is no record of that debate. Thus, the House debate on Jackson's invasion is the best source available for Congressional thinking regarding Florida at the time Adams and Onís were successfully concluding their negotiations.

What this debate demonstrates, is that the experience of the British invasion during the late war had indeed affected the thinking of the Congress regarding Florida: the lessons of the War of 1812 pervaded the discussion. In the first response offered to Cobb's resolution censuring Jackson, John Holmes of Massachusetts set the tone of the debate for the pro-Jackson forces when he justified the invasion by asking the Congress to think back to the experience of the late war, recall what the British had done in Florida, and remember how the Spanish had not lifted a finger to defend Florida's neutrality.[71] His invitation to reflect on the experience of the War of 1812 was eagerly accepted by his colleagues.

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[70]For this debate see the entire period from January 12, 1819 to February 8, 1819 in the *Annals*, 15 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 1, pp. 515-1138. See also Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Empire*, pp. 370-377; Weeks, *John Quincy Adams and American Global Empire*, pp. 158-160; and Cunningham, *The Presidency of James Monroe*, pp. 65-67.

[71]January 19, 1819, in *Annals*, 15 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 1, pp. 600-617, see especially pp. 601, and 605-610.

The speech of Richard Johnson offers one typical example. In his defense of Jackson he asked his peers to think about the consequences of Florida remaining in Spanish hands. What if Jackson had simply sat by and done nothing? What would the situation on the southern border be like? Johnson quickly answered his own question with; "Would it not have been the same as during the British War?" Johnson then argued that Congress should be delighted that Jackson had acted as decisively in 1818 as he had during the War of 1812. Or, Johnson asked, would the opponents of the General then and now prefer "that the Mississippi and its various waters . . . should have been jeopordized, that New Orleans should have passed from your power in the hands of the British?"[72] After framing the debate in terms of the lessons of the War of 1812, the answer to the question of what to do regarding Jackson's invasion of Florida was as obvious as the answers to all of Johnson's leading questions: Florida was necessary for our security, therefore Jackson's seizure must be defended.

George Strother of Virginia offers another example of this type of reasoning. He too took his defense of Jackson back to the hostile British activities in Florida during the War of 1812. He recalled how the British had:

> penetrated the Indian tribes through the Spanish territory,
> and aided by Spanish treachery, excited that unfortunate
> race to war. . . . It was the plan of the campaign to cut the
> United States in twain, by introducing a large military force
> to cooperate with the Indians. Recollect, sir, the

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[72]January 20, 1819, in *Annals*, 15 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 1, pp. 663-674, see especially pp. 662 and 665.

> proclamation of Nicholls. . . . No heart can conceive, no tongue can adequately describe, the calamities with which that region was threatened.

Viewing the importance of Florida for the security of the United States through the lens offered by the experience of the War of 1812, Strother, like many of his colleagues, came inescapably to the conclusion that the United States must possess Florida and therefore Jackson's invasion merited approval, not censure.[73]

Sentiments like the ones expressed by Johnson and Strother were common. One after another, the supporters of General Jackson took the floor and defended his invasion based upon what the experience of the War of 1812 had demonstrated concerning the importance of holding Florida for the security of the country. In their view, the invasion of Florida was a natural outgrowth of the experience of the War of 1812.[74] The same goes for the execution of Ambrister and Arbuthnot. As far as most of the House was concerned, these two were merely the latest in a line of British troublemakers that had started with Nicholls. In this view, as successors of Nicholls, Ambrister and Arbuthnot richly deserved their fate.[75] Given the importance of obtaining Florida for the security of the nation, many Congressmen were hesitant to bring even a

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[73]January 27, 1819, in *Annals*, 15 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 1, pp. 832-850, the quote is from pp. 836-837.
[74]See the following speeches, Philip Barbour of Virginia, January 25, 1819; John Rhea of Tennessee, January 27, 1819; George Poindexter of Mississippi, February 2, 1819; Joseph Desha of Kentucky, February 6, 1819; and James Ervin of South Carolina, February 8, 1819; in *Annals*, 15 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 1, pp. 769-770; 855-870; 951-954, 956-959, 964; 1091-1092; 1119, 1120, and 1126.
[75]See the excerpts noted in the following, The Report of the Minority of the Committee of the House on Military Affairs (presented by Richard Johnson of Kentucky), January 12, 1819; John Holmes of Massachusetts, January 19, 1819; Alexander Smyth of Virginia, January 21, 1819; George Poindexter of Mississippi, February 2, 1819; Henry Baldwin of Pennsylvania, February 5, 1819; and Joseph Desha of Kentucky, February 6, 1819; in *Annals*, 15 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 1, pp. 521; 611-614; 688; 951, 981-982; 1039; 1092, 1095 and 1099. This, incidentally is the exact same ground that Secretary of State Adams took with regard to the executions, see his letter to Erving, November 28, 1818 in *ASP: FR's*, vol. 4, pp. 540-543.

hint of censure down upon General Jackson in fear that it would make the negotiations with Spain more difficult.[76]

The influence of the lessons of the War of 1812 can also be seen in the speeches of the General's detractors. As the proponents of censure gained the floor they did not attempt to deny the lessons of the War of 1812. They agreed that as long as Florida remained in the hands of Spain it presented a threat to the security of the United States, they agreed that Spain's inability or unwillingness to enforce its neutrality gave the United States ample cause for war, and they agreed that Jackson's motive in seizing Florida was to protect the United States. Jackson's critics did not question whether the United States had good reasons to seize Florida, instead, they limited their criticism to the Constitutional question of whether Jackson had the constitutional right to decide when the United States had reasons good enough to go to war. They criticized the invasion as a violation of the Constitution, not because the acquisition of Florida was not sound policy.[77]

However, even on the limited grounds offered by his opponents, the House, by large majorities refused to pass any censure of General Jackson for his invasion of Florida.[78] Jackson's invasion also received a form of approval from the Senate. While the committee appointed by

[76]See the excerpts noted in the following, Alexander Smyth of Virginia, January 21, 1819; George Strother of Virginia, January 27, 1819; George Poindexter of Mississippi, February 2, 1819; and David Walker of Kentucky, February 3, 1819; in *Annals*, 15 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 1, pp. 699, 849-850, 937-938, and 1010.

[77]See the following speeches, Thomas Cobb of Georgia, January 18, 1819; Hugh Nelson of Virginia, January 19, 1819; James Johnson of Virginia, January 19, 1819; Henry Clay of Kentucky, January 20, 1819; Charles Mercer of Virginia, January 26, 1819; Joseph Hopkinson of Pennsylvania, January 29, 1819; John Tyler of Virginia, February 1, 1819; and William Henry Harrison of Ohio, February 3, 1819; in *Annals*, 15 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 1, pp. 593-596; 615-618; 623-624; 631-635; 814; 883-884; 888; 927-930; and 1033.

[78]See the votes on February 8, 1819 in *Annals*, 15 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 1, pp. 1135-1138.

the Senate to investigate the invasion did issue a report recommending that Jackson be censured for violating the Constitution, the Senate quietly tabled the report.[79]

Even before Jackson's invasion, Madrid was acutely conscious of the military pressure the United States was exerting to persuade Spain to cede Florida. In words peculiarly reminiscent of Adams's warnings to Onís, Onís's superiors in Madrid began to worry that if they did nothing to protect Florida, then "the difficult negotiation based on the cession of Florida will be useless, as we shall not have them to cede."[80] No doubt Jackson's invasion and the approval with which it was met in the United States greatly increased their fears.[81]

Throughout the discussions between Adams and Onís, the major impediment to the signing of a treaty had been Onís's insufficient instructions. Madrid had not given him the ability to make the concessions necessary to come to terms with Adams. As the military pressure on Spain increased, Onís constantly asked Madrid for greater latitude and as news of Jackson's invasion crossed the Atlantic, Madrid was finally willing to give Onís the powers he had been asking for.[82] As a result of Onís's enlarged power, Adams and Onís signed a treaty on

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[79]For the report of the Committee on the Seminole War issued on February 24, 1819, which also disapproved of the executions of Ambrister and Arbuthnot, see *Annals*, 15 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 1, pp. 255-268. See also Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Empire*, pp. 375-377.

[80]Quoted in Brooks, *Diplomacy and the Borderlands*, p. 92.

[81]On the conviction of Adams and Monroe that Jackson's invasion played a key role in forcing Spain to come to terms see *Memoirs of JQA*, November 23, 1818, February 16, 1819, and February 24, 1819, pp. 176, 263, and 278. James Monroe to James Madison, February 7, 1819, and Monroe and Richard Rush, in Hamilton, *The Writings of James Monroe*, vol. 6, pp. 87-89 and 89-92. On Madrid's fear concerning Andrew Jackson see Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Empire*, pp. 383-384.

[82]On Onís's complaints regarding his instructions and Madrid's decisions to slowly increase his powers see Brooks, *Diplomacy and the Borderlands*, pp. 74, 77-79, 85-88, 132-136, 144-148, and 154-156; and Griffin, *The United States and the Disruption of the Spanish Empire*, pp. 71, 80, 82, 87, 94, 175-177, and 185.

February 22, 1819. The United States finally possessed Florida, but had to trade claims to Texas to get it. Having learned the lessons of the War of 1812 regarding the importance of Florida for the security of the United States, this was a trade Adams was happy to accept.

INITIAL REACTIONS TO THE TREATY

How would the rest of the country react to the trade Adams had engineered? Because the lessons of the late war were not limited to Adams, but pervaded the entire country, the treaty was met with almost universal approval throughout the United States. The whole country was happy to trade Texas for Florida. Two days after the Adams-Onís Treaty had been signed and submitted to the Senate, that body voted unanimously to give its approval to the treaty.[83]

President Monroe, who throughout the negotiations had worked closely with Adams, was warm in his support of the treaty. He considered it to be of "transcendent importance to this country" and mainly because of the security benefits of the acquisition of Florida he viewed the treaty as "inexpressibly advantageous to us."[84] The rest of the Cabinet agreed. Secretary of War Calhoun, who had initially favored censuring General Jackson and had expressed his desire that the United States retain its rights to Texas, was likewise convinced that the acquisition of Florida was so important to the security of the nation that

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[83]The Senate went into Executive Session to consider the treaty and as a result the discussions surrounding it were not recorded. On the vote see the *Journal of The Executive Proceedings of The Senate*, (Washington: Duff Green, 1828) February 24, 1819, vol. 3, pp. 177-178. On the popularity of the Treaty throughout the country see Brooks, *Diplomacy and the Borderlands*, pp. 170-171.
[84]*Memoirs of JQA*, March 10, 1819, vol. 4, p. 290.

the treaty was a good one, even if it meant giving up the rich lands of Texas.

> By the acquisition of Florida we acquire a country of more value to us, than one between the Sabine and the Del Norte [Texas]; not in extent, soil or climate, but what is to us more important in position and naval and commercial advantage.[85]

The treaty also met the approval of the generals who were in charge of protecting the southern border of the United States. General Gaines wrote that the treaty would "have the effect of disarming the . . . Indians of their hostility, restoring the fugitive blacks, and giving entire security to this frontier."[86] The trade of Texas for Florida also got an important endorsement from Andrew Jackson because, in the words of Samuel Flagg Bemis, "Nobody realized better than the hero of New Orleans the significance of the Florida pistol barrel if held against the Mississippi River by a foreign enemy."[87]

Before Adams had signed the treaty, he had informed Jackson of the boundary line that he proposed to accept and Jackson had given his approval. Jackson used the map that Adams had used to outline the proposed border to trace for Adams the movements of the British army during the War of 1812. Jackson told the Secretary of State that as long as Florida remained in foreign hands the United States could not be

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[85]On Calhoun's desire to retain Texas see *Memoirs of JQA*, January 22, 1818, vol. 4, pp. 47-48. The quote is taken from John C. Calhoun to Charles Tait, January 29, 1820 in Hemphill, *Papers of JCC*, vol. 4, p. 617. For other Calhoun statements on the importance of Florida see Calhoun to Tait July 20, 1818; Calhoun to Patrick Noble, September 1, 1818; Calhoun to Andrew Jackson, September 8, 1818; and Calhoun to Micah Sterling, September 10, 1819; vol. 2, pp. 407-408, vol. 3, pp. 88-89, 109-11, and vol. 4, pp. 316-317.
[86]Edmund P. Gaines to John C. Calhoun, March 23, 1819 in Hemphill, *Papers of JCC*, p. 685.
[87]Bemis, *John Quincy Adams and the Foundations of American Foreign Policy*, p. 332.

made secure. For that reason, Jackson gladly accepted the concessions in Texas offered to gain the acquisition of Florida.[88] After the Senate had ratified the treaty, Jackson also gave his opinion of it to President Monroe.

> With the Floridas in our possession, our fortifications complete, Orleans, the great emporium of the West is secure. The Floridas in possession of a foreign power, you can be invaded, your fortifications turned, the Mississippi reached, and the lower country reduced. From Texas an invading enemy will never attempt such an enterprise.[89]

Although Jackson later condemned the administration for disgracefully giving away Texas to placate sectional interests and eventually changed his mind about the importance of Texas for the security of the nation,[90] at the time the Treaty was signed he clearly approved of it. When attempting to explain his earlier support for a treaty he later came to denigrate, Jackson was quick to refer to the lessons of the War of 1812 and their influence on his thinking. "I knew from the projected invasion of Britain, through the Floridas, [that] as long as our Southern Coast was open to British influence . . . we were vulnerable from that quarter."[91]

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[88]See footnote number 1 above.

[89]Andrew Jackson to James Monroe, June 20, 1820, in Bassett, *Correspondence of AJ*, vol. 3, pp. 28-29.

[90]On the charge of sectionalism see Andrew Jackson to Colonel Anthony Butler, October 7, 1830; Francis P. Blair to Jackson, October 19, 1838; and Jackson to Aaron V. Brown, February 9 [12], 1843; in Bassett, *Correspondence of AJ*, vol. 4, pp. 183-184, vol. 5, pp. 567-568, and vol. 6, pp. 201-202. On his later views that Texas is vital to the security of the country see his Notes on Poinsett's instructions, August 13, 1829 and Jackson to Brown, February 9 [12], 1843, vol. 4, pp. 58-59 and vol. 6, pp. 201-202.

[91]Andrew Jackson to Amos Kendall, January 15, 1845, in Bassett, *Correspondence of AJ*, vol. 6, pp. 364-365. At times, Jackson also claimed that he had never approved of the borders stipulated in the Treaty, see Jackson to Francis P. Blair, October 24, 1844, vol. 6, pp. 325-327. On Jackson's initial

The popular reaction across the country to the trade of Texas for Florida was also positive. As the President made a tour through the South and West after the signing of the Treaty, he was greeted by public toasts applauding his administration for securing a territory that was "indispensable to our property; [and] essential to or security."[92] Newspapers across the country also trumpeted the advantages of the bargain that Adams had secured. *Niles Register* was ardent in its praise of the treaty, primarily because, in their words, "experience" had taught them that the possession of Florida was "indispensable to the safety of our citizens." While they noted that some may complain about the relinquishment of the claims to Texas, as far as they were concerned the treaty was a great achievement, because the War of 1812 had shown that Florida was vital to the security of the nation whereas Texas was not.

> Everyone has seen for several years past, that they [the Floridas] were destined to become a part of this Republic, by contract or by force. During the late war, and indeed antecedent to it and up to the late capture of Pensacola by General Jackson, they were to us as an enemy's country. . . . The British and British traders, recruited men, built forts, established military depots, distributed arms, raised the tomahawk . . . [and] the local Spanish authorities were unwilling or too weak to resist them . . . we should have taken possession of it several years ago--as much so as a

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approval and later disapproval of the treaty see Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Empire*, pp. 386-391.

[92]From the *National Intelligencer*, June 29, 1819, p. 3. Quoted in Brooks, *Diplomacy and the Borderlands*, pp. 186.

stick (neutral property) which any man had raised up to knock us down with.[93]

So powerful was the influence of the lessons of the War of 1812, that scarcely a voice was heard in opposition to the treaty immediately after its signing.

THE RELATIVE IRRELEVANCE OF THE MISSOURI CRISIS

"When the amendment was first presented, its importance and consequence were certainly seen by no one."

-John Quincy Adams, February 7, 1820[94]

While Adams and Onís were busy discussing the possible cession of Florida, nearby at the Capitol, Congress was busy discussing, among other things, the petition of Missouri to be admitted to the Union. At the same time that Adams and Onís were putting the final touches on their treaty; in Congress, Representative James Tallmadge, Jr. of New York was offering an amendment to the proposed Missouri bill that would prohibit slavery in Missouri. This coincidence in timing has forever linked these two events. Indeed, as was discussed in the introduction of this chapter, from this coincidence many have concluded that Adams signed the treaty as a result of the burgeoning Missouri Crisis. Adams has been accused of giving up Texas to stunt the growth of the slave

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[93]The shorter quote is from May 1, 1819 (p. 161) and the longer quote is from March 13, 1819 (p. 44). See also February 27, 1819, p. 3.
[94]*Memoirs of JQA*, vol. 4, pp. 528-529.

states, to prevent future controversies over the extension of slavery from erupting, and to appease the Northern States who saw their power in the Union decreasing relative to the expanding South and West.[95] These arguments are mistaken. Having learned the lessons of the War of 1812, Adams, Monroe, the Cabinet, the Congress, and the country as a whole agreed to relinquish the U.S. claim to Texas in order to protect the security of the nation by acquiring Florida. The contemporaneous Missouri Crisis and the lessons associated with that event had nothing to do with the signing of the treaty and its initial ratification.

First, the debates that erupted over the admission of Missouri came far too late to have any effect on the negotiation and ratification of the Adams-Onís Treaty. When, on February 13, 1819, Tallmadge proposed his amendment to prohibit slavery in Missouri, Adams and Onís had already spent over two years working out the terms of the treaty that they would agree to only a week later, and the basic outline that the treaty would take had already been determined.[96] Moreover, at the time that the treaty was signed and ratified, the Missouri Crisis was still in its embryonic stages. When Tallmadge offered his amendment, no one could foresee that his proposal would ignite a debate that would rage through Congress and eventually the nation as a whole for over two years. Before the debate over Missouri's admission was to even come close to reaching the high levels of bitterness and divisiveness that is accurately associated with it, the treaty had already been signed and ratified. In the words of Virginian Senator James Barbour, in February

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[95]See the opening pages of this chapter for specific examples.
[96]Adams and Onís agreed on the final terms of the treaty on February 20, 1819, and they officially signed it on February 22, 1819.

1819, the Tallmadge amendment was nothing more than a "little speck;[97] a speck that had no effect on the negotiation and initial ratification of the treaty.

Second, the Missouri Crisis explanation does not fit with the behavior of the administration in making the treaty or the Senate in approving it. Take for example the unanimous consent of the Senate, and indeed the general approval the treaty received throughout the country. If the treaty was, as some later contended, "a twin brother" of the moves to abolish slavery in Missouri because both were designed to keep political power in the North by limiting the growth of the South and the West,[98] how can this nation-wide acceptance and unanimous consent to the Treaty be explained? Why would the South and the West, and the members of the Congress from those areas, approve a treaty designed to stunt their growth? In short, the explanation based on sectional motivations derived from the Missouri Crisis simply can not account for the universal approval with which the treaty was greeted.

This sectionally based explanation can also not account for the behavior of the administration. If Monroe and Adams were looking to limit the growth of the South and the West, they would have been eager to unload Texas. However, this was not the case; their efforts show that they did not give up Texas without a fight. Throughout the negotiations the administration zealously protected the U.S.'s claim to Texas. Adams made it clear to the Spanish that any concessions made in Texas were provisional and that if a treaty that secured Florida was not reached,

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[97]Quoted in Ammon, *James Monroe*, p. 450.

[98]This is a quote from Senator Barton of Missouri, cited in Frank H. Hodder, "Side Lights on The Missouri Crisis" *Annual Report of the American Historical Association For the Year 1809* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911) p. 158.

then none of these concessions would be binding on the United States. The administration even threatened that if a treaty was not concluded, the United States would keep all its rights in Texas and would take Florida by force as an indemnity for unpaid Spanish claims.[99] In addition, during the negotiations both Monroe and Adams had made efforts to retain as much of Texas as possible. Indeed as late as mid-February 1819, Adams tried to reopen the previously settled question of Texas's border.[100]

Additional evidence that the administration was not eager to give up Texas is that during the negotiations Adams had attempted to reach an agreement with Spain that would gain Florida for the United States, but one that would also leave the western boundary unsettled.[101] If the goal of the negotiations was to stunt the growth of the West and the South by getting rid of Texas, why would Adams offer to make a treaty that did not include the cession of Texas? While it is true that Texas was never the administration's top priority (Florida was), the administration did not eagerly give up the U.S. claim to Texas. Texas was given up grudgingly as the only way to gain the far more important territory of Florida.[102]

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[99]John Quincy Adams to George Erving, April 20, 1818; in Ford, *The Writings of John Quincy Adams*, vol. 6, pp. 307; and Adams to Luis de Onís November 30, 1818, in *ASP: FR's*, vol. 4, p. 545. See also James Monroe to Adams, August 10, 1818, quoted in Bemis, *John Quincy Adams and The Foundations of American Foreign Policy*, pp. 322-323 and *Memoirs of JQA*, November 30, 1818, vol. 4, pp. 184-185.

[100]See *Memoirs of JQA*, November 20, 1818, vol. 4, p. 176 and Griffin, *The United States and the Disruption of the Spanish Empire*, p. 186.

[101]John Quincy Adams to Luis de Onís November 30, 1818 and Adams to Onís, January 29, 1819, in *ASP: FR's*, vol. 4, pp. 545-546 and 616.

[102]See Luis de Onís to John Quincy Adams, February 1, 1819 for Spain's absolute refusal to make any deal for Florida unless there was also an agreement on the western boundary, in *ASP: FR's*, vol. 4, pp. 616-617. See also *Memoirs of JQA*, July 11, 1818, vol. 4, p. 107.

Also, the Missouri Crisis explanation can not account for the administration's desire for Florida. If the administration wanted to weaken the power of the slave states or make sure that the question of slavery's expansion did not erupt again on the political scene, why negotiate with Spain for new territory that was destined to become a slave state? The Missouri Crisis explanation simply can not account for the U.S.'s behavior regarding the signing and initial ratification of the Adams-Onís treaty.

In addition to not being able to account for the behavior of the United States, the third reason why the Missouri Crisis explanation is unsatisfactory is that it does not accord with the documentary record. There is not a shred of evidence in the documentary record to indicate that while the treaty was being negotiated, Adams or Monroe worried about avoiding future debates over the extension of slavery or that they were concerned about the need to block the growth of the South and the West. While, as will be discussed below, both would later make comments linking the treaty to those sectional questions, the important point to note is that all these statements date to the period after the treaty had been negotiated, signed, and ratified.

While there were times when Adams and Monroe worried that some of the Western States might object to the cession of Texas, these worries were unconnected to any concerns about questions relating to the extension of slavery, and throughout, Monroe and Adams remain confident that the security benefits of the acquisition of Florida would be enough to stifle any Western opposition.[103] In John Quincy Adams's

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[103]*Memoirs of JQA*, February 1 and 2, 1819, vol. 4, pp. 237-239.

immense diary there is only one mention of the debate over Missouri's admission that does predate the signing of the treaty. In his entry for February 16, 1819, Adams does note that the move to eliminate slavery in Missouri has recently created a stir in the House pitting the North against the South. However, what is striking about this entry is that although considerations relating to the treaty he is negotiating with Spain dominate his thoughts at this time, he does not refer to this debate as having any connection whatsoever with the treaty. He merely notes that both issues have generated some curiosity.[104] Given Adams's later openness, which will be discussed below, to talk about the impact that the debates over slavery could have for his treaty, his silence on this point in February of 1819 is telling. Indeed, when Adams later discusses the impact of the slavery debates on the Treaty, he talks of this influence as a new development; thereby implying that such concerns had nothing to do with the negotiations and initial ratification.[105]

Concerns over the extension of slavery related to the debates about Missouri's admission did not begin to have an important impact on the thinking of Monroe and Adams until the beginning of 1820. On January 3, 1820, Adams wrote that his thoughts concerning the implications of the Missouri Crisis were still "in a state of chaos in my mind." Only later in the month does he begin to form any definite thoughts about the crisis.[106] The same goes for Monroe; it is only after 1819 had reached its end that concerns over the Missouri Crisis come to play an important

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[104]*Memoirs of JQA*, vol. 4, p. 262.

[105]*Memoirs of JQA*, March 18, 1820 and April 13, 1820, vol. 5, pp. 26 and 68.

[106]*Memoirs of JQA*, vol. 4, p. 496. On the development of Adams's thinking on the Missouri Crisis during 1820 and 1821 see vol. 4, pp. 506, 511, 517-518, 522, 524-526, 529-531; and vol. 5, pp. 3-4, 13-15, 199, 205-211, 236-237, 275-278, 301-302, and 307-308.

role in Monroe's thinking.[107] For example, the Cabinet does not hold its first discussion of the Missouri Crisis until March 3, 1820.[108] Obviously, concerns relating to the Missouri Crisis that date to the beginning of 1820 could have no bearing on a treaty that had been ratified almost one year before. In short, the Missouri Crisis came too late to affect the negotiation and initial ratification of the Adams-Onís Treaty.

THE SECOND RATIFICATION OF THE ADAMS-ONÍS TREATY

"Mr. Wirt [Monroe's Attorney General] remark[ed] that the treaty, when signed, had been unanimously ratified by the Senate, and, so far as the sanction of the House of Representatives could be taken or given, approved with equal unanimity by them--if the treaty was then a good one last year, had anything happened to make it a bad one now?"

-Cabinet meeting of May 20, 1820[109]

Had Spain ratified the Adams-Onís Treaty within the six-month time limit specified in the treaty, that would have been the end of the story as far as the United States was concerned. However, Spain had reservations about the treaty and withheld its ratification for close to two years. During these two years, the Adams-Onís Treaty remained a live

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[107]Ammon, *James Monroe*, pp. 93 and 96.
[108]*Memoirs of JQA*, vol. 5, pp. 3-12. For accounts of the adminstration's role in the settlement of the Missouri Crisis see Cunningham, *The Presidency of James Monroe*, pp. 87-109.
[109]*Memoirs of JQA*, vol. 5, p. 126.

issue within the United States as the country debated what should be done about the unratified treaty.

This two year delay gave more time for the experience of the Missouri Crisis to sink in and have an impact on the treaty. However, while the Missouri Crisis would exert some influence over the fate of the treaty during this two-year wait for ratification, that influence was not great. The Missouri Crisis played some role in leading the United States to forgo the military option of enforcing the treaty without Spain's consent, it turned some individuals against the treaty, and it made others less enthusiastic about the treaty; but in the end, the lessons of the War of 1812 prevailed. Though applying the lessons of the Missouri Crisis was given consideration, which is additional evidence that policy makers are not prisoner to any one analogy, these lessons were ultimately rejected. The mere occurrence of the Missouri Crisis was not enough to make the lessons of that event acceptable as a basis for policy. Still facing a threatening international environment given the relative weakness of the United States in relation to Great Britain, and still facing a relatively permissive domestic situation with the collapse of the Federalist Party, the administration and the Senate continued to use the international lessons of the War of 1812 as the basis for policy. Thus, the United States remained willing to stand by the treaty because as the lessons of the War of 1812 taught, the importance of Florida for the security of the country made the trade of Texas for Florida too good to pass up.

There were a number of causes at work behind Spain's delay in ratifying the treaty. A diplomatic snafu concerning a number of large

grants of land in Florida that the King had made before the signing of the treaty, domestic instability within Spain, and what Spain saw as the undiplomatic behavior of the new U.S. Minister (John Forsyth) all made ratification difficult. However, the largest obstacle to ratification was the question of the possible recognition of Spain's rebellious colonies. Madrid worried that ratification would be followed immediately by U.S. recognition of the insurgent republics.[110] However, whatever the cause of the delay, the result for the United States was the same: As long as Spain delayed ratification, the treaty remained an important and pending issue in U.S. politics.

The administration's initial reaction to Spain's failure to ratify was to take Florida by force. "I do not see," the President wrote, "how we can decline taking Florida if she does not ratify."[111] The result of a series of Cabinet meetings held in August and November of 1819 was a decision to ask Congress for authorization to seize Florida whenever the President decided that such a step was necessary.[112] The administration's actions also demonstrate that contrary to the charges of some of their critics, even six to nine months after Tallmadge had offered his amendment to eradicate slavery in Missouri, the administration was still far from eager to abandon U.S. claims to Texas. Starting in August and

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[110]On the topic of Spain's delay in ratifying the treaty see Brooks, *Diplomacy and the Borderlands*, pp. 172-180 and 184-185; Griffin, *The United States and the Disruption of the Spanish Empire*, pp. 191-209, 235-241 and 230-231; Chadwick, *Relations Between the United States and Spain*, pp. 141-147; and Fuller, *The Purchase of Florida*, pp. 354-358. The diplomatic discussion arising out of Spain's failure to ratify can be followed in *ASP: FR's*, vol. 4, pp. 650-703.

[111]James Monroe to James Madison, November 24, 1819, in Hamilton, *The Writings of James Monroe*, vol. 6, p. 105.

[112]See Monroe's Third Annual Message, December 7, 1819, *Messages and Papers*, vol. 2, pp. 626-627. On the Cabinet discussion see *Memoirs of JQA*, August 10, 1819, August 17, 1819, November 5, 1819, November 10, 1819, November 26, 1819, and November 27, 1819, pp. 405-406, 412, 432, 435, 448-450 and 450-453.

continuing into May of 1820, the administration considered occupying Texas and threatened that if Spain did not ratify the treaty soon, besides seizing Florida, the United States would also take Texas as an indemnity.[113]

However, after initially encouraging Congress to authorize the seizure of Florida and threatening Spain with the occupation of Texas as well, the administration eventually pursued a more pacific path. On two separate occasions the administration counseled Congress to be patient and not to pass any legislation that would entail the use of force against Spain. Why was the administration now advising against the course they had previously considered, conditionally approved, and had used to intimidate Spain? Publicly the administration cited two reasons. The first focused on the domestic instability of Spain itself: Given its continued internal turmoil, the administration argued that it would only be just to allow them more time to straighten out their affairs before forcibly seizing their territory. The second publicly cited reason was the expected reaction of the major European powers. Monroe argued that Great Britain, Russia and France were all pushing Spain to ratify the treaty, and that Russia and France were strongly advising the United States to refrain from any use of force. Therefore, rather than risk the anger of these powers, it would be prudent to give them more time to persuade Spain to ratify the treaty.[114]

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[113]John Quincy Adams to John Forsyth, August 18, 1819; Adams to William Lowndes, December 16, 1819; Adams to Francisco Vives, May 3, 1820; and Forsyth to Adams, May 20, 1820, in *ASP: FR's*, vol. 4, pp. 657, 673-674, 684 and 690. Adams to Forsyth, May 25, 1820, in Ford, *The Writings of John Quincy Adams*, vol. 7, p. 31 and *Memoirs of JQA*, November 16, 1819, vol. 4, pp. 437-439.
[114]See Monroe's Messages to the Senate and House of March 27, 1820 and May 9, 1820, *Messages and Papers*, vol. 2, pp. 638-639 and 639-641.

Although the private record does not indicate that the United States took the first reason, Spain's domestic turmoil, very seriously, that record also indicates that the administration took the second reason very seriously. The administration's first inclinations towards caution come after receiving reports from Europe informing them that the European powers are for the peaceful ratification of the treaty. Adams related that this information caused the President "to hesitate," and that "the dispatches from Europe have produced in my own mind a disposition to pause and review before the decisive step is taken." Although there was some question as to the propriety of bowing to the will of Europe, the administration clearly had begun to doubt "whether the boldest course" was "also the safest."[115] In December of 1819, President Monroe wrote to Andrew Jackson warning him that a war with Spain might also involve the United States in a quarrel with France, Russia, or Great Britain.[116]

Months after the administration began to have its doubts about the wisdom of implementing the treaty by force, the House of Representatives was finally ready to take action regarding the unratified treaty. On March 9, 1820, the House Committee on Foreign Affairs finally issued its report regarding the President's request for conditional authorization to seize Florida. This report clearly shows the influence that the lessons of the War of 1812 still had on Congressional thinking as the bill it proposed mandated the occupation of Florida as a just and prudent recompense:

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[115]*Memoirs of JQA*, November 26, 1819, vol. 4, p. 448-449.

[116]James Monroe to Andrew Jackson, December 12, 1819, Bassett,*Correspondence of AJ*, vol. 2, p. 448.

for the invasion of our soil, for the weakness or partiality which has made a Spanish territory the place of rendezvous and encampment of our enemy, and which has still more recently permitted the Indian inhabitants of that territory (whom Spain was bound by treaty to restrain) to engage in savage hostilities against us.

Not only did this report recommend requiring the President to seize Florida, but it also said that if Florida is not enough of an indemnity than the United States should "look westward" to Texas.[117] Having received further dispatches from the U.S. Ministers in Europe relating the desire of the European powers that the United States take no military actions against Spain, the administration decided to inform Congress regarding the wishes of the European states and recommend that Congress delay authorizing any hostile measures.

An interesting illustration of the continued power of the lessons of the War of 1812 is that many Americans refused to accept that Britain favored ratification. Instead, many believed that British machinations were the cause of Spain's failure to ratify, because Britain wanted Florida to remain Spanish so they could use it "as a fruitful means of annoyance to us, on our weakest side, in another war."[118]

While Adams and Monroe genuinely worried that the use of force to seize Florida could embroil them in a dispute with other European powers besides Spain, the administration also had worries of a domestic nature that led them to favor a delay in the use of force to implement the

[117]*Annals*, 16 Cong., 1 sess., vol. 2, p. 1619.
[118]*Niles Register*, May 29, 1819, pp. 225. See also Griffin, *The United States and the Disruption of the Spanish Empire*, pp. 209-210.

treaty; worries that flowed directly out of the Missouri Crisis. About the time that the House Committee on Foreign Affairs had issued its report recommending the seizure of Florida and possibly Texas, the administration had reached the conclusion that delaying any debate over the possible forcible seizure of Florida and Texas was, "sound policy as [it] relates to the internal state of our affairs."[119] Regarding Monroe's call advocating a delay, Adams wrote that:

> there were other reasons for sending it in besides those apparent on the face of it--reasons of transcendent influence, but not proper to be publicly assigned. One was, to prevent a long, angry, dangerous, and unprofitable debate, which would certainly have arisen from the report of the Committee of Foreign Relations. A second was to avoid a certain issue of that debate, which would have exhibited to the nation and the world a disagreement of the worst kind.[120]

When former President Jefferson wrote to Monroe recommending that he take both Florida and Texas, Monroe wrote back that if the issue was simply one between the United States and Spain he would be glad to, "but the difficulty does not proceed from these sources. It is altogether internal and of the most distressing nature and dangerous tendency." Then after tracing the history of sectionalism that culminated in the Missouri Crisis Monroe argues that,

> From this view it is evident, that the further acquisition of territory, to the West & South, involves difficulties of an

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[119]*Memoirs of JQA*, March 18, 1820, vol. 5, p. 26.
[120]*Memoirs of JQA*, March 31, 1820, vol. 5, p. 54.

internal nature, which menace the Union itself. We ought therefore to be cautious in making the attempt.[121]

Monroe was equally outspoken in a letter to Andrew Jackson:

> The Missouri question has also excited feelings & raised difficulties of an internal nature, which did not exist before. Some parts of our Union became less anxious even for the acquisition of Florida, while others, not content with that, were desirous of taking possession also of Texas. . . .Having long known the repugnance with which the eastern portion of our Union, . . . have seen its aggrandizement to the west and south, I have been decidedly of the opinion that we ought to be content with Florida for the present.[122]

These letters, according to Thomas Hart Benton, lift "the curtain which concealed the secret reason for giving up Texas."[123] And, according to historian William Weeks, "the two letters unarguably demonstrate that Monroe's willingness to concede the claim to Texas stemmed from his fears of adding more potential slave territory to the Union, not as a prerequisite for securing the Floridas."[124] However, such reasoning is dubious. These letters, and indeed all similar thoughts voiced by Monroe or Adams date to the end of 1819 or the beginning of 1820 at the earliest. How can considerations that were not thought about until almost a year after the treaty had been negotiated have had any affect on those negotiations? They could not and did not.

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[121]James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, May, 1820, in Hamilton,*The Writings of James Monroe*, vol. 6, pp. 119-123.
[122]James Monroe to Andrew Jackson, May, 23 1820, in Hamilton, *The Writings of James Monroe*, vol. 6, pp. 126-130. See also Monroe to Albert Gallatin, May 26, 1820, vol. 6, pp. 130-134.
[123]Benton, *Thirty Years View*, vol. 1, pp. 15-16.
[124]Weeks, *John Quincy Adams and American Global Empire*, p. 168.

Is it possible that Adams and Monroe had these thoughts all along and were simply reluctant to voice them? This explanation also has its problems. First, proponents of such an explanation would have to have some way of accounting for the somewhat miraculous change of heart that both men experienced that led them to be so honest about something they had kept hidden for so long. Why in 1820 would they, all of a sudden, be so open about having such motives if they had just spent the last few years trying to keep these motives secret? Second, as was discussed above, if the administration was so worried about "adding more potential slave territory to the Union," why would they work so hard to obtain the possession of Florida, when its acquisition would only add slave territory to the Union?

While concerns relating to the expansion of slavery can help explain why, in 1820, the administration was reluctant to use force against Spain to seize Florida and possibly Texas; in no way can worries regarding the domestic problems of western expansion that arose almost a year after the signing of the treaty be used to explain the U.S.'s motivation in making that treaty. Moreover, these domestic concerns growing out of the Missouri Crisis can not take sole credit for inducing the United States to delay the forcible implementation of the treaty. That decision was overdetermined. The fear of precipitating a conflict with some of the other European powers, by itself, would probably have been sufficient to lead the United States to give Spain more time to ratify.

In addition to playing some role in causing the administration to delay the forcible implementation of the treaty, the experience of the

Missouri Crisis also helped to make John Quincy Adams decidedly less enthusiastic about his handiwork. As he began to grasp the implications of the Missouri Crisis he started to look at the treaty in a different light, and he was not particularly pleased with what that light emphasized. The Missouri Crisis led him to deprecate the value of both Texas and Florida. By March of 1820 he was ready to report that he "had very little attachment to the treaty" and that "as an Eastern man, I should be disinclined to have either Texas or Florida without a restriction excluding slavery from them."[125] Adams's diary makes it clear that these doubts concerning the wisdom of the treaty were new, and that they had not occurred to him while he was negotiating the treaty. For example, he also came to worry that the treaty might give us territory:

> sooner than we should want it; and even now, I thought that the greatest danger to this Union was in the overgrown extent of its territory, combining with the slavery question. . . . *Since the Missouri debate* (emphasis added), I considered the continuance of the Union for any length of time very precarious, and entertained serious doubts whether Louisiana and slavery would not ultimately break us up.[126]

However, regardless of their doubts about the wisdom of increasing the amount of slave territory possessed by the Union, both Adams and Monroe continued to value the treaty because of the security benefits that Florida offered. In spite of all the doubts concerning the value of the treaty that were raised as a result of the Missouri Crisis, the

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[125]*Memoirs of JQA*, March 31, 1820, vol. 5, p. 54.
[126]*Memoirs of JQA*, April 13, 1820, vol. 5, p. 68.

entire Cabinet remained unanimous that if Spain should ratify the treaty, then the United States should accept that ratification.[127] Despite Adams's claim that he was indifferent to the fate of the treaty, he continued to regard it as his greatest accomplishment and to staunchly defend the trade of Texas, which is "of no present value" for Florida, "which we very much wanted."[128]

The same can be said for Monroe. No matter how much the Missouri Crisis taught him to fear the addition of any more slave territory he still argued that "to the acquisition of Florida too much importance can not be attached." Monroe continued to support the treaty, regardless of the domestic risks it entailed, because the possession of Florida "secures us against all future annoyance from powerful Indian tribes . . . and enables the United States to afford complete protection to the vast and very valuable productions of our whole Western country."[129] Monroe's thinking concerning Florida remained heavily influenced by the lessons of the War of 1812. In a report on the construction of fortifications in Florida, Monroe maintained that while before the war some may have doubted the need to have an extensive military presence in Florida, "with the experience of that war before us, their is no cause for hesitation."[130]

Andrew Jackson also continued to support the treaty and to defend the trade of Texas for Florida that was the heart of it.

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[127]*Memoirs of JQA*, May 20, 1820, vol. 5, p. 127. See also, John Quincy Adams to John Forsyth, August 18, 1819 in *ASP: FR's*, vol. 4, p. 659.

[128]*Memoirs of JQA*, April 13, 1820, vol. 5, p. 69. See also entry for September 27, 1844, vol. 12, p. 78.

[129]Monroe's Second Inaugural Address, March 5, 1821, *Messages and Papers*, vol. 2, pp. 658-659.

[130]Monroe's Message to the Senate and the House, March 22, 1822, *Messages and Papers*, vol. 2, pp. 693-694.

I must confess that I am one of those who believed and still believes that our treaty with Spain as it respected our limits and the possession of the Floridas was a good one. Texas for the present we can do without. But without the Floridas our lower country can not be made secure, . . . the idea of invading our territory through the province of Texas is to me absurd.[131]

Thus, while the Missouri Crisis led the administration to hesitate implementing the treaty by force and it created some doubts regarding the domestic consequences of the treaty, it did not turn the administration against the treaty; the lessons of the War of 1812 were still preferred to the lessons of the Missouri Crisis. This reluctance to abandon the lessons of the War of 1812 was not simply the result of an emotional attachment the creators of the treaty had formed, though such a motivational bias may have played some role, because this reluctance was also prevalent outside the administration. Indeed, the analogy to the British invasion of Florida during the War of 1812 continues to dominate Congressional debates, even though individual members of Congress had little emotional investment in the treaty. The Missouri Crisis made it more difficult for the legislators to take any firm actions regarding Spain's failure to ratify and it turned some members against the treaty, but on the whole Congress continued to support the treaty.

As long as Congress was preoccupied with the debate over the move to ban slavery in Missouri it could do nothing regarding the

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[131]Andrew Jackson to John C. Calhoun, December 21, 1820, Moser, *Papers of AJ*, vol. 4, pp. 409-410. On Calhoun's continued support for the treaty see his letter to John E. Colhoun, January 8, 1821, in Hemphill, *Papers of JCC*, vol. 5, p. 542.

Adams-Onís Treaty. Henry Clay, who wanted Congress to adopt a vigorous policy towards Spain, had trouble getting the House to do anything about the treaty. A frustrated Clay complained that the debate over Missouri's admission was keeping the issue off the Congressional agenda.[132] For example, the House Committee on Foreign Affairs did nothing on the President's request for contingent authorization to seize Florida until after the Missouri debates had been settled (at least for that session). The President had made his request on December 7, 1819, but the Committee did not issue its report until March 9, 1820. As John C. Calhoun complained, the question over what to do about the unratified treaty "slumbers in Congress, in the midst of the din of the Missouri question."[133]

The Missouri Crisis also caused some members of Congress to look with disfavor on the treaty that had previously been met with nothing but applause. Adams became worried about how the treaty would fare in the post-Missouri Crisis era because if the treaty was judged on sectional grounds alone, no one would be happy. As he saw it, the Missouri Crisis:

> has operated to indispose every part of the Union against the
> treaty: The North and East, because they do not wish to
> even have Florida as another slave State; and the South and

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[132]Henry Clay to Jonathan Russel January 29, 1820, and Clay to Russel, April 10, 1819, Hopkins, *Papers of HC*, vol. 2, pp. 771 and 819.

[133]John C. Calhoun to Charles Tait, January 29, 1820, in Hemphill, *Papers of JCC*, vol. 4, pp. 617-618. See also Calhoun to Andrew Jackson, March 27, 1820, vol. 4, pp. 735-736.

West, because they wish to have all the territory to the Rio Del Norte for more slave States.[134]

There is little reason to doubt that some individuals did turn against the treaty on sectional grounds as a result of the Missouri Crisis. Some newspapers in the North and the South did begin to condemn the treaty on the sectional grounds cited by Adams, and certain Southern members of Congress did begin to voice their displeasure at a treaty that was secured "at the expense of a vast sacrifice of territory south of the thirty-six and a half latitude (the Missouri Compromise line)."[135] However, in hindsight, Adams had little to worry about. These sectional arguments did not turn Congress against the treaty. Even in the midst of the Missouri debates, the lessons of the War of 1812 continued to dominate the debate.

When Spain eventually did offer its ratification and the treaty was resubmitted to the Senate, that body's debate on re-ratification was be held in secret session, which meant that again, the debate was left unrecorded. Fortunately, however, the *Annals of Congress* does have a record of a debate over the treaty conducted in the House of Representatives during the period in which Spain was withholding its ratification. Once the debate over Missouri's admission had ended, at least for this session of Congress, Henry Clay was finally able to gain the floor of the House and offer two resolutions relating to the treaty. The first resolution, a statement that only Congress has the Constitutional

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[134]*Memoirs of JQA*, March 31, 1820, vol. 5, p. 53. See also the entries for December 18, 1819 and January 3, 1820, vol. 4, pp. 480 and 496; and March 13, 1820 and March 18, 1820, vol. 5, pp. 19 and 26.

[135]This is a quote from Congressman John Randolph of Virginia, in his "Valedictory to His Constituents;" *Annals*, 17 Cong., 1 sess., vol. 1, pp. 1247-1248. See also Moore, *The Missouri Crisis: 1819-1821*, pp. 343-346.

right to alienate territory was a thinly veiled swipe at the Adams-Onís Treaty's relinquishment of the U.S.'s claim to Texas. The second resolution confronted the treaty head-on; it declared that because the treaty had given up too much of Texas, it would be unwise to renew it.[136]

Though Congress only considered Clay's resolution for a very short time, the brief two-day debate that ensued is the best available source for gauging Congress's thoughts on the treaty at the time. Clay opened with a speech in which he came out against the treaty and in favor of the occupation of Texas. Interestingly, although the Missouri debates had just (temporarily) ended, Clay does not accuse the administration of sectionalism in signing the treaty. He does not charge the administration with giving up Texas to stunt the growth of the South and the West. Instead, he correctly recognizes that the administration made the treaty due to the military importance that had been placed on Florida. Clay does not try to deny that Florida possesses a great military importance to the United States, he simply argues that given the weakness of Spain, if the United States acts decisively, it can gain both Florida and the valuable lands of Texas.[137]

Each of the speeches made against the treaty followed this basic pattern. Each speaker accepted that the treaty was signed because of the security advantages of possessing Florida and none disputed that it was necessary to acquire Florida. Each then extolled the many advantages of possessing Texas, and criticized the treaty by claiming that the United

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[136]April 3, 1820, *Annals of Congress*, 16 Cong., 1 sess., vol. 2, pp. 1716-1719. See also Remini, *Henry Clay*, pp. 171-174.
[137]April 3, 1820, *Annals*, 16 Cong., 1 sess., vol. 2, pp. 1716-1731.

States could gain Florida without having to give up Texas. For example, one of the treaty's opponents recognized that "great military importance was attributed to Florida" and that a policy that strove to keep Florida out of foreign hands was of "unimpeachable" merit. However, he also argued that it was also important to possess Texas and that the treaty should not be renewed because the United States could get Texas and Florida without it.[138] In an interesting display of the dominance of the 1812 analogy in the debate over the treaty, one of the opponents of the treaty asked;

> What if England should get the province, subsidize the
> natives and establish a line of posts along our southern
> border? Is experience lost upon us? Have we forgotten the
> rude lessons of the last war?[139]

By itself, this would seem to be just another argument in favor of the acquisition of Florida made by referring to the lessons of the War of 1812. However, what makes this quote interesting is that the province that the speaker is referring to is not Florida, but Texas. Thus, in a curious testimonial to the power of the analogy that had led to the treaty, one of its opponents tried to undermine the treaty by stretching the analogy to include Texas as well.

With the opponents of the treaty agreeing that the acquisition of Florida was necessary for the security of the country, all that was left for the treaty's supporters was to re-emphasize that importance and, given the cloudy nature of the U.S.'s claims to Texas, express their doubts that acquiring both Florida and Texas would be as easy as the

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[138]Mr. Archer of Virginia, April 4, 1820, *Annals*, 16 Cong., 1 sess., vol. 2, pp. 1743-1755.
[139]Mr. Trimble of Kentucky, April 4, 1820, *Annals*, 16 Cong., 1 sess., vol. 2, pp. 1756-1768.

treaty's opponents assume.[140] Without any actual responsibility for negotiating with Spain for Florida, these critics could, in the words of John Quincy Adams, be:

> excellent negotiators in theory. They were for obtaining all and granting nothing. They played the game between their own right and left hands, and could allot with admirable management the whole stake to one and total discomfiture to the other. . . . If after obtaining every object of your pursuit but one [Texas], and that one weak in principle and of no present value, what would you have offered to Spain to yield that also?[141]

Opposition to the treaty was so weak that Clay's resolutions did not gather enough support to get out of committee and reach the floor for a final vote.

After Adams had given Spain some informal promises that the United States would not rush to recognize Spain's insurgent colonies, Spain eventually ratified the treaty. Monroe re-submitted the treaty to the Senate, and on February 19, 1821, with only four dissenting votes, that body again gave its assent to the treaty.[142] Two years after the treaty had been signed, it had finally become official. Close to seven years after the British troops had landed in Florida, the United States had finally achieved what the lessons of 1812 had demanded: the pistol pointed at the heart of the Republic was now out of foreign hands.

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[140]The speeches in support of the treaty that were recorded were given by Mr. Lowndes (South Carolina) and by Mr. Anderson (Kentucky) on April 3 and 4, 1820. See *Annals*, 16 Cong., 1 sess., vol. 2, pp. 1731-1738 and 1768-1776.
[141]*Memoirs of JQA*, March 13, 1820, vol. 5, p. 69.
[142]*Journal of the Executive Proceedings of the Senate*, February 19, 1821, vol. 3, p. 244.

CONCLUSION

"This day, two years have elapsed since the Florida Treaty was signed. Let my sons, if they ever consult this record of their father's life, . . . meditate upon all the vicissitudes which have befallen the treaty . . . in the interval between that day and this."

<div align="right">-John Quincy Adams, February 22, 1821[143]</div>

When historians have taken John Quincy Adams up on his suggestion to meditate on the two year interval between the signing of the Adams-Onís Treaty and its final ratification, one event has stood out above all others. That event is the Missouri Crisis. However, in 1821, when Adams offered his thoughts upon this period, he does not mention the Missouri Crisis. The reason for this seemingly surprising omission is fairly straightforward. Regardless of the significant place that the Missouri Crisis would later earn in the history of the nation, when it came to the negotiation and double ratification of the Adams-Onís Treaty, the Missouri Crisis was not a major event.

The most important event regarding the U.S.'s position in its negotiations with Spain occurred five years before James Tallmadge offered his famous amendment in the House of Representatives to ban slavery in Missouri. The truly momentous day, was May 10, 1814. On that day, British forces landed near the Apalachicola River in Florida and began to use the Spanish territory as a base from which to carry on

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[143]*Memoirs of JQA*, vol. 5, p. 289.

a war against the United States. It was the events during the War of 1812 that followed from that day that convinced the decision makers in the United States that Florida must be taken out of foreign hands. The lessons of the War of 1812 were clear; the United States had to acquire Florida. The trade of Texas for Florida that was embodied in the Adams-Onís Treaty was a direct result of that lesson. Had other historical analogies or historical lessons been followed, U.S. policy towards Florida and Texas would have been quite different. The Louisiana Purchase analogy would have counseled against conceding Texas and the Missouri Crisis analogy would have counseled against acquiring Florida at all, let alone Texas.

The conviction that the British invasion of Florida during the War of 1812 was the most applicable analogy, a conviction based on estimates of relative levels of international and domestic threats and estimates of causal similarities, led Adams to negotiate a treaty that traded Texas for Florida and led the Senate to ratify that trade on two occasions. The two year interval between ratifications happened to coincide with the period when the Missouri debates raged through Congress. However, the Missouri Crisis had only a negligible effect on the policy of the United States at this time. In relation to the Adams-Onís Treaty, the Missouri Crisis was merely a funny thing that happened on the way to ratification. However, as the following chapters will show, the Missouri Crisis would soon take on far greater significance with regard to the foreign policy of the United States.

CHAPTER FOUR

EXPANSION DELAYED:

THE MISSOURI CRISIS AND THE FAILURE TO ANNEX TEXAS

DURING THE JACKSON AND VAN BUREN ADMINISTRATIONS

"But this momentous question, like a fire bell in the night awakened and filled me with terror. I considered it at once the knell of the Union. It is hushed, indeed for the moment. But this is a reprieve only, not a final sentence"

-Thomas Jefferson[1]

As discussed at the end of Chapter Two, the event that inspired such fear in Thomas Jefferson was the controversy that convulsed the Congress and eventually the nation as a whole concerning Missouri's petition for statehood. Unlike previous petitions for statehood, which had sparked little debate, the question of Missouri's admission to the Union provoked one of the fiercest debates the young republic had ever seen. At the center of this debate was the issue that dominated much of ante-bellum politics in the United States, the question of the extension of slavery. While debates over slavery in America were nothing new, the Missouri Crisis can justifiably be pointed to as the first time that agitation over this question came to be seen as a clear threat to the

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[1] Thomas Jefferson to John Holmes, April 22, 1820 in Ford, *Writings of TJ*, vol. 10, p. 157.

stability and existence of the political system that had been developed by the founding fathers. The debates over Missouri's admission demonstrated the power of and the danger inherent in the slavery issue; an issue that, since it had been the subject of a number of key compromises at the Constitutional Convention, had remained relatively dormant. What made the Missouri Crisis so ominous was, by pitting the North against the South in an acrimonious debate over the extension of slavery, it threatened to create a national political system dominated by hostile sectional blocs, with all the dangers of civil war that a sectional schism entailed.

The importance of the Missouri crisis did not end with eventual admission of Missouri as a slave state in 1821. As Glover Moore notes in the most complete study of the crisis, the true significance of the Missouri question was "in what it clarified and foreshadowed. . . . There was little about it that was original. . . . Yet its clarifying effects were not only great but appalling, and it was these which startled thoughtful men in 1820."[2] The debate over Missouri's admission had its greatest influence on American politics through the lessons that policy makers drew from the controversy and the effect those lessons had on their later actions. After the Missouri crisis, and partly as a result of what they had learned from the controversy, certain politicians endeavored to avoid the nightmare of a sectional rupture by constructing national political coalitions that could mute sectional controversies. This work was largely successful, and by the late 1830's, cross-sectional political parties dominated national politics. For politicians with an interest in the

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[2]Moore, *The Missouri Controversy*, p. 342.

continued existence and strength of these inter-sectional parties, the central lesson of the Missouri crisis was simple: it was vital to avoid all discussions of the divisive slavery issue if the existing national political coalitions were not to be overturned in favor of sectional divisions.[3]

This lesson of the Missouri crisis had an important impact on the course of American expansion prior to the Civil War. The purpose of the next two chapters is to explore the effect that the lessons of the Missouri crisis had on the policy of the United States regarding the annexation of Texas. In addition to studying a relatively neglected period in American diplomatic history[4], looking at the annexation of Texas is also an interesting case because it is an anomaly for the dominant theory students of American foreign policy have advanced concerning the ambitions of the young republic. The portrayal of the United States as a restless empire anxiously looking to extend across the continent has long been accepted as accurate by historians of early American foreign relations.[5] Arthur Schlesinger Jr. expresses the central tenet of this interpretation well: "The United States has been an expansionist country. . . . The drive across the continent does not call for complicated analysis. An energetic, acquisitive people were

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[3]This lesson can also be stated in its converse. Namely, the lesson for those who were outside the existing political coalitions was that the existing coalitions could be upset if the slavery question was raised. The dual nature of this lesson set up the central political dynamic of this issue, with political outsiders constantly trying to raise the issue and upset the existing political parties, and party leaders doing their best to keep the issue dormant.

[4]See Kinley Brauer, "The Great American Desert Revisited: Recent Literature and the Prospects for the Study of American Foreign Relations 1815-1861" *Diplomatic History* 13,3 (Summer 1989): 395-417. For a recent discussion of the literature on this period and some of its deficiencies, see Lawrence S. Kaplan, ed. "Foreign Policy in The Early Republic Reconsidered: Essay's From A SHEAR Symposium" *Journal Of The Early Republic* 14,4 (Winter 1994): 453-495.

[5]For a classic statement of this position see Richard W. Van Alstyne, *The Rising American Empire*, (1960; New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1974). For a more recent statement of a similar position see Bradford Perkins, *The Creation of A Republican Empire*, vol. 1 of *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 6, 170 and 232.

propelled by their traits and their technologies to push restlessly into contiguous western spaces. . . .This was a primal instinct."[6]

U.S. policy towards the possibility of acquiring Texas is an interesting case to study because it does not fit neatly into this model. In this case, U.S. policy makers did not act as if they led a land hungry expansionist empire; instead, U.S. policy makers were reluctant to make any moves that would result in the annexation of Texas. Why the United States would be reluctant to annex vast amounts of rich land contiguous with their western border and populated mainly by former Americans is a puzzle for the commonly accepted interpretation of American foreign policy; a puzzle that this chapter endeavors to explain by focusing on the domestic lessons the Missouri Crisis. The argument here is not that the traditional interpretation of America as an expansionist power is incorrect, indeed there is much evidence that there was a clear desire on the part of many Americans to acquire Texas, but that this interpretation needs to be augmented with an explicit concern for the domestic political implications of expansion and how domestic calculations influenced the course followed by the United States.[7]

The argument advanced in the following two chapters is that the lessons derived from the Missouri Crisis concerning the domestic consequences of expansion explain U.S. policy towards Texas after it had achieved its independence. The historical analogy of the Missouri Controversy and the warning it presented to policy makers concerning

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[6]Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Cycles of American History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1986), p. 128.

[7]The relative absence of studies on this era that focus on the influence of domestic politics on U.S. foreign policy has be noted by Walter LaFaber, "Responses to Charles S. Maier, 'Marking Time: The Historiography of International Relations,'" *Diplomatic History* 5 (Fall 1981), p. 364 and Brauer, "The Great American Desert Revisited," p. 409.

the danger of introducing into politics a question that would excite the slavery issue and thus threaten the existing national party structures with sectional division explains why Texas's annexation was delayed for over nine years; only to be accomplished through a Congressional sleight of hand, by a lame duck president without a party, in the closing days of his administration, after the election of the first dark horse candidate for president in U.S. history. The U.S's expansionist impulses were held back for nine years by party leaders who wished to keep the existing national political coalitions intact and thus did not want to broach the sectionally divisive issue of slavery extension that the annexation of Texas was sure to agitate. Annexation was only successfully completed when the executive branch of the United States was in the hands of a leader (President Tyler) who not only lacked a stake in the existing political alignments, but who hoped also to disrupt those alignments and to construct a new political coalition that could keep him in power. Following the lessons of the Missouri Crisis, while existing party leaders did their best to suppress the issue, Tyler seized on the annexation of Texas as the issue that could destroy the existing political alignments and open the way for new coalitions to dominate American politics.

THE MISSOURI CRISIS ANALOGY AND THE ANNEXATION OF TEXAS

After the signing of the Adams-Onís Treaty in 1819, John Quincy Adams voiced the optimistic thoughts of many American expansionists concerning the future of the Republic when he said he considered "our

proper dominion to be the continent of North America. From the time when we became an independent people it was as much a law of nature that this should become our pretension as that the Mississippi should flow to the sea."[8] However, the land gained in the Adams-Onís Treaty was the last major territorial acquisition the United States would make for over twenty-five years.

To explain this long hiatus in the operation of this expansionist "law of nature" is the purpose of this chapter. The central argument advanced here is that domestic political considerations, stemming from the lessons of the Missouri Controversy, blocked further territorial expansion. Party leaders, fearful of creating any new Missouri Crises, decided to forgo territorial expansion rather than let the issue of the extension of slavery divide their party and possibly the Union. However, keeping the issue off the political agenda proved to be a challenging task. The expansionist bent of the nation as a whole ensured that opportunities for expansion continually arose. In addition, the rise of abolitionism in the North and the threat that this moral opposition to slavery posed to defenders of the status quo in the South, created a pool of combatants North and South eager to debate the slavery issue. Each time the possibility of expansion arose, there was a danger that party outsiders could seize upon the opportunity to arouse these combatants as a way to upset the party structure that was blocking their path to greater power domestically. This struggle between party insiders, from both of the major political parties, who wanted to silence the issue and party outsiders who wanted to agitate the issue, provided the chief dynamic

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[8]*Memoirs of JQA*, November 16, 1819, vol. 4, p. 438.

that drove U.S. foreign policy towards territorial expansion in this era. This chapter will examine the policies of the United States towards the possible annexation of Texas during the Jackson and Van Buren administrations, a time when party insiders dominated the national government and succeeded in keeping annexation off the national agenda.

However, before examining how the Missouri Crisis analogy influenced U.S. policy towards Texas, consider for a moment the prior question of why: Why did the Missouri analogy dominate U.S. policy towards an independent Texas rather than other possible analogies? Why did the policy makers of the day not see Texas's request for annexation as a successful application of the Louisiana Purchase strategy? After all, America was being offered Texas in exchange for nothing. Why not take advantage of it as Jefferson had done with Napoleon's offer to sell Louisiana? Or, why did the policy makers of the time not interpret the events surrounding Texas's request for admission to the Union in terms of the Hartford Convention analogy? This analogy would warn them about the dangers of sectional complaints arising from the issue, but would also predict that in the end, the sectionalists would be defeated by the nationalists. Both of these analogies would have predisposed the policy makers in charge of U.S. foreign policy to push for annexation, rather than try to bury the issue. Why were neither of these analogies seen as a relevant guide for action?

The following section on the nature of the developing second party system in the United States helps to answer these questions. The War of 1812 had ended over twenty years ago, and during those twenty

years the United States had continued to grow at a rapid pace. Thus, internationally the country that Jackson and Van Buren led was far more secure than the one led by Monroe and John Quincy Adams. The country had changed greatly on the domestic front as well. The one-party "era of good feelings" was over and in its place a highly competitive, national and intersectional two-party system emerged. The result of these two changes was that the for the policy makers of the day the international consequences of different policies towards Texas were less important than the impact different policies would have on the domestic front. Therefore, lessons that focused on the international ramifications of different policies, like those contained in the Louisiana analogy, were less important than lessons that focused on the domestic ramifications of different policies, like those found in the Missouri and Hartford Convention analogies.

With the choice narrowed to those analogies that emphasize the domestic consequences of different policies, why did the Missouri analogy come to dominate? Quite simply, the absence of war time type threat to the existence of the Union and the presence of the developing second party system made the current situation more similar, in terms of causal relations, to the Missouri Crisis experience than to the Hartford Convention experience. An important factor in causing the downfall of the Federalists as a result of the Hartford Convention was that their sectionally-based demands were issued during a period of war. It was doubtful whether the outcome would be the same during a time of peace and relative security. Second, as the following section will show, the development of the second party system made the cause and effect

relationship posited by the Missouri Crisis analogy especially pertinent to the policy makers of the era.

THE SECOND AMERICAN PARTY SYSTEM

What historians call the second American party system developed out of contests for the presidency after 1824, following the demise of the first party system with the disappearance of the Federalist Party. While the two parties that came to dominate the second party system started out as loose coalitions centering on prominent political leaders, these parties grew to become nationwide, broad-based parties who ushered in a period of party strength that is unmatched in the history of the United States.[9] The supporters of Andrew Jackson, the leading politician of the day, became the Democratic Party and the opponents of Jackson, including such notable men as John Quincy Adams, Daniel Webster and Henry Clay formed the nucleus of the leadership of the anti-Jackson party, the Whig Party. However, the Democrats and the Whigs became more than mere personality cliques as the coalitions they formed developed into ideologically distinct parties. Each party came to offer a distinctive program on the leading issues of the day, such as the tariff, the national bank and federally sponsored internal improvements. These issues formed the core of the political debates of the era, with the Whig

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[9]On the development of the second party system see McCormick, *The Second American Party System*, pp. 13-14 and 321-352; A. James Reichley, *The Life of The Parties: A History of American Political Parties* (New York: The Free Press, 1992), pp. 82-103; William G. Shade, "Political Pluralism and Party Development: The Creation of A Modern Party System, 1815-1852" in Paul Kleppner et al, eds. *The Evolution of American Electoral Systems* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981): 77-111; Donald B. Cole, *The Presidency of Andrew Jackson* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1993), pp. 245-267; and Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *The Age of Jackson* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1945).

Party supporting what Clay called the American System of high tariffs, a national bank and federally sponsored internal improvements; while the Democrats opposed the intervention of the federal government in the economy to such a degree.[10]

One key characteristic of the second party system was that the two dominant parties were national ones: both relied on support from every section of the Union. A second key characteristic was that the competition between these two parties was very close nationally and very close within each region. An important consequence of these two characteristics was that both parties had a definite interest in avoiding sectionally divisive issues. For inter-sectional political parties engaged in a tight struggle nationally and within each region, sectionally loaded questions were a no-win situation. For a national party to take a clear stance on a sectionally divisive issue like the extension of slavery was to court electoral defeat.[11] First, any definite stand ran the risk of creating

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[10]On the development of the Democratic Party see Michael Holt, "The Democratic Party 1828-1860," in Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., ed., *History of United States Political Parties*, vol. 1, 1789-1860 From Factions to Parties (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1973): 497- 536. For the development of the Whig party see Glyndon G. Van Deusen "The Whig Party" in Schlesinger, *History of United States Political Parties*, vol. 1: 333-363. For analyses that look primarily at the development of the Whig party in the South see Arthur Charles Cole, *The Whig Party In The South* (Baltimore: The Lord Baltimore Press, 1914), Charles Grier Sellers Jr. "Who were the Southern Whigs?" *The American Historical Review* 59,2 (January 1954): 335-346, Thomas Brown, "The Southern Whigs and Economic Development" *Southern Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal of the South* 20,1 (Spring 1981): 20-38, and James Oakes "From Republicanism to Liberalism: Ideological Change and the Crisis of the Old South" *American Quarterly* 37,4 (Fall 1985): 551-571. For a discussion of the political differences between the Democrats and the Whigs, see Joel H. Silbey, *The Partisan Imperative: The Dynamics of American Politics Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 36 and 58-63, Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York, The Noonday Press, 1990), pp. 98, 113-114, 133-134, 186, and 237-247; Wayne S. Cole, *An Interpretive History of American Foreign Relations*, revised edition, (Illinois, Dorsey Press, 1974), pp. 95-96 and Edward Pessen, *Jacksonian America: Society, Personality, and Politics* (Illinois, The Dorsey Press, 1978), pp. 200, 208-209, 214-217 and 294.

[11]Eric Foner, "Politics, Ideology and The Origins of The American Civil War" in George M. Frederickson, ed. *A Nation Divided: Problems and Issues of the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Minneapolis: Burgess, 1975), pp. 16-19, 23, John McFaul, "Expediency versus Morality: Jacksonian Politics and Slavery" *The Journal of American History* 62,1 (June 1975): 24-39, Kenneth O'Reilly, *Nixon's Piano: President's and Racial Politics From Washington to Clinton* (New York:

a rupture between the sectional wings of the party and such a division would bring certain defeat in national elections. Furthermore, even if the party could somehow manage to hold together, a stance that was seen as pro-southern would discredit the party in the eyes of Northern voters, while a stance that was seen as pro-northern would doom the party's electoral chances in the South. Either way the result would be the same for the party at the national level; given the closeness of the competition between the parties in each section, a clear defeat in either section would spell defeat at the national level. Even committing the party to the most moderate stance imaginable would be electorally dangerous, because any such compromise position would leave the party vulnerable in both sections. If one party committed itself to a moderate stance while their opponents avoided taking any definitive stance, the party that was committed to a particular position would find itself at a disadvantage in both the North and the South. Their opponents, unencumbered by a definite position, could run sectional campaigns and out-bid the moderate position in both sections. However, this type of sectional campaigning was only possible if the national party leaders could avoid taking any stance on sectionally divisive issues, which was only possible if these issues were kept out of the national arena.[12] Therefore, for

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The Free Press, 1995), pp. 10-37; McCormick, *The Second American Party System*, pp. 15 and 353; and Watson, *Liberty and Power*, pp. 8-11.

[12]A good example of the delicate balancing act the slavery issue forced politicians to engage in can be found in William J. Cooper Jr., *The South and the Politics of Slavery, 1828-1856* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1978), pp. xi, 58-74, 105-10 and 313. He argues that in this era, politics in the South was dominated by the slavery issue as each party tried to one-up the other as protector of the South's peculiar institution. However, to play the role of protector, the party had to be in power nationally and thus they had to keep close ties with the Northern wing of the party. This meant that they could not push the slavery issue too far, as it would alienate their Northern wing, lead to national defeat, and thus render their party useless as a protector for the South. Rather than engage in the risky effort of trying to find this delicate balance, it was often easier to simply ignore questions that would raise the slavery issue in the national arena.

party leaders, the best strategy was to avoid such issues if possible and, as the Missouri Crisis had shown, the extension of slavery was such an issue. As one historian noted, "in effect the second American party system lived by avoiding divisive sectional issues, and the most potentially disruptive was slavery."[13]

This tendency to avoid sectionally divisive issues was further encouraged by a third characteristic of the second party system, which was the prominent role played by the two parties in the political life of the nation. By the mid 1830's political parties and the two-party system dominated the political landscape to a degree unparalleled in U.S. history. Joel Silbey argues that political life in this period was characterized the partisan imperative, which he defines as the wide-spread belief that, "political life and individual political choice were partisan; that little could exist in American politics that was not partisan." The two national parties that dominated the era, the Whigs and the Democrats, offered contrasting political programs and thus presented voters with the opportunity to make meaningful choices. Voters and politicians came "to accept parties and develop partisan commitments and loyalties of tremendous strength, intensity and vitality because parties expressed their deepest values, beliefs and preferences."[14] The very strength of the party system further discouraged discussion of divisive sectional issues because politicians

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[13]William Nisbett Chambers, "The Election of 1840" in Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., ed. *History of American Presidential Elections 1789-1968* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1985), vol. 2, p. 655. For a general discussion of party leaders and their fears concerning party splitting issues, see James L. Sundquist, *Dynamics of The Party System: Alignment and Realignment of Political Parties in the United States* (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1983) revised edition, p. 23. For Sundquist's discussion of slavery as a party splitting issue see pp. 50-73.

[14]Silbey, *The Partisan Imperative*, pp. xv and 56. See also pp. 55-66, and 36-37.

were naturally hesitant to endanger such a vital component of the political system that had put them in power. Why risk the stability of the party and its electoral chances by taking a strong stand on a sectionally divisive issue that would only help the opposition attain office and implement its detested program? Why destroy a party that stood for so many important measures over one issue?[15]

The connection between the second party system and the avoidance of the slavery issue was not an accident. Instead, this connection was a direct result of what politicians had learned from the Missouri Crisis and their subsequent attempts to use that knowledge to construct political coalitions capable of exercising power nationally. In essence, the lessons of the Missouri Crisis became embedded into the institution of the second party system.[16] The sectional split engendered by the Missouri controversy not only frightened politicians by warning them of the dangers of geographically based parties, but also demonstrated that the key to national party success lay in silencing the slavery issue. National power could be gained by linking the Republicans of the South with a Northern constituency, but this could only be done if slavery was removed from politics because a strong stand on the slavery issue would endanger the success of the party in one section or the other.

This lesson of the Missouri Crisis was instrumental in the formation of the dominant party of the era, the Democratic party.[17] The

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[15]Silbey, *The Partisan Imperative*, pp. 87-115.

[16]On embedding ideas within institutions see Goldstein and Keohane, "Ideas and Foreign Policy," pp. 20-24 and Sikkink, *Ideas and Institutions*, especially pp. 248-251.

[17]Richard H. Brown, "The Missouri Crisis, Slavery and the Politics of Jacksonianism" *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 65,1 (Winter 1966): 55-72; Michael F. Holt, *The Political Crisis of The 1850's* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1978), pp. 19-21; Holt, "The Democratic Party 1828-1860," pp. 500-502; Foner, "Politics Ideology and the Origins of the American Civil War," pp. 17-19; and Watson, *Liberty and Power*, pp. 70-72.

primary mover behind the construction of the Democratic Party was Martin Van Buren of New York.[18] Van Buren was quick to recognize both the dangers and the opportunities presented by the Missouri Crisis and immediately set out upon the construction of a new national party. His attempts to create a national party by silencing the slavery issue began in the very midst of the Missouri Crisis. During the crisis, Van Buren and his Bucktail faction made it clear privately that they favored a compromise with the South, but publicly tried to remain mute on the issue. Van Buren arranged to be out of town when a well-attended anti-slavery meeting was held in Albany to support the restriction of slavery in Missouri, and in the New York legislature, the Bucktails refused to make any statements on the issue despite the efforts of their political opponents to draw them out.[19] This silence was designed to further the construction of a viable national coalition by avoiding the twin dangers of either being seen as too pro-Southern to survive in the North, or too anti-Southern to survive in the South.

Van Buren made his thoughts clear in a famous letter to Thomas Ritchie, leader of the powerful Richmond Junto of Virginia and editor of the influential *Richmond Enquirer*. In a reference to the Missouri Crisis, Van Buren argued that it was the weakness of the national parties of the era that made that sectional crisis possible: "It was not until that defence [national parties] had been broken down that the clamor agt. Southern Influence and African Slavery could be made effectual in the

[18]Robert Remini, *Martin Van Buren and the Making of the Democratic Party* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959).
[19]Fitzpatrick, *The Autobiography of Martin Van Buren*, pp. 99-100 and 138; Richard Brown, "The Missouri Crisis, Slavery, and the Politics of Jacksonianism," pp. 61-62; and Pessen, *Jacksonian America*, p. 189.

North." Mirroring the lessons of the Missouri Crisis, Van Buren worried that without the re-creation of strong national parties, "geographical divisions founded on local interests or, what is worse prejudices between free and slave holding states will inevitably take their place." To prevent the formation of sectional parties, Van Buren recommended the re-establishment of strong party ties, which "in former times furnished a complete antidote for sectional prejudices by producing counteracting feelings." As a basis for such a party, Van Buren recommended an alliance "between the planters of the South and the plain republicans of the North."[20] By focusing on economic or constitutional issues and avoiding the issue of slavery, Van Buren's alliance became the leading political coalition of the ante-bellum era.

The cross sectional nature of this coalition had important effects on the policies its leaders favored. As Michael Holt argues, "from the time of its formation, then, an important wing of the Democratic party was determined to protect slavery . . . and to prevent its emergence as an issue in the political arena by focusing attention on other issues."[21] As Democrats could agree on so many vital political issues, why risk a split over a question many saw as peripheral to the main events of the day?[22] The next two sections focus on one result of this determination to keep slavery out of politics, the resistance of both the Jackson and Van Buren administrations to the annexation of Texas.

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[20]Martin Van Buren to Thomas Ritchie, January 13, 1827, in Holt, "The Democratic Party," pp. 539-540.

[21]Holt, "The Democratic Party 1828-1860," p. 502.

[22]Silbey, "'There Are Other Questions Beside That Of Slavery Merely': The Democratic Party and Antislavery Politics," Chapter 6 of *The Partisan Imperative*, pp. 87-115.

THE JACKSON ADMINISTRATION AND THE ANNEXATION OF TEXAS

The question of the acquisition of Texas by the United States became an issue on the political map very late in the administration of Andrew Jackson. What forced the issue onto the agenda was the successful revolt of Texas against Mexican rule in 1836 and the subsequent requests from an independent Texas to be allowed to join the United States. As the leader of an inter-sectional coalition who desired to place his chosen successor in the White House, Jackson was unwilling to risk the stability of his party, even for a prize as valuable as Texas. As Texas was a slave-holding nation, the question of its annexation was sure to reopen the debate over the extension of slavery, a debate that the Missouri Crisis had shown to be sectionally divisive. Following the lessons they had learned from the Missouri Crisis, the leading men of the Jackson administration repeatedly turned a deaf ear to the annexation requests of the Texans, believing that any moves towards annexation would produce a sectional debate that would threaten the existence of their party and the Union.

While nominally a part of Mexico, by the mid 1820's Texas can probably be more accurately characterized as an American colony.[23] In many ways Texas was tied more closely to the United States than to Mexico: it was populated primarily by former Americans who had brought with them American customs and laws and who someday

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[23]Van Alstyne, *The Rising American Empire*, p. 103

expected to be brought back under the rule of the United States.[24]
However, before 1836, the question of Texas's acquisition was not an
important issue in American politics. After the debates on the Adams-
Onís Treaty had ended (1821),[25] Texas is not mentioned again in
Congress until Texas's declaration of independence in 1836.[26] In this
period between 1820 and 1835, U.S. policy towards Texas is limited to a
few "half hearted" and "rather cautious and tentative" efforts by both the
Adams and Jackson administrations to negotiate a new Mexico-U.S.
border.[27] Negotiations, that neither administration seems to have taken
very seriously. Though the U.S. Minister to Mexico under Adams and
Jackson, Joel R. Poinsett, was authorized on three different occasions to
open negotiations with Mexico over Texas,[28] on none of those occasions
did he seriously push these negotiations.[29] Poinsett's successor, Anthony

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[24]By one estimate, in the 1830's, Americans outnumbered Mexicans in Texas by a margin of 10 to 1,
see Lloyd C. Gardner, Walter F. LaFeber and Thomas J. McCormick, *Creation of The American
Empire: United States Diplomatic History* 2nd. ed. (Chicago: Rand McNally College Publishers
Company, 1973), p. 121. In a more conservative estimate, Frederick Merk judges that by 1830 the
population of Texas was between 25,000-30,000 and only 4,000 of those were Mexicans, *History of
The Westward Movement* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1978), pp. 270 and 274. W. Dirk Raat
estimates that by 1835 there were between 25,00-30,000 Americans in Texas and less than 8,000
Mexicans, *Mexico and The United States: Ambivalent Vistas* (Athens: The University of Georgia
Press, 1992), pp. 63-67. For a general assessment of the of the closer ties between America and Texas
than Mexico and Texas see also George Lockhart Rives, *The United States and Mexico 1821-1848: A
History Of The Relations Between The Two Countries From The Independence Of Mexico To The
Close Of The War With The United States* 2 vols., (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913) vol. 1,
pp. 128-54, 182-184 and 195.

[25]On the role of Texas in the negotiation and ratification of the Adams-Onís Treaty see Chapter 3.

[26]Rives, *The United States and Mexico*, p. 362.

[27]The first quote is from Bradford Perkins, *The Creation of A Republican Empire*, p. 175. The second
is from Rives, *The United States and Mexico*, p. 169. For a similar assessment see Remini, *Henry
Clay*, pp. 303-305.

[28]These authorizations were given on March 26, 1825, March 15, 1827 and August 25, 1829. See
Eugene C. Barker "President Jackson and the Texas Revolution" *American Historical Review* 12, 4
(July 1907), pp. 788-789.

[29]See Josefina Zoraida Vazquez and Lorenzo Meyer, *The United States and Mexico* (Chicago:
University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 27-28; James Morton Callahan, *American Foreign Policy In
Mexican Relations* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1932), pp. 53-55; and J. Fred Rippy, *Joel
R. Poinsett: Versatile American* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), pp. 113-115.

Butler was left "almost entirely unsupervised" on the issue[30] and his successor, Powhatan Ellis was told not to push for the purchase of Texas.[31]

There the question stood until the Texas revolution thrust the issue back into American politics. From the very beginning of its existence as an independent state, the people of Texas, by a large majority wished to become part of the United States. In a referendum on annexation in September of 1836, Texas voters approved a union with the United States by the incredible majority of 3,227 to 91.[32] The first commissioners appointed to the United States by the provisional government of Texas were instructed to "approach the authorities of our Mother Country. . . [to see] whether by any fair and honorable means Texas can become a member of that Republic." Similar instructions were given to the subsequent commissioners and Ministers to the United States.[33] Unfortunately for the Texans, in responding to these requests, President Jackson acted more like the head of a threatened intersectional coalition than as an expansionist leader of a land hungry empire.

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[30]David M. Pletcher, *The Diplomacy of Annexation: Texas, Oregon And The Mexican War* (Missouri: The University of Missouri Press, 1973), p. 69.

[31]Eugene I. McCormac, "John Forsyth" in Samuel Flagg Bemis, ed. *The American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1928), vol. 4, p. 319.

[32]George P. Garrison, "The First Stage of The Movement For The Annexation of Texas" *American Historical Review* 10,1 (October 1904), p. 74. For an examination of domestic developments within the Republic of Texas see Stanley Siegel, *A Political History of The Texas Republic: 1836-1845* (Austin: University Of Texas Press, 1956).

[33]Henry Smith to Stephen Austin, Branch Arthur and William Wharton, December 8, 1835 in George P. Garrison, ed. *Diplomatic Correspondence of the Republic of Texas*. Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Years 1907, 1908. 3 vols. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1908-1911) vol. 1, p. 53 (herafter referred to as *DCRT*). It is interesting to note that these instructions were given before Texas officially had declared its independence. For later instructions on annexation see David Burnett to James Collingsworth and Peter Grayson, May 26, 1836, Stephen Austin to William Wharton, November 18, 1836 and R.A. Irion to Memucan Hunt January 26, 1837 in *DCRT*, vol. 1, pp. 90, 131, and 233.

By all accounts, Andrew Jackson was an avid expansionist who was especially interested in Texas. Its acquisition was "dearly wanted" and his "constant desire."[34] During discussions with representatives from Texas, Secretary of State John Forsyth asserted that he knew that annexation "was a favorite measure of General Jackson"[35] and Jackson himself made no effort to conceal his fervid desire for Texas.[36] Except for Mexico's legal claim on Texas, Jackson considered Texas to be thoroughly American and a natural addition to the United States:

> A large portion of its civilized inhabitants are emigrants from the United States; speak the same language with ourselves; cherish the same principles, political and religious, and are bound to many of our citizens by ties of friendship and kindred blood; and more than all, it is known that the people of that country have instituted the same form of government with our own.[37]

Given the attractiveness of Texas to the United States and the President, Jackson's actions towards the newly independent nation and its requests for annexation are puzzling. Instead of rushing to assist Texas in its war against Mexico, acknowledging Texas's independence and pursuing the possibilities of annexation; Jackson refused to assist the

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[34]For Jackson's desire for Texas see Eugene C. Barker, "President Jackson and The Texas Revolution," pp. 788-809. The quotes come from Leonard L. Richards, "The Jacksonians and Slavery" in Lewis Perry and Michael Fellman, eds. *Antislavery Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Abolitionists* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1979), p. 117 and Eugene I. McCormac, "Louis McClane" in Bemis, *The American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy*, vol. 4, p. 290.

[35]James Collingsworth and Peter Grayson to David Burnet, July 15, 1836 in *DCRT*, vol. 1, p. 110.

[36]Rives, *The United States and Mexico*, vol. 1, pp. 396-7. See also Wharton to Austin, January 6, 1837, Wharton to Houston, February 2, 1837 and Wharton and Hunt to Rusk, February 20, 1837 in *DCRT*, vol. 1, pp. 171, 179 and 197.

[37]Jackson's Special Message to the Senate and The House on Texas, December 21, 1836, *Messages and Papers*, vol. 4, p. 1487.

fledgling republic, hesitated to recognize the independence of Texas, and avoided all discussions of the question of annexation.[38] As Robert Remini puts in, when given the opportunity to acquire Texas, "Andrew Jackson slowed to a crawl."[39] The restraint shown by Jackson in his policy towards Texas was startling to many of his contemporaries who expected a much more belligerent stance from the fiery Old Hickory.[40] How can this unexpected caution be explained, especially on the part of a President who, in the words of one contemporary, "had a mania on the issue of Texas annexation?"[41] The argument of this section is that this caution can best be explained as a result of Jackson's fear of the domestic consequences of annexation. Andrew Jackson was no longer the aggressive military warrior he once was. He was now the cautious leader of a political party who was struggling to keep his broad coalition intact.[42]

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[38]For Jackson's call for neutrality see his Seventh Annual Message, December 7, 1835; Executive Order of August 7 1836; and Eighth Annual Message, December 5, 1836, *Messages and Papers*, vol. 4, pp. 1370, 1453-1454 and 1456-1457. See also Jackson's response to the Appeal by Stephen F Austin, April 15, 1836; Andrew Jackson to Governor Newton Cannon, August 6, 1836; Jackson to Asbury Dickins, August 17, 1836; and Jackson to Edmund Gaines, September 4, 1836 in Bassett, *Correspondence of AJ*, vol. 5, pp. 398, 417, 421 and 424. For assessments of the effectiveness of the neutrality of the Jackson administration see Barker, "President Jackson and The Texas Revolution," pp. 788-809, Justin H. Smith, *The Annexation of Texas* (New York: The Baker & Taylor Company, 1911), pp. 20-33; and Pletcher, *The Diplomacy of Annexation*, pp. 69-72. For Jackson's caution regarding recognition see his message to the Senate on June 23, 1836; his Eighth Annual Message, December 5, 1836; and his message to Senate and House on Texas December 21, 1836, *Messages and Papers*, vol. 4, pp. 1449, 1456-1457, and 1485-1487.

[39]Robert Remini, *Andrew Jackson and The Course of American Democracy, 1833-1845* vol. III (New York: Harper and Row, 1984), p. 360.

[40]Rives, *The United States and Mexico*, vol. 1, pp. 395-396.

[41]This phrase is attributed to Silas Wright in Pessen, *Jacksonian America*, p. 303.

[42]When President Monroe suggested sending Jackson as the American Minister to Russia, a horrified Thomas Jefferson declared, "Why good God, he would breed you a quarrel before he had been there a month!" See *Memoirs of JQA*, April 8, 1818, vol. 4, p. 76. However, as President and leader of the Democratic party, Jackson did not live up to this aggressive image. For an account of Jackson's Presidency that stress Jackson's moderation and caution as a party leader see Cole, *The Presidency of Andrew Jackson*, especially pp. x, 121, 134-136, 213-215, 228, 245-246, 257-258 and 274-275.

Publicly, Jackson explained his caution by stressing two international factors: The first was his wish to avoid provoking any dispute with Mexico that could lead to a Mexican-American War. Mexico had yet to recognize the independence of Texas and was still planning on crushing the rebellion and reasserting its control over the breakaway province. Indeed the Mexican Minister to the United States had made it clear that recognition would be seen by the Mexican government as a hostile act and an unwelcome interference in their domestic affairs.[43] The second of the publicly pronounced factors was Jackson's desire to avoid bringing down upon the United States the censure of the world community. The President feared that any precipitate actions towards Texas would expose America to the criticism that it had fomented and sustained a rebellion in a neighboring state to satisfy its expansionist impulses.[44]

Though these concerns over the possible international repercussions of recognition and annexation were legitimate, privately Jackson and his administration made it clear that the major stumbling block in the way of annexation was domestic, not international. That stumbling block was the issue of slavery and its extension. Although Jackson coveted Texas, his fear of igniting a domestic debate on this issue precluded the implementation of his expansionist desires.[45] Jackson

[43]See Manuel Eduardo de Gorostiza to John Forsyth, May 24, 1836 in William R. Manning, ed. *Diplomatic Correspondence Of The United States: Inter-American Affairs, 1831-1860*, vol. 8, Mexico (1831-1848 mid-year) (Washington: Carnegie Endowment For International Peace, 1937), pp. 328-329. (Hereafter simply Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence—US.*)

[44]See Jackson's Eighth Annual Message (December 5, 1836) and his Special Message to the House and Senate on Texas, December 21, 1836, *Messages and Papers*, vol. 4, pp. 1456-1457 and 1484-1488.

[45]Because Jackson's failure to annex Texas was a non-event, this period is often ignored or treated in a cursory fashion by those historians who study the era. As argued earlier, this relative neglect is unfortunate, and indeed, part of the motivation behind this study is to look closely at the proverbial 'dog that did not bark'. However, while this period is often only briefly addressed, the explanations given are

worried that any moves towards annexation would inevitably agitate the question of the expansion of slavery and result in a replay of the Missouri Controversy; a replay that could create a geographically based schism, divide and destroy the Democratic party, and possibly dissolve the Union. To prevent this, Jackson acted in accordance with the lessons of the Missouri Crisis and endeavored to prevent the dangerous debate from taking place. His desire for Texas was overcome by his fear of domestic discord.

In his Eighth Annual message, President Jackson made the rather cryptic comment that the annexation of Texas depended on "the reconcilement of various and conflicting interests."[46] What he meant by this phrase is somewhat ambiguous as he quickly changed the subject to address his worries concerning the reactions of Mexico and other interested powers. However, once freed from the constraints of publicity he was able to be more explicit concerning these "various and

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often largely consistent with the interpretation offered here. For example, Frederick Merk's *Slavery and the Annexation of Texas* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972) focuses almost exclusively on the Tyler era, but when the actions of Jackson and Van Buren are briefly mentioned, their fear of the slave question is also mentioned, see pp. 5-6 and 45-47. For other cursory handlings of the issue that highlight the problem caused by the slavery question see, Cole, *The Presidency of Andrew Jackson*, pp. 130-131 and 266-267; Lester D. Langley, *Mexico and The United States: The Fragile Relationship* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991), p. 2; Varg, *United States Foreign Relations 1820-1860*, p. 123, Leckie, *From Sea To Shining Sea*, pp. 481-482; and Richards, "The Jacksonians and Slavery", p. 117. The major exceptions to the relative neglect of this period include Garrison's, "The First Stage of the Movement For the Annexation of Texas," pp. 72-96, Smith's *The Annexation of Texas;* and Rives, *The United States and Mexico*, especially pp. 389-416, all of which stress the importance of the slavery issue. While all studies that address this period cite the importance of the slavery question, most mention both the international and domestic hindrances and do not attempt to assign them relative weights, see Remini, *Andrew Jackson and The Course of American Democracy, 1833-1845* vol. III, pp. 359-364; Robert Remini, *The Life of Andrew Jackson* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), pp. 309-313; Robert Remini, "Texas Must Be Ours" *American Heritage* 37,2 (February/March, 1986): 42-47, Pletcher; *The Diplomacy of Annexation*, pp. 72-74; John M. Belohlavek, *"Let The Eagle Soar": The Foreign Policy of Andrew Jackson* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), pp. 215-238; Douglas Astolfi, *Foundations of Destiny: A Foreign Policy of the Jacksonians, 1824-1837* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1989), pp. 168-169 and 198-199; Merk, *History of The Westward Movement*, p. 279; and Thomas A. Bailey, *A Diplomatic History Of The American People*, 7th ed. (New York: Appleton, 1964), pp. 241-246.

[46]December 5, 1836, *Messages and Papers*, vol. 4, p. 1456.

conflicting interests" that were blocking annexation. Privately Jackson made it clear that it was his fear of igniting a sectional conflict that prevented him from pursuing annexation at this time. In a private meeting with the Texan representative that the President stressed was to be kept "in the strictest confidence," Jackson confided that it was the opposition of the Northeast to any expansion southward that was the chief obstacle to annexation. He also offered a plan that he felt might be successful in preventing this question from dividing the country and the Democratic Party into sectional groups and thus facilitate annexation. The Texan Minister in Washington, William Wharton, reported back to his government that:

> Genl. Jackson says that Texas must claim the Californias on the Pacific in order to paralyze the opposition of the North and the East to annexation. That the fishing interests of the North and East wish a harbour on the Pacific; that this claim of the Californias will give it to them and will diminish their opposition to annexation. He is very earnest and anxious on this point of claiming the Californias and says we must not consent to less. This is in strict confidence.[47]

Jackson's suggestion that Texas should claim California and his assertion that such a claim would improve Texas's prospects for admission is interesting in a number of respects. First, it clearly shows that Jackson was deeply concerned with the domestic reactions and consequences of his foreign policy. What is more significant, however,

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[47]Wharton to Thomas Rusk, February 16, 1837, *DCRT*, vol. 1, pp. 193-194. See also, Merk, *Slavery And The Annexation of Texas*, p. 47.

is that this suggestion also demonstrates that these domestic concerns were more important to him than the international concerns voiced in his official pronouncements. Publicly, Jackson maintained that the major stumbling blocks in the way of annexation were his desire to avoid provoking Mexico and his wish to avoid the accusation that America had encouraged a revolt in a neighbor to satiate its territorial ambitions. If these concerns were truly paramount in Jackson's mind, why would he encourage Texas to claim California as a prelude to annexation? Taking California along with Texas would only further enrage the Mexican government and support accusations of U.S. complicity. Jackson's proposed scheme to take more territory from Mexico in order to appease domestic opinion shows that his worries over the domestic repercussions of any attempt to annex Texas were greater than the international worries offered for public consumption. That Jackson was willing to accept Texas, provided it came with California to appease the North, illustrates that Jackson hesitated to annex Texas not out of fear of provoking Mexico or international censure; he was willing to accept and even increase these costs provided that annexation would not be sectionally divisive. He hesitated because he feared that annexation would ignite a sectional controversy similar to the Missouri Crisis that would threaten the stability of the Democratic party and the Union. Jackson was willing to sacrifice expansion for domestic stability.

Jackson's reaction to the domestic constraints on expansion is also interesting because, in many ways, the solution he offers here: combining the annexation of Texas with the acquisition of valuable ports on the Pacific coast to appease the North and enlist their support in a

policy of landed expansion, foreshadows the solution offered almost a decade later by James K. Polk and his supporters in their efforts to annex Texas without destroying the Democratic Party and disrupting the Union.

Additional evidence that Jackson was more concerned with the domestic consequences of the Texas issue than the international consequences comes from Jackson's belligerent stance towards Mexico over the issue of unpaid claims. In February of 1837, Jackson sent a message to Congress calling Mexico's refusal to honor the various claims held by U.S. citizens against Mexico reason enough for "immediate war" and he asked Congress for the authority to launch military reprisals if Mexico was not more forthcoming.[48] If Jackson's fear of provoking a war with Mexico was great enough to force him to deny his ardent desire for the annexation of Texas, why would he be willing to risk a war over a less significant issue? This also supports the conclusion that it was Jackson's fear of creating a sectional schism in the Democratic Party and the nation as a whole that led him to reject the advances of the Texans, and not fear of a possible war with Mexico.

Jackson's concern with maintaining the unity of the Democratic party may seem somewhat puzzling given that Jackson himself was nearing the end of his political career. While members of the Democratic party who hoped to attain positions of power in the future would quite understandably desire party unity to help insure the realization of their political ambitions, Jackson's motives are not as straightforward. Following the precedent set by Washington, Jackson

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[48]February 6, 1837, *Messages and Papers*, vol. 4, pp. 1497-1498.

was planning on retiring from politics after his second term. Therefore, why should he be concerned about the future unity of the Democratic Party? Why not push for the annexation of Texas, which in addition to satisfying an ardent personal desire would also add to the accomplishments of his administration, and let those who hoped to use the Democratic party as a base for future political careers worry about the dangers of a sectional split?

However, even though Jackson himself was nearing the end of his active political career, the fate of the Democratic Party was still an issue of considerable importance to him. While Jackson would not be a candidate for the presidency in 1836, his hand picked successor, Martin Van Buren of New York, would be. The elevation of Van Buren to the presidency would safeguard Jackson's achievements and further Jacksonian policies, while Van Buren's defeat would likely lead to the reversal of many of Jackson's most cherished policies.[49] As Jackson himself put it, "I have labored to reconstruct this great Party and . . . secur[e] its permanent ascendancy, . . . it is truly mortifying, to see men who have hitherto sustained me in the course I have pursued and acknowledging its rectitude, all at once turn round and endeavor to destroy by diverting a portion of the Republican strength, . . . all that I have accomplished."[50] Thus, Jackson still had a definite interest in maintaining the unity of the Democratic party. A sectional fissure in the party over the acquisition of Texas could lead to the election of his

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[49]On Jackson's preoccupation with ensuring his legacy with a Van Buren victory in 1836, see Watson, *Liberty and Power*, pp. 165.

[50]Jackson to Joseph Conn Guild, April 24, 1835, Bassett, *Correspondence Of AJ*, vol. 5, p. 339.

political opponents and the overthrow of the political program he had worked to implement.

Thus, even though Jackson was no longer a candidate for a governmental position, his desire to insure the continued implementation of his policies gave him an interest in maintaining the unity of the Democratic party identical to those Democrats who planned on remaining active in politics. Both had an interest in seeing that the Democratic party stay united and emerge victorious in the upcoming presidential election. The election of 1836 was a significant event in the development of the second American party system as party loyalty, party identification and party programs became more important than at any previous period in U.S. history.[51]

As discussed above, a significant characteristic of this developing two-party system was how evenly matched the two parties were. Not only were the two parties engaged in close struggle nationally, but more importantly, the parties were also equally competitive in each region. As Harry Watson puts it, by the election of 1836, "the two parties had become almost evenly matched throughout the country, with no party having more than a 54% majority in any one section."[52] If Van Buren hoped to win in 1836, he would need to get significant support from all parts of the Union. Thus, he needed to have a nationally unified political party behind him. As political competition became increasingly

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[51]See Joel H. Silbey, "The Election of 1836" in Schlesinger, *History of American Presidential Elections 1789-1968*, vol. 2, pp. 577-600 and Shade, "Political Pluralism and Party Development," pp. 77-111. While both of these authors agree that the election of 1836 was a key event in the development of the second party system, the emphasis of each is somewhat different. Silbey argues that the election of 1836 crystallized the second party system as the parties became national in scope, where Shade, noting the marked divisions in Whig ranks considers the election a transitional one and the second party system not initiated until the Whigs close ranks following the Panic of 1837.
[52]Watson, *Liberty and Power*, p. 205.

dominated by this tight struggle between two national parties, party unity increased in importance and came to be seen as a prerequisite of victory. As Joel Silbey puts it, by 1836 "politicians throughout the country increasingly accepted the necessity of party discipline, party loyalty and party organization, concepts which they had by no means universally embraced up to that point."[53]

The desire of leading Democrats to see a Democratic victory in 1836, led them to work towards party unity, and this pursuit of unity would necessarily frustrate the hopes of Texas throughout the Jackson administration. Calls for unity within the Democratic party were a key component of Democratic rhetoric in 1836, a strategy that left no room for the pursuit of such sectionally divisive issues as the annexation of Texas.[54] A proto-platform issued by the Democratic Party following the nomination of Van Buren made no mention of the Texas issue, but did devote a great deal of space to calls for party unity and the dangers of sectional divisions.[55] The fact that the Whigs failed to unite on a single nominee, but were instead running three largely sectional candidates against Van Buren only furthered the importance of avoiding the sectionally divisive Texas issue.[56]

While the Democratic Party had won a rather decisive victory in the presidential election of 1832, Democrats suspected, correctly it

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[53]Silbey, "The Election of 1836," p. 577. See also, Watson, *Liberty and Power*, p. 199.

[54]Silbey, "The Election of 1836," pp. 580, 585 and 588.

[55]Statement by the Democratic Republicans of the United States, Washington, July 31, 1835, in the appendix of Silbey's "The Election of 1836" pp. 616-638, see especially pp. 618-619 and 623-629. Some indication of the dominant role played by the party in this presidential election can be gleaned from the fact that in this statement Van Buren's name is only mentioned once, but the Democratic Party is mentioned 34 times, see, Cole, *The Presidency of Andrew Jackson*, p. 257 and Thomas Brown, "From Old Hickory To Sly Fox: The Routinization of Charisma In The Early Democratic Party," *Journal Of The Early Republic* 11,3 (Fall 1991), pp. 362-363.

[56]I would like to thank Professor James E. Lewis for emphasizing this point to me.

turned out, that the balance between the Whig and the Democratic parties would be much closer in 1836.[57] The Democratic party had formed around the charismatic figure of Andrew Jackson and Democrats feared that without his popularity to anchor the presidential ticket the party would go down to defeat. Moreover, Jackson's retirement raised the question of succession and opened the door for an intra-party dispute over who would become his heir. In the hope of avoiding such a divisive struggle, Jackson unequivocally supported Martin Van Buren as his successor and worked towards getting the entire party to unite behind a Van Buren led ticket in 1836.

However, contrary to Jackson's hopes, the choice of Van Buren would create divisions in the Democratic party, especially in its southern wing. In many southern states, where the Jackson led Democratic party had been virtually unbeatable in 1828 and 1832, opposition to Van Buren threatened divisions severe enough to endanger the party's hold on those electoral votes.[58] Though opposition to the New Yorker sprang from many causes, the primary objection to Van Buren was that as a northerner, he could not be trusted on the slavery issue.[59] Van Buren could have solidified his support in the South by strongly supporting the extension of slavery through the annexation of Texas. However, such a

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[57]In the election of 1836, Van Buren got only 50.2 % of the popular vote, with the rest going to his Whig opponents. However, Van Buren's electoral majority was much higher because the Whigs had failed to unite and ended up running three separate candidates, Watson, *Liberty and Power*, pp. 204-5.
[58]As William Cooper Jr. puts it, "Andrew Jackson strode across southern politics like an Olympian among mortals. Men flocked to his banner simply because he carried it." Jackson received 81.4% and 88% of the popular vote in the South in 1828 and 1832 respectively; whereas Van Buren would only carry 50.7 percent of the South's popular vote, *The South and the Politics of Slavery*, pp. 5 and 95-96. See also McCormick, *The Second American Party System*, pp. 178, 194-195, 205-206, 250-251 and 254; and Watson, *Liberty and Power*, pp. 204-205.
[59]Cooper, *The South and the Politics of Slavery*, pp. 16-22, 74-75 and 81-82. See also, Francis P. Blair to Andrew Jackson, August 24, 1836, Bassett, *Correspondence of AJ*, vol. 5, p. 423.

stand was not politically feasible because it would surely have alienated a great number of Northern Democrats. The safest course was to ignore the slavery issue, and thus ignore Texas's request for annexation.

Fearing that a division within the Democratic party could lead to a Whig victory in 1836, and thus the defeat of his program; Jackson made repeated calls for party unity and endeavored to avoid agitating sectionally divisive issues. Jackson's public and private communications in this period are littered with warnings against sectional splits and calls to subordinate sectional disputes to the interests of the Union and the Democratic party. Whether Jackson stressed dangers to the Union as a whole or to the Democratic party in particular depended upon his audience. While his public statements stressed the dangers that the slavery issue presented to the Union as a whole, his private communications show more concern with the impact of the slavery issue on the future electoral success of the Democratic party. Nevertheless, whether stressing dangers to the Democratic party or to the Union, the lesson he wished to impart was the same: responsible politicians should avoid agitating the divisive slavery issue.

In his seventh annual message, which called for U.S. neutrality towards Texas's struggle for independence, Jackson, in a separate section, made a special point of warning the nation against the agitation of the slavery issue and sectional disputes. "The general government, to which the great trust is confided of preserving inviolate the relations created among the States by the Constitution, is especially bound to avoid in its own action anything that might disturb them."[60] In composing his

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[60]Though this quote appears in a section of the message where Jackson is supporting the Post Office's decision to restrict the mailing of abolitionist literature from the north to the south, the logic is equally

farewell address, Jackson admitted that the danger of geographical disputes "has occupied my own thoughts greatly" and for that reason he would like "to impress the public with an adequate aversion to the sectional jealousies, the sectional parties and sectional preferrences (sic)."[61] Echoing George Washington's warning against the dangers of parties, especially those based on geography, Jackson devoted over one quarter of his farewell address to the danger of sectional agitation and sectional disputes. In his warning to the nation, Jackson denounced the attempts of scheming politicians:

> to sow the seeds of discord between different parts of the
> United States and to place party divisions directly upon
> geographical distinctions; to excite the South against the
> North and the North against the South, and to force into the
> controversy the most delicate and exciting topics- topics
> upon which it is impossible that a large portion of the Union
> can ever speak without strong emotions.[62]

Jackson's central message was clear: The sectional divisiveness of the slavery issue threatened the stability of the existing political structure, and therefore it was imperative for those with a stake in the system to avoid such issues.

However, whereas the President's public utterances downplayed any partisan concerns by stressing the dangers a North-South split presented to the Union as a whole, his private communications

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applicable to the Texas issue. The quote is from Jackson's Seventh Annual Message, December 7, 1835, *Messages and Papers*, vol. 4, p. 1394. For his warnings on sectional splits and his call for neutrality see pp. 1367 and 1370.

[61]Jackson to Chief Justice Taney, October 13, 1836, Bassett, *Correspondence of AJ*, vol. 5, pp. 429-430.

[62]March 4, 1837, *Messages and Papers*, vol. 4, pp. 1511-1527. The quote is on p. 1514.

emphasized the dangers a geographical division presented to his beloved Democratic party. Jackson impressed upon his supporters the need to remain united in order "to give stability to the measures which the Republican party have so recently carried thro[ugh]."[63] Speaking passionately of the personal sacrifices he had made to implement the program of the Democratic party and fearing the destruction of that program at the hands of his political opponents, he decried "those who aid in dividing the Republican ranks" as "apostates from principle."[64] According to Jackson, the most prudent course for the Democratic party was to avoid discussing any divisive issues because intra-party disputes carried the risk of political defeat. "In the view of such consequences it was my object to guard my friends . . . and to urge them to postpone such differences . . . to a period when they could be as well settled as now, and without any hazard to the great republican party."[65] Jackson placed the unity of the Democratic party ahead of any particular issue. As the Missouri Crisis had revealed, a debate on the question of the extension of slavery through the annexation of Texas would be sectionally divisive and threaten the stability of the coalition between the northern and southern wings of the Democratic party. No move on Texas could please both sections, therefore the best policy was to ignore the issue.[66]

While the previous paragraphs have focused on the President and his calculations, concerns over the domestic ramifications of the Texas

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[63]Jackson to Henry Horn, January 25, 1835, Bassett, *Correspondence of AJ*, vol. 5, p. 321.
[64]Jackson to Joseph Conn Guild, April 24, 1835. See also, Jackson to Alfred Balch, February 16, 1835, Bassett, *Correspondence of AJ*, vol. 5, pp. 338 and 327-328.
[65]Jackson to Henry Horn, January 25, 1835, Bassett, *Correspondence of AJ*, vol. 5, p. 321.
[66]Astolfi, *Foundations of Destiny*, pp. 196-199

issue were not limited to Jackson alone, but permeated his entire administration—an administration composed of people like Van Buren, who had definite political ambitions and needed a stable and united Democratic party to realize those ambitions. They too accepted the lessons of the Missouri Crisis as the most relevant guide for action. The person in the administration who dealt most closely with the representatives of Texas was Secretary of State John Forsyth. Like Jackson, Forsyth would like to have seen Texas become a part of the United States; but like Jackson he was also hesitant to annex Texas because he feared that the question would spark a sectionally divisive debate over the extension of slavery and endanger the Democratic Party and the Union.[67] In Forsyth's early meetings with the Texan representatives they found him "but little disposed to be communicative in anything" as he implied that this was not an opportune time for annexation.[68] At a later meeting, when Forsyth was asked directly by the Texan minister, William Wharton, whether annexation was likely, Forsyth was explicit concerning what made this an unpropitious time for such a move. Of this meeting, Wharton wrote:

> I beg that what I am about to state as occurring between myself and Mr. Forsyth and the President will be considered as sacredly confidential. The publication of it under any possible circumstances would be extremely embarrassing and indeed unpardonable for some time to come. Mr. Forsyth replied to me that various sectional

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[67]Alvin Laroy Duckett, *John Forsyth: Political Tactician* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1962), p. 211.
[68]James Collingsworth and Peter Grayson to David Burnet, July 15, 1836, *DCRT*, vol. 1, p. 110.

interests in Congress would have to be reconciled before annexation would be agreed to.[69]

Thus, Forsyth, in contrast to the public stance of the administration that fear of provoking Mexico and inviting the censure of the world community were delaying annexation, privately argued that Texas could not be acquired because of the domestic disturbance annexation was likely to produce. Like Jackson, the fear of stirring up a sectional debate over the extension of slavery and the dangers that such a renewed Missouri Controversy would present to the Democratic Party and the Union is what caused Forsyth to pause, not fears over the reaction of Mexico, Great Britain and France.

Worries over the consequences any discussion of annexation would have for the Van Buren ticket's chances in the election of 1836 also influenced the actions of the administration's friends in Congress. The desire to avoid agitating a question that could divide party lines by splitting the country on geographical lines caused Congress to move as slowly on the Texas issue as the executive. The evasion of this issue by Congress is just as striking as the inactivity of the executive branch. As in the White House, opinion in both houses of Congress was ardently pro-Texas. Whenever Texas was discussed, members in both houses unanimously expressed their support for Texas in its revolution against Mexico and the close connections between the United States and the people of Texas.[70] However, like Jackson, their sympathy and desire for

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[69]William Wharton to Stephen Austin, January 6, 1837, *DCRT*, vol. 1, p. 169.

[70]Look at any discussion of the issue and virtually all speakers, regardless of whether they favor quick action or delay, will open their comments with a statement of support for Texas and a description of its similarity to the United States. For example see the comments by Senators Walker, Preston and Calhoun in favor of quick recognition and Senators King, Morris, and Webster against any sudden

Texas were overcome by their fear that addressing the question would create unacceptable domestic problems. Party leaders in Congress, attempting to prevent a replay of the Missouri Crisis, consistently avoided actions that would lead to a similar sectional debate over Texas.

Commenting on how members of Congress had handled the questions of the recognition and possible annexation of Texas, one Congressman declared that he had "looked with disgust and indignation on their truckling, skulking and shrinking from this question, which had been so much evinced whenever any matter touching it had been called up." He argued that, judging from the efforts he saw around him to avoid any discussion of the issue, one would think that many members of Congress viewed the Texas issue as one "conjured up . . . by the spirit of some foul demon, whose touch threatened little less than political annihilation." He attributes "this sudden timidity, this extraordinary precaution," this "dodging and evasion," to the "apprehension . . . that it might directly or indirectly effect that subject [slavery] which now seems to threaten us of being the Pandora's box of all our future mischief's; infecting our whole political atmosphere with discords and 'furies damned,' crying aloud for havoc and civil war."[71]

While some members of Congress decried the attempts to sidestep discussion of the Texas issue as an unconscionable dereliction of duty, the very fact that Congress did evade the question suggests that many other members were in favor of avoiding the question or at least were willing to acquiesce in the evasion. Instead of rushing ahead with

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moves toward Texas. *The Congressional Globe: Containing Sketches of Debates and Proceedings* 24 Cong., 1 sess. (Washington: Blair and Rives, 1836) vol. 3, pp. 331-332, 359-360, 378 and 394-395.
[71]Congressman Bynum (North Carolina) 1837, in *Appendix to The Congressional Globe* 24 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 4, p. 229.

recognition and exploring the possibilities of annexation, these members, while expressing support for and an affinity towards Texas, argued that the more prudent course was to avoid agitating such a sectionally divisive issue. Speaking of the dangers of a debate on the question of the extension of slavery, one western Senator argued that, "The recognition of Texas involved a question . . . which was beyond the mere recognition of her independence- a question that would convulse this Union from one end to the other."[72]

Such sentiments were common and explain why Congress moved so slowly and cautiously in the recognition of a country that they all ardently wanted to see achieve its independence from Mexico. Thus, in their attempts to silence any debate on the Texas issue, the Jackson administration was aided by Congressional leaders from both major parties who also wished to avoid debating a question of territorial expansion believing it was certain to stir up new Missouri Controversies with all the dangers that held for the existing parties and the Union.

Starting in April 1836, petitions in favor of recognizing the independence of Texas began to reach the Senate. Reacting predictably to the possibility of the intrusion of this potentially disruptive issue onto the agenda, Senate leaders, especially those closely linked to the administration, endeavored to avoid the issue. Citing the dangers of a sectional fight over the question of annexation, various Senators urged caution on the question of annexation.[73] Throughout April and early May, all such petitions were laid on the table by general consent and no

[72]Senator Morris (Ohio) May 23, 1836, in *Congressional Globe* 24 Cong., 1 sess., vol. 3, p. 394.
[73]See the speeches by Senators Benton and Southard in *Appendix to The Congressional Globe*, 24 Cong., 1 sess., pp. 509-510 and 520-521. In addition, see Benton's comments in *Thirty Years View*, vol 1, pp. 667-668.

further action was taken. While all Senators expressed their desire to see Texas free from Mexican control, the clear majority was in favor of caution and delaying action on the issue.[74] To avoid any divisive debates on the question of recognition, the Senate voted to refer the entire issue to the Committee on Foreign Relations for study.[75] The solution adopted by the Foreign Relations Committee was to avoid the issue by turning the question over to the executive branch. The Committee report, which was subsequently approved by the Senate, expressed support for the recognition of Texas only if the President receives information that the breakaway republic was the de facto government of Texas.[76] Meanwhile, the House, which had avoided virtually any discussion of the issue, refused to appropriate any money for the appointment of a minister to Mexico, but did pass the Senate resolutions in favor of sending the question to the White House.[77]

Even before the House and Senate had registered their approval of sending the question to the President, Jackson told Congress that while he was looking into the question, he had no information at this time that would warrant recognition.[78] Jackson, eager to avoid taking a definite stand on the issue, responded to the Congressional resolutions by attempting to shift responsibility back to the legislature. In December 1836, Jackson presented the report of his secret emissary to Texas,

[74]*Congressional Globe* 24 Cong., 1 sess., vol. 3, pp. 331-332, 359-360.

[75]May 23, 1836, *Congressional Globe* 24 Cong., 1 sess., vol. 3. p. 395.

[76]The Committee made its report on Saturday June 18, and the measure was approved on Friday July 1, 1836. *Congressional Globe*, 24 Cong., 1 sess., vol. 3, p. 458.

[77]The one instance where the Texas issue did arise in the House was in a speech by John Quincy Adams on an unrelated topic, See Rives, *The United States and Mexico*, vol. 1, p. 388. Adams, his national political career long since over was the only prominent member of either House to come out strongly against the independence movement of the Texans. The House passed the Senate resolution on July 4, 1836, *Congressional Globe* 24 Cong., 1 sess., vol. 3, p. 486.

[78]Message to the Senate, June 23, 1836, *Messages and Papers*, vol. 4, p. 1449.

Henry Morfit, to Congress. The essence of Jackson's message was that he would rather not make the decision. He argued that it was such an important decision, the Congress should make it and not the executive. He gave his opinion that the United States should move cautiously on the matter, but maintained that the decision was Congress's to make.[79]

Thus responsibility was thrust back upon a Congress that was still unwilling to take any strong stand on the recognition of Texas. Proponents of immediate recognition consistently found themselves delayed by the administration's allies in Congress who, urged on by Van Buren, continually sought to postpone any discussion of the issue.[80] Eventually, all Congress could agree on was the desirability of shifting responsibility back to the President. Both the House and the Senate passed resolutions in favor of recognizing Texas and sending a minister, but only when "the President of the United States may receive satisfactory evidence that Texas is an independent power and shall deem it expedient to appoint such minister." Jackson took advantage of the closing hours of his administration to finally accede to the recognition of Texas. However, the game of political hot potato was still not quite over, for in his message to Senate explaining his decision he reiterated that he had advised caution on the question and stressed that he felt he was merely doing his duty by acquiescing to the wishes of the Congress.[81]

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[79]Message to the Senate and the House on Texas, December 21, 1836, *Messages and Papers*, vol. 4, pp. 1484-1488.

[80]See James C. Curtis, *The Fox At Bay: Martin Van Buren and the Presidency, 1837-1841* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1970), pp. 152-156 and Rives, *The United States and Mexico*, vol. 1, p. 398.

[81]Message to The Senate, March 3, 1837, *Messages and Papers*, vol. 4, pp. 1500-1501.

The Texan representatives themselves were under no illusions concerning the reason for the delay on recognition and the rejection of their offers for annexation. Disregarding the explanations publicly proffered, the Texan representatives who dealt with the Jackson administration concluded that domestic fears of creating sectional divisions and dividing the Democratic party were behind the hesitancy of the United States. Up to the closing months of the Jackson administration, the Republic of Texas was represented in Washington by William Wharton. Wharton did not doubt that the reason the United States moved so slowly on recognition and refused to consider annexation was the fear of the domestic debate that such moves would produce.   Referring directly to the Missouri Crisis, Wharton wrote that he did not have much confidence that Texas would be annexed, because "That question when proposed will agitate this Union more than did the attempt to restrict Missouri, nullification, and abolitionism all combined."[82] Viewing the marked hesitation of the leading politicians to push for the annexation of Texas, Wharton attributed this hesitation to the sectional divisiveness of the question and the desire of these politicians, especially those associated with the dominant Democratic Party, to avoid a geographical split in their party and the nation:

> I will now tell you the whole secret of the reluctance of
> Congress to act on this matter. I have made it my business
> to unravel the mystery and I know that I have succeeded.
> Some of the members have openly avowed to me their
> reasons for wishing to postpone our recognition until the

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[82]William Wharton to Stephen Austin, December 11, 1836, *DCRT*, vol. 1, p. 152.

next Congress. It all proceeds from the Van Buren party. They are afraid that the subject of annexation will be pressed immediately after recognition;--that annexation or no annexation will be made the test of the elections . . . -- that the North will be opposed and the South in favor of annexation, and that Mr. Van Buren will of course have the support of either the South or North in mass accordingly as
, he favours or opposes annexation. The fear then of throwing Mr. Van Buren into a minority. . . induces his friends to desire a postponement of recognition at present, thereby keeping down the exciting question of annexation at the next elections and giving Mr. Van Buren more time to manage his cards and consolidate his strength. . . . they prefer that Texas should in the mean time suffer by the delay . . . rather than jeopardise his popularity.[83]

Wharton argued that this motive could not be advanced publicly and that many of the policy makers favored the annexation of Texas, but that this fear of dividing the Democratic Party into Northern and Southern branches impelled many of "Mr. Van Buren's friends" to "secretly desire to prevent the agitation of the question altogether."[84] This was also the view of the Secretary of Texas's legation to the United States, who wrote that he was "confident that the questions of recognition and annexation will produce a general splitting up of the old Democratic Party."[85]

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[83]William Wharton to Sam Houston, February 2, 1837, *DCRT*, vol. 1, pp. 179-80
[84]William Wharton to Sam Houston, February 5, 1837, *DCRT*, vol. 1, p. 182.
[85]Fairfax Catlett to Stephen Austin, January 11, 1836, *DCRT*, vol. 1, p. 173.

The attempts by the Jackson administration and its Congressional allies to avoid a divisive sectional debate over the annexation of Texas, which so frustrated the Texan representatives, were very successful. Texas was not made an issue in the election of 1836, and the Democrats were able to maintain unity and defeat the divided opposition.[86] While this section has focused on the Democrats, as they were the party in power, it should be noted that in their attempt to stifle the debate on the issue they were aided by the silence of the opposition Whig party. Hoping to construct an intersectional party that could defeat the Democrats on the national level, the Whigs also had an interest in avoiding such a sectionally divisive issue. Just as Jackson and Van Buren wanted to avoid the issue, Whig leader Henry Clay had also learned the lesson of the Missouri Crisis and did not want to be forced to take a stand on an issue that would ruin him in one section or the other.[87]

Regardless of the number of issues where Whigs and Democrats disagreed, one area where they were in full accord was on the importance of avoiding discussing sectionally charged issues. This agreement is perhaps best seen in the positions taken by the party newspapers on sectionally divisive issues. Rather than attack the position of the opposing party on such issues, as they did with all other issues, both parties agreed that such questions were outside the bounds of party competition and the work of desperate politicians outside the party structure. The Democratic Washington *Globe* declared that the agitation of sectional issues could not "be attributable to either of the great

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[86]Silbey, "The Election of 1836", pp. 577-600.

[87]See Remini, *Henry Clay*, pp. 485-486, Van Deusen, *The Life Of Henry Clay*, pp. 294-296 and George Rawlings Poage, *Henry Clay and The Whig Party* (Chapel Hill: University Of North Carolina Press, 1936), p. 126.

political parties of the country. The attempt carries self contradiction with it. Neither the Whigs or the Democrats are exclusively confined to the slave holding or free states. How then can it be the exclusive work of either party?"[88] Approving of the *New Orleans Bee*'s statement that "Party politics have nothing, and should have nothing to do with this question [the slavery question], the *Globe* went on to argue that any "mad scheme" to debate such questions would certainly ruin the parties by precipitating a sectional split.[89] The most prominent of Whig papers, *The National Intelligencer* agreed fully and it too cautioned its readers about the importance of keeping sectionally divisive issues out of politics.[90]

Thus, as Van Buren entered the White House, the prospects for Texas did not look bright. Though they had finally received recognition in a midnight ceremony that took place during the closing moments of the Jackson administration, they were facing a political system where the two major parties, who agreed on few things, did agree on one--the relevance of the Missouri Crisis analogy to the question of expansion and the resulting importance of avoiding a sectionally explosive debate over the extension of slavery that the annexation of Texas was sure to raise.

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[88]Washington *Globe*, Wednesday, September 30, 1835. See also, McFaul, "Expediency vs. Morality," pp. 29-30.
[89]Washington *Globe*, Wednesday, October 14, 1835 (The *Bee* was also a Democratic paper). See also, Silbey, *The Partisan Imperative*, p. 90.
[90]See the *National Intelligencer*, July 24, August, 5, 28, and September 2, 1835. See also, McFaul, "Expediency vs. Morality," pp. 29-30.

THE VAN BUREN ADMINISTRATION AND THE ANNEXATION OF TEXAS

"I shall, if honored with the choice of the American people, endeavor to tread generally in the footsteps of General Jackson"

-Martin Van Buren[91]

In many ways, Andrew Jackson's hand-picked successor presented a stark contrast to the retiring General. Martin Van Buren, a short and somewhat portly professional politician from the North seemed to be the polar opposite of the tall and thin military chieftain from the Southwest whose footsteps he had now promised to walk in. Contemporaries drew these contrasts most sharply in the area of resoluteness. Whereas Jackson was renowned for his boldness and decisiveness, Van Buren was constantly derided for being overly-cautious and evasive when presented with controversial political issues. The differences contemporaries saw between these two men is well represented in their nicknames: Jackson was the "Hero of New Orleans," Van Buren was the "Little Magician" or the "Sly Fox"; Jackson was "Old Hickory" and Van Buren was the "Slippery Elm."[92]

However, in other ways, Van Buren seemed to be the natural successor to the Andrew Jackson that had occupied the White House. A key member of the coalition that had brought Jackson to the Presidency, the driving force behind the creation of the Jackson led Democratic

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[91]This is a quote from Van Buren's acceptance of the Democratic nomination for President, Martin Van Buren to Andrew Stevenson et al, May 29, 1835. Published in the Washington *Globe*, June 12, 1835.
[92]See Watson, *Liberty and Power*, p. 198. On the transition from Jackson to Van Buren, see also, Brown, "From Old Hickory To Sly Fox, pp. 339-369.

Party, an extremely loyal Secretary of State and Vice President, and a devoted adherent to the program of the Democratic Party; Van Buren was, in Jackson's eyes, the perfect man to carry on the programs of his administration.

Whether a proponent of the acquisition of Texas looked at the differences or the similarities between Jackson and Van Buren, the prospects for annexation must have looked bleak. If the intrepid Old Hickory had hesitated to pursue annexation out of fear of disrupting the Democratic Party, what could be hoped for from the equivocal Slippery Elm? Prospects for annexation were indeed bleak with Van Buren in the White House. His policy towards the possible acquisition of Texas did follow very closely in the footsteps of President Jackson: rather than let the question of the extension of slavery divide the Democratic party, he too decided to evade the issue.

Though often overshadowed by his more dynamic predecessor, Martin Van Buren was a pivotal figure in the political development of the United States. One of the first professional politicians in the country, Van Buren went against the strong anti-party sentiments that pervaded the United States and extolled the benefits of political parties, party unity, and party competition. Rather than seeing political parties as a dangerous threat to freedom, Van Buren praised parties as necessary and useful means of popular control of the government. Van Buren's efforts in this direction made him one of the primary architects of the Democratic Party and the second party system.[93]

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[93]As Robert Remini argues, "The making of the Democratic Party . . . was largely the work of Martin Van Buren," see Remini's *Martin Van Buren and the Making of The Democratic Party*, p. 124. On Van Buren's role in the origins of the Democratic party and the second party system in general, see also, Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea Of A Party System: The Rise of Legitimate Opposition In The United*

In his attempts to construct and hold together a political party, Van Buren acquired a reputation for evasiveness and political manipulation. In fact, the term Van Burenish was coined as a synonym for non-commitalism.[94] Though Van Buren disliked his image as the Little Magician, he did take pride in it at times; repeating with pleasure a story he had heard about two men reacting to a speech he had just given on the controversial tariff question. Both agreed it was an excellent speech, but neither could figure out which side it was on.[95] Another prominent example of the behavior that earned the Sly Fox his reputation for evasiveness was his handling of the growing issue of nullification. At a banquet in honor of Thomas Jefferson's birthday in 1830, President Jackson decided to openly challenge then Vice President John C. Calhoun's support for the doctrine that a state could nullify federal law. After hearing a speech in favor of nullification, Jackson boldly challenged the states-rights crowd with his defiant, and now famous, toast to "Our Federal Union. It must be preserved." Also well known as an implacable defender of his political ideals, Calhoun responded to this challenge with his equally intractable and famous toast to "The Union, next to our liberty, most dear." Less well remembered from that night's toast wars is Van Buren's less than stirring call in his toast for "Mutual forbearance and reciprocal concessions."[96]

States, 1780-1840 (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), pp. 212-271; Watson, *Liberty and Power*, pp. 66-72; William Appleman Williams, *The Contours of American History* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1966), pp. 234-235; and Fitzpatrick, *The Autobiography of Martin Van Buren*, pp. 123-125.

[94]See, Fitzpatrick, *The Autobiography of Martin Van Buren*, pp. 196-197; Curtis, *The Fox At Bay*, pp. 17-18 and 44; and Cooper, *The South and the Politics Of Slavery*, p. 144.

[95]Major J. Wilson, *The Presidency of Martin Van Buren* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1984), p. 25

[96]John Niven, *Martin Van Buren: The Romantic Age of American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 255-247. See also, Watson, *Liberty and Power*, pp. 120-121; Cooper,

In spite of this reputation for caution and political fence sitting, one constant throughout most of Van Buren's career was his attachment to the Democratic Party and his pursuit of party unity.[97] For Van Buren, the key to electoral success and implementing the ideology of the Democratic Party was in maintaining a well-disciplined party.[98] After creating a unified political machine that could control politics in New York State, Van Buren moved into the national arena convinced of the importance of maintaining a unified party on the national level. Upon his arrival in Washington, Van Buren was disappointed by the lack of party unity he found and President Monroe's inability or unwillingness to create a disciplined national party. Van Buren criticized Monroe for failing to designate a successor and failing to stress party loyalty in presidential appointments. The result of Monroe's "heresy" against his political party would, according to Van Buren, result in the ruin of his political agenda and the victory of his political opponents as his party would splinter into competing factions.[99] For Van Buren, the only way to secure national power for himself and his political allies would be to create and maintain a tightly disciplined unified national party.

From the start of his national political career, Van Buren realized that one issue clearly presented the gravest threat to his hopes for the

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The South and the Politics of Slavery, p. 13; Curtis, *The Fox at Bay*, p. 32; and Fitzpatrick, *The Autobiography of Martin Van Buren*, p. 416. For an overall account of the Nullification Crisis see William M. Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina, 1816-1836* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965).

[97]At the end of his political career, Van Buren does despair of the political direction the Democrats have taken under Polk and he bolts the Democratic Party to become a Presidential candidate on the Free Soil ticket.

[98]See Remini, *Martin Van Buren and the Making of The Democratic Party*, pp. 11 and 61; and Curtis, *The Fox At Bay*, pp. 12 and 17.

[99]The term "Monroe heresy" is from Remini, *Martin Van Buren and The Making of The Democratic Party*, pp. 35 and 96. For Van Buren's criticisms of Monroe see, Fitzpatrick, *The Autobiography of Martin Van Buren*, pp. 119-127, 197 and 233.

preservation of a nationally united party: that issue was slavery. As with many of his contemporaries, the event that made this danger clearest to him was the Missouri Crisis. Viewing the debates that wracked Congress as a result of Missouri's petition for statehood, Van Buren learned the central lesson of the Missouri Crisis—given the sectional divisiveness of the slavery extension issue, that issue must be avoided if national party unity is to endure. He viewed the Missouri Crisis in partisan terms and feared the slavery issue because it threatened the political dominance of the national Republican Party by splitting the Republicans of the North from their political allies in the South. He argued that "the principal design" of those who stirred up Missouri Controversies "was to produce political and partisan effect by seizing on the question as an opportunity to bring the politics of the slave states and the standing of their supporters in the free states into disrepute through inflammatory assaults upon the institution of slavery."[100]

Though Van Buren goes to great lengths in his *Autobiography* to jettison his image as a Little Magician who avoided political commitments, he does admit that his handling of the Missouri Crisis and the slavery issue in general was the one area where this characterization of him as a wily issue straddler was accurate. During the Missouri debates, Dewitt Clinton, the leader of Van Buren's political opponents in New York, tried to force Van Buren to take a clear stand on the slavery issue. However, Van Buren explains that he "was unwilling to give him the advantage of wielding so powerful an influence against us, if we had opposed it [the restriction on slavery in Missouri]." To prevent his

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[100]Fitzpatrick, *The Autobiography of Martin Van Buren*, see pp. 100 and 137-138.

political enemies from gaining this partisan advantage, Van Buren decided that the best course was to remain as silent as possible on this issue. This he accomplished by intentionally leaving town when a large anti-slavery meeting was held in Albany, declining to make any statements on the issue when it was raised in the New York legislature, and passing all motions relating to Missouri without requiring a formal vote.[101]

In the midst of the Missouri Crisis, Van Buren recognized the dilemma that the slavery issue presented to a Northern politician who valued his affiliation with a national party. For such an individual, any position taken on the slavery issue was fraught with danger. An anti-slavery stance would divide him from his southern allies, while a pro-slavery stance would threaten his hold on his northern constituency. Van Buren also identified the only safe way out of this dilemma, which was to avoid the question if at all possible. As a result of this diagnosis of the Missouri Crisis, from 1820 on, Van Buren believed that responsible partisan leadership entailed suppressing or avoiding the sectionally divisive slavery issue.[102]

Given Van Buren's caution and penchant for avoiding controversial issues, his devotion to the political party he had done so much to create, his emphasis on party unity, and his assessment of the dangers of the slavery extension issue coming out of the Missouri Crisis, it should come as no surprise that the desire of many Texans for

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[101]Fitzpatrick, *The Autobiography of Martin Van Buren*, pp. 99-100, 138 and 196-197. See also, Brown, "The Missouri Crisis, Slavery and the Politics of Jacksonianism," pp. 61-62; and Pessen, *Jacksonian America*, p. 189.
[102]Holt, "The Democratic Party 1828-1860," pp. 500-502 and 514-515.

admission to the United States would not be fulfilled under the Van Buren administration.

After Texas was accorded recognition by the outgoing Jackson administration, the Texan representatives were free to do formally what they had been previously doing informally, which was to seek admittance to the Union. On August 4, 1837, Memucan Hunt, Texas's Minister to the United States, made it official by formally presenting Secretary of State Forsyth with a request for annexation.[103] The assessments made by the Texan representatives concerning their chances for a positive reply from the Van Buren administration offer an interesting illustration of the curious position the annexation issue held in U.S. politics. Their calculations consisted of an odd mixture of reasons why they should be optimistic, combined with a gnawing sense of doubt.

Their reasons for hope derived from the benefits they were sure would accrue to the United States as a result of annexation and the general popularity of the Texan cause throughout the government and the country. The formal request for annexation spent a great deal of time enumerating the benefits the acquisition of Texas would bring to the Unites States, and the correspondence between the Texas government and their representatives in Washington is replete with declarations asserting support for annexation from prominent Americans. Though a few Northern politicians such as Daniel Webster were seen as opposed to annexation, the Texan representatives were convinced that annexation was supported by the entire South, the bulk of Democrats in the North

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[103]See Memucan Hunt to John Forsyth, August 4, 1837 in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence— US*, vol. 12, pp. 129-140.

and majorities in Congress that included Democratic leaders such as Thomas Hart Benton and Whig leader Henry Clay. Most importantly, the Texans were satisfied that annexation was supported by President Van Buren and his cabinet, including Secretary of State Forsyth, Secretary of War Joel Poinsett, Secretary of the Treasury Levi Woodbury and the Postmaster General Amos Kendall. With the President, the cabinet, the Congress, and the majority of Americans in favor of annexation, the Texans felt they had reason to hope.

However, in their estimations of the chances for annexation, these hopes were often overridden by a keen sense of doubt. The source of these doubts was their concern that fear of raising the slavery issue would prevent the United States from acting. In spite of the general popularity of acquisition, the Texan representatives feared that U.S. policy makers would not pursue it, because any moves towards annexation would lead to a dangerous debate over the extension of slavery--dangerous because it could split the existing political parties into Northern and Southern wings. Despite confidence that support for annexation was strong in the country, the Congress, and the cabinet; one Texan representative came to the conclusion that annexation was "exceedingly doubtful" because of domestic/partisan concerns. He likened the issue of annexation to a natural disaster about to befall the dominant parties of the era. As he put it, raising the issue would cause a "volcanic explosion to take place in Congress . . . and as in the natural world, such convulsions sometimes sink old continents and throw up new ones--by analogy we may suppose, that political convulsions may destroy

old opinions and parties and bring up others in their stead."[104] Though the Texans saw some reasons to hope that annexation would be achieved, their realization of the dangers U.S. policy makers saw in the slavery issue caused them to have grave doubts concerning the prospects of annexation. Even though the acquisition of Texas would provide a number of benefits to the country and was favored by most of the leading politicians of the day, their fear of inciting another debate over the extension of slavery meant that they would not pursue annexation.

Whatever slim hopes the Texans may have had of getting a positive response from the Van Buren administration must have been further dashed by the early actions of the administration. Rather than welcome Texas with open arms, Van Buren sent clear signals that he hoped to distance himself and the administration from the issue. In his inaugural address, Van Buren called for caution in dealing with the slavery issue and made a clear plea for avoiding any controversy regarding the South's "peculiar institution."[105] Van Buren made it clear that one of his administration's primary domestic goals was to preserve domestic harmony and that the way to do that was to avoid any debate on the slavery issue. The hopes of the Texans for a return to the republic of their birth, was a clear threat to that goal. Further indications of the administration's desire to distance itself from discussion of the

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[104]This quote is from P.W. Grayson to Sam Houston, October 21, 1837, *DCRT*, vol. 1, pp. 264-265, which was written after the administration had already turned down Texas's initial request. For other instances where their hopes given the popularity of the issue are mixed with their fears due to the slavery issue see Memucan Hunt to J.P. Henderson, April 15, 1837, pp. 208-211; Hunt to the Secretary of State of Texas (Irion), undated, pp. 236-241; Hunt to R.A. Irion, August 4, 1837, pp. 245-247; Hunt to Irion, August 10, 1837, pp. 253-255 and Hunt to Irion, August 11, 1837, pp. 256-257 (In Hunt's letter of the 10th, Forsyth is considered to be pro-annexation, but by the 11th Hunt considers Forsyth to be violently opposed to annexation). These assertions of friendliness towards annexation continue even after Texas is turned down by the administration, see the Grayson letter cited above and Hunt to Irion, November 15, 1837, pp. 267-269.

[105]March 4, 1837, *Messages and Papers*, vol. 4, pp. 1534-1536.

annexation of any slave territory came from its delay in sending a representative to Texas and its delay in formally receiving Texas's representative in Washington.[106]

As with Missouri's petition for statehood, Texas's formal request for annexation did not mention slavery. However, the reasons for these omissions were quite different. In the case of Missouri's request, slavery was not mentioned because it was not seen as important. Slavery existed in Missouri, everyone assumed that Missouri would become a slave state, and the question of slavery in new states had never before created a controversy. However, with regard to Texas's application this was not a simple omission, but a clear strategy on the part of the Texan government. Knowing the controversy Missouri's application had created and the fear many politicians in the United States felt regarding stirring up any more Missouri Controversies, the Texans decided to intentionally downplay the existence of slavery in Texas. In their request for annexation, the Texans concentrated on the international ramifications for the United States of annexation or its failure. The message spent a great deal of time discussing the power resources America stood to gain and the possible reactions of Mexico and Great Britain. However, privately they believed that it was the domestic consequences of their request that would be more important in determining their fate. To increase their chances for a positive response they attempted to defuse the slavery issue by ignoring it. As the author of the formal request wrote to his superiors in Texas, "I thought it best

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[106]Rives, *The United States and Mexico*, p. 401.

to say nothing on the slave question, which as you know is more important than any other connected with the subject."[107]

Despite their attempt to downplay the slavery issue, the efforts of the Texans to achieve admittance to the Union was not destined for success in 1837, or for the immediate future. The danger of a sectional split in the major parties and in the nation as a whole over the extension of slavery was simply too great for the established politicians of the day to risk. Especially if that politician was President Van Buren, a man who placed great emphasis on unity within the Democratic Party he had done so much to create. Moreover, the Van Buren administration was facing trouble on a number of fronts. In addition to dealing with the financial downturn of the Panic of 1837, which many blamed on the economic policies of the Democratic Party, Van Buren was also engaged in a difficult political fight over his major domestic initiative, the creation of the sub-Treasury, and he was burdened with a serious dispute with Great Britain over America's Northeastern border with Canada. Van Buren had no desire to add to these difficulties by pursuing a policy with regard to Texas that he feared would ruin his administration by splitting his party into sectional wings.[108]

On August 25, 1837, the Van Buren administration unambiguously turned down Texas's request stating that annexation was

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[107]Memucan Hunt to R.A. Irion, August 10, 1837. See also Hunt to J. P. Henderson, April 15, 1837, *DCRT*, vol. 1, pp. 252-255 and 208-211.

[108]On the Van Buren administration and Texas see, Niven, *Martin Van Buren: The Romantic Age of American Politics*, pp. 443-447; Curtis, *The Fox At Bay*, pp. ix and 156-169; Wilson, *The Presidency of Martin Van Buren*, pp. 148-153; Pletcher, *The Diplomacy of Annexation*, pp. 73-74; Daniel James, *Mexico and The Americans* (New York, Praeger, 1963), pp. 53-59; Merk, *History of The Westward Movement*, pp. 279-280; Callahan, *American Foreign Policy in Mexican Relations*, p. 90; Rives, *The United States and Mexico*, pp. 406-416; and Smith, *The Annexation Of Texas*, pp. 56-65. For a focus on the Secretary of War, see Rippy, *Joel R. Poinsett*, pp. 114-115 and 170. For a focus on the Secretary of State see Duckett, *John Forsyth*, p. 211.

an issue that, "would be inexpedient under existing circumstances to agitate." To prevent anyone from mistakenly interpreting the phrase "under existing circumstances" to mean that the door to annexation was still open, at least a crack, Secretary of State Forsyth made it clear that as far as the administration was concerned this turndown was final, refusing even to have the question "reserved for future consideration."[109] Forsyth claimed that the state of war that existed between Mexico and Texas made annexation impossible. He argued that annexation would be an unjust breach of U.S. treaty obligations and would risk a war with Mexico. At no point did Forsyth mention slavery or the danger of setting off a sectionally divisive debate. As a domestic concern, such sentiments would have been inappropriate to include in communications with what was, and what would remain, a foreign state.[110] However, some indication of the administration's true fears may have inadvertently crept into the message with Forsyth's admission that the United States has "learnt the value of internal quiet."[111]

That Forsyth never directly referred to the slavery issue did not prevent the Texans from concluding that it was the fear of agitating that very issue that made annexation "inexpedient under existing circumstances." The two primary representatives of Texas in Washington, Memucan Hunt and Peter Grayson, agreed that the concern voiced by Forsyth about upsetting Mexico was not the primary obstacle Texas faced. Instead, they both concluded that the chief hindrance was

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[109]John Forsyth to Memucan Hunt, August 25, 1837, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence--US*, vol. 12, pp. 11-13.

[110]Merk, *History of The Westward Movement*, p. 279.

[111]John Forsyth to Memucan Hunt, August 25, 1837, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence--US*, vol. 12, pp. 11-13.

the administration's fear of precipitating a divisive debate over slavery and alienating the northern wing of the Democratic Party by promoting its extension. Grayson argued that even though the administration's desires for Texas "can not I think be questioned," the cabinet was perpetually trying to delay and avoid any consideration of the issue. To account for this evasiveness he pointed to Van Buren's domestic worries. "The Cabinet . . . is for the present acting with a sort of diplomatic caution, out of deference to the prejudices of the North."[112] His colleague, Memucan Hunt, was even more direct. He argued that Van Buren and was not pushing annexation for the simple reason that it would "jeopardize the strength of the party in the North."[113]

Texas's representatives in Washington gave what were perhaps the best contemporary analyses of the position of the Texas issue in the second American party system and how that party system, in tandem with the warnings of the Missouri Crisis analogy, frustrated the hopes of the Texans. To his superiors in Texas, Grayson explained that:

> there is no solid foundation on which to build a hope that the measure can now be carried. . . . [B]oth parties here are afraid to move in the matter for fear of losing popularity in the North--in so critical and touchy a condition are they with respect to each other. I have indeed the strongest reason to believe that some of the most prominent men of both sides of politics here are heartily in favor of annexation, and would at once advocate the measure openly and freely but for the scare crow to which I have alluded,

[112]P.W. Grayson to Sam Houston, October 21, 1837, *DCRT*, vol. 1, pp. 264-265.
[113]Memucan Hunt to R.A. Irion, October 21, 1837, *DCRT*, vol. 1, pp. 266-267.

the displeasure of the North. . . . [T]he determination is to give the question the go by for this session, until weightier matters can be adjusted,--touching the future ascendancy of the two great belligerents--the Loco focos [Democrats] and Whigs.[114]

Similarly pessimistic, in January of 1838, Hunt asked to be recalled because he was convinced "that it would be useless to push the matter of annexation any further." He reiterated his conclusion that the White House would make no moves towards Texas because Van Buren and his entire cabinet were "hampered . . . by their party trammels." He also saw no hope of gaining valuable support outside the administration as even those who favor annexation:

> dread the coming of the question . . . on account of the
> desperate death-struggle, which they foresee, will enevitably
> ensue between the North and the South;--a struggle
> involving the probability of a dissolution of this Union. . . .
> [T]he matter has been thrown into the background . . . by
> common consent . . . leading men are principally concerned
> with their own personal safety, position and prospects. The
> administration party are in a tottering condition and are
> struggling hard to save themselves from falling. On the
> other hand, the whigs are pressing on, with all their
> energies bent upon the overthrow of their adversaries.
> Texas and every thing else [is] forgotten in the struggle.
> We have friends and enemies on both sides, and neither

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[114]P.W. Grayson to R.A. Irion, December 7, 1837, *DCRT*, vol. 1, pp. 273-274.

party are willing at this time to embarrass themselves with a question, which would necessarily disunite them, and produce confusion in their respective ranks.[115]

While this section has so far focused on Van Buren and his desire to keep the annexation of Texas off the political agenda, these two quotes also indicate how he was abetted in this evasion not only by his supporters in the Congress, but also by the leaders of the opposition Whig party. As leaders of a national political coalition, even one that was currently out of power, they too had a clear stake in avoiding any sectionally divisive issue that would split their party and dash their hopes for attaining national power. Whig leader Henry Clay even took the unusual step of publicly praising his political rival in the White House for the caution he had shown over Texas and other issues that could provoke a debate over slavery. After denouncing those who would attempt to inject the divisive slavery issue into national politics, Clay argued that "much as I was opposed to his election" he felt compelled to defend Van Buren's prudence regarding the slavery issue and to reiterate his belief that neither "of the two great parties in this country has any design or aim" to agitate the slavery question.[116] With leaders of the opposition party in agreement with the administration party on the need to avoid the slavery extension issue, Texas would make as little headway in Congress as they had made in the White House. The basic story

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[115]Memucan Hunt to R.A. Irion, January 31, 1838, *DCRT*, vol. 1, pp. 284-288. Though in this letter Hunt also talks about the administration's worries concerning a possible war with Mexico, the consequences of such a war are still spoken of in terms of its impact on domestic public opinion. For further examples of the Texans attributing their failure to the domestic political situation within the United States, see Irion to Hunt, December 31, 1837 and Hunt to Irion, March 12, 1838, vol. 1, pp. 277-281 and 316-317.

[116]Benton, *Thirty Years View*, vol. II, p. 157

would be the same: though many members were theoretically in favor of adding Texas to the Union, they avoided the issue because they feared the effects of broaching the dangerous slavery issue.

Congress's handling of the annexation issue demonstrates quite well the central dynamic that drove U.S. policy towards Texas. The lessons of the Missouri Crisis, in combination with the positions the two major parties found themselves in with respect to each other in the second party system, led to a political struggle marked by the attempts of national party leaders to keep the slavery extension issue from tearing apart their inter-sectional parties and the attempts of party outsiders to advance their political prospects by using the slavery extension issue to upset existing political alignments. The party leaders won this round of the political struggle; Congress did not advance the cause of the annexationists.

Texas appears most often in the Congressional debates of this era in the form of petitions from various groups of citizens regarding the possibility of annexation. The vast majority of these petitions originated from the Northeast, were presented to Congress by members from the Northeast, and were violently opposed to annexation.[117] Unwilling to be dragged into a sectionally divisive debate over slavery by the most vocal of their constituents, Congress reacted to this inundation of petitions by simply laying all such petitions on the table, which avoided the necessity

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[117]Perhaps the most celebrated of these petitions were the so called "Vermont Resolutions." This particular petition against slavery and its extension through the annexation of Texas caused a greater stir than other such petitions because this was not a petition from a group of citizens, but instead came from the legislature of Vermont. Many in Congress felt that a petition from a state merited a stronger hearing than that given to similar petitions, which were automatically tabled. Congress eventually decided to receive the petition, but proceeded to avoid a debate on it by then laying it on the table. See *Congressional Globe*, 25 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 6, pp 39-40 and 107-109.

of engaging in any debate on the content of the petitions. By laying all these petitions on the table, members could claim that they had represented their constituencies by presenting the petitions without having to actually engage in any discussion of the dangerous issue.[118] While this expedient helped defuse pressure from outside the legislature, Congress had a much more difficult time in silencing the party outsiders who were already in Congress and were looking to spark a debate on this issue.

The most prominent of these party outsiders was Senator John C. Calhoun from South Carolina. Calhoun would make such a nuisance of himself by continually attempting to disrupt the existing party system by injecting the slavery question into national politics that Whigs would eventually begin claiming that the "C" must stand for "Crisis".[119] In a departure from his earlier career as a nationalist politician, Calhoun had, by the mid-1830's, become the foremost sectional leader in the country. Rejecting the national party system that had continually frustrated his ambitions for the presidency, Calhoun turned his energies to protecting the South by disrupting that system. Most of Calhoun's Southern colleagues believed that the best way to protect the South was to cooperate in a national party with Northerners who would leave the slavery issue to be dealt with at the local level. They believed that an assault on slavery could be deterred by making themselves key members of a national coalition. To protect this national coalition Southern

[118]These petitions regarding slavery and Texas fell under the infamous gag rule, which was an attempt to prevent the slavery issue from being debated in Congress in any way. On the gag rule, see William Lee Miller, *Arguing About Slavery: The Great Battle in the United States Congress* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1996). For his discussion of the gag rule and annexation, see pp. 284-298.
[119]Cooper credits the *Richmond Whig* with coining the nickname (December 29, 1848); see *The South and the Politics of Slavery*, p. 111. See also, Remini, *Henry Clay*, p. 586.

participants were happy to avoid any discussion of the slavery issue on the national level. Pushing for a public stand in favor of slavery would only weaken their Northern associates at home. They feared that their Northern colleagues would "react by annulling their political alliance or by taking positions on sectional questions that would make it impossible for southern party men to defend their northern connection before southern voters."[120] Forcing the issue on the North would only weaken their political prospects and endanger the security of slavery in the South.

Calhoun rejected this assessment of the situation. Fearing the swelling abolitionist sentiment and the growing power of the North, Calhoun feared that eventually Northern politicians would have the power and the desire to attack the South's "peculiar institution". Calhoun believed that the interests of the South would be best protected by confronting the North as a unified section demanding a public and Constitutional guarantee for slavery.[121] As part of this strategy of confrontation, in December of 1837, Calhoun introduced in the Senate a series of resolutions designed to agitate the slavery issue. He sought a debate and vote on six resolutions in favor of state's rights and the sanctity of slavery. For the purposes of this chapter, the sixth of these resolutions is the most important. With the government's failure to enthusiastically embrace the annexation of Texas in mind, Calhoun's sixth resolution called for a confirmation from the Senate for rights of

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[120]Cooper, *The South and the Politics of Slavery*, p. 106.
[121]For an excellent discussion of Calhoun's political strategy and the differences between it and the strategy of the regular party members in the South, and the one I have relied on here see Cooper, *The South and the Politics of Slavery*, pp. 104-118. See also, Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System*, pp. 253-256.

the people of the South and West to extend their limits without regard to the question of slavery.[122]

_Reacting negatively to Calhoun's attempt to make a vote on his resolutions a "test" designed to force Northern politicians to accede to the South's demands, fellow Southerner, Senator Robert Strange of North Carolina, called for the Senate ignore the resolutions. He feared that a debate on such "disquieting topics" would only serve to turn the North against the South and thus destabilize both political parties and eventually the Union. Denouncing Calhoun's attempt to spark a political fight over slavery, he argued that "All past history show[s]" how destructive such a debate would be and that, "he wished to avoid it from the very bottom of his soul." Warning his colleagues against "the danger of producing mischief by the discussion," he opposed "agitation of the question, in any shape or form."[123]

Calhoun's resolutions received a similar reception from many of his Northern colleagues. By attempting to force a debate over slavery and its extension, Calhoun was castigated by Senator John Davis of Massachusetts for unwisely violating what Davis saw as an implicit agreement among the legislators to avoid such issues.[124] Senator James Buchanan of Pennsylvania also condemned Calhoun's introduction of a

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[122]The exact wording of this resolution argued that "to refuse to extend to the Southern and Western States any advantage which would tend to strengthen, or render them more secure, or increase their limits or population by the annexation of new territories or states, on the assumption or under the pretext that the institution of slavery, as it exists among them, is immoral or sinful, or otherwise obnoxious, would be contrary to that equality of rights and advantages which the Constitution was intended to secure." *Congressional Globe* 25 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 6, p. 55.

[123]On Calhoun's interpretation of his resolutions as a test, see his comments in *Congressional Globe*, 25 Cong. 2 sess., vol. 6, pp. 59 and 73-74. For Strange's speech, see *Congressional Globe*, 25 Cong. 2 sess., vol. 6, pp. 59-60. For a general statement on the reaction of party regulars in the South to Calhoun's resolutions see Cooper, *The South and the Politics of Slavery*, p. 112.

[124]*Appendix To The Congressional Globe*, 25 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 6, pp. 36-38.

question that "can do no good, but may do much harm both in the North and the South." For Northern politicians who wished to remain popular in their anti-slavery constituencies while still keeping ties with the southern wing of their party, such a debate offered only danger.

> The fact is, and it can not be disguised that those of us in the Northern States who have determined to sustain the rights of the slaveholding States at every hazard, are placed in a most embarrassing situation. We are almost literally between two fires: whilst in front we are assailed by the abolitionists, our own friends in the South are constantly driving us into positions where their enemies and our enemies may gain important advantages.[125]

Buchanan concluded that the best policy for him and for his party was simply to avoid such discussions. Connecticut Senator John Niles agreed and cited the "delicate situation" that the resolutions placed so many of his colleagues in as his reason for opposing "its discussion here".[126]

Sensing the danger these resolutions posed to their intersectional coalitions, Democratic and Whig leaders in the Senate worked together to defuse the issue. Whig leader Henry Clay countered Calhoun's resolution with six of his own more moderate resolutions. The most significant difference between the resolutions was that while Calhoun's sixth resolution attempted to open up the question of Texas's annexation, Clay's resolutions did not broach the subject of expansion.[127] In his

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[125]*Appendix To The Congressional Globe*, 25 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 6, pp. 30-31.

[126]*Appendix To The Congressional Globe*, 25 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 6, p. 39.

[127]*Appendix To The Congressional Globe*, 25 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 6, pp. 58-59. On Clay's reaction to Calhoun's resolutions see Remini, *Henry Clay: Statesman for the Union*, pp. 509-511 and Van Deusen, *The Life Of Henry Clay*, pp. 314-319.

attempt to undercut Calhoun, Clay was joined by Democratic leaders in the Senate who were friendly to the administration. When Calhoun's resolutions were under consideration, Whigs and Democrats joined forces to pass a series of amendments that watered down some of the more extreme resolutions.[128] The Senate eventually adopted five of Calhoun's six resolutions. Some of the more moderate ones were adopted whole, while others gained a majority only after they had been significantly amended.[129] The one resolution the Senate balked at was the sixth one, which dealt with the annexation of Texas.

Regarding this resolution, Indiana Senator Oliver Smith admonished Calhoun and whatever supporters he had in the Senate for "com[ing] into this body asking to extend the territory and principles of slavery, when they well know that of all the subjects under the heavens there is none so well calculated to excite and arouse the feelings of the non-slaveholding States." For Smith, debating the issue would be unwise as it would only pour additional fuel on the fire of sectional discord.[130]

Henry Clay agreed with Smith on the desirability of avoiding a debate on this resolution. He saw the introduction of the resolutions as "a trap" for himself and the Whig party and that the resolution regarding Texas was the most dangerous of the six. Clay contended that Calhoun was trying to injure him politically by forcing him to take a definite stance on the issue of the extension of slavery, which would ruin his political prospects in the North or the South depending on which side

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[128]Curtis, *The Fox at Bay*, pp. 118-119 and 166-167.

[129]For a list of the resolutions as adopted by the Senate see *Congressional Globe*, 25 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 6, p. 98. For the votes themselves see pp. 74 and 81. See also *Appendix To The Congressional Globe*, 25 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 6, pp. 41 and 53.

[130]*Appendix To The Congressional Globe*, 25 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 6, p. 28.

he came down. Instead of walking into the trap, Clay decided to sidestep it. He argued that this discussion of "the most exciting of all subjects at the present period, the annexation of Texas" was "peculiarly unfortunate." Rather than debate the merits of the issue, Clay called on both Democrats and Whigs to protect themselves from issues "which cannot be seriously touched without endangering the stability of our entire political fabric."[131] The Senate responded to Clay's call. When Calhoun's sixth resolution was up for consideration on January 12, 1838, the Senate voted overwhelmingly to lay the issue on the table (35-9). Allied in this motion for tabling were Whig leaders like Daniel Webster and Henry Clay and prominent Democrats like Thomas Hart Benton and Silas Wright, Van Buren's closest political ally.[132] Clay congratulated himself for avoiding the trap by handling the issue "in such a manner as to lose nothing neither at the South or at the North."[133]

While Calhoun's attempt to agitate the Texas question was stifled, the danger had not completely passed: the twenty-fifth Congress still had one more Texas bullet to dodge. Interestingly, this second bullet was also fired from South Carolina. On January 4, 1838, Calhoun's fellow Senator from South Carolina, William Preston introduced a measure calling for the re-annexation of Texas.[134] Preston's resolution was designed to pick up the support from Senators who wanted to acquire

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[131]*Appendix To The Congressional Globe*, 25 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 6, p. 57,

[132]*Congressional Globe*, 25 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 6, p. 98.

[133]Henry Clay to Peter B. Porter, January 10, 1838 in Hopkins, *Papers of HC*, vol. 9, p. 127. See also Clay to Francis T. Brooke, January 13, 1838, and Clay to Porter, January 26, 1838, vol. 9, pp. 129-130, and 135-136.

[134]Proponents of the acquisition of Texas often referred to it as the re-annexation of Texas arguing that Texas had once been part of the United States as part of the Louisiana Purchase and had been handed over to Spain by John Quincy Adams as part of the Adams-Onís treaty. For Preston's resolution see, *Congressional Globe* 25 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 6, p. 76.

Texas but feared that annexation might lead to a war with Mexico. To quiet their fears, Preston made it clear that his measure would sanction annexation only if Mexico did not object. The resolution only put the Senate on record in favor of annexation if the United States was able to first attain Mexico's acquiescence. Preston himself recommended accomplishing annexation through a tripartite treaty with both Texas and Mexico.[135]

If fear of wronging Mexico and possibly provoking a war was the true deterrent to annexation, Preston's resolution should have solved the problem as far as the Senate was concerned. By making an agreement with Mexico a necessary part of any deal, those who had qualms about angering Mexico had no need to fear this particular measure. However, because the chief deterrent to annexation was fear of the slavery issue and not fear of offending Mexico, Preston's measure did not gain significant support. Preston himself only partially recognized the obstacles he was facing. Speaking in favor of his measure, Preston argued that while there were certainly international dimensions to this issue, the question of Texas was primarily a question of domestic politics whose outcome depended upon a domestic political struggle. In this assessment he was correct; however, his identification of two sides of this political struggle was mistaken. He saw the question primarily in sectional terms of North versus South rather than in terms of a struggle between party insiders versus party outsiders. He argued that the struggle over Texas would be a straightforward power struggle between

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[135]Preston's resolution called for annexation only if it could be made consistent with U.S. treaty obligations to Mexico, *Congressional Globe*, 25 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 6, p. 76. See also Preston's speech in support of his resolution in the *Appendix to the Congressional Globe*, same volume, pp. 556-558. See also Benton, *Thirty Years View*, vol. II, pp. 94-97.

the North and the South.[136] While certainly the South was solidly in favor of annexation and the North opposed, the outcome of his bill was not determined by a sectional struggle. Nor was the issue settled in terms of a partisan struggle between the Democrats and the Whigs. Instead, the fate of Preston's bill was determined by the struggle between party insiders (from both parties and all sections) who wanted to keep the issue off the agenda and party outsiders like Calhoun who wanted to put the issue on the political agenda.

In this struggle, the party insiders prevailed. At first, Preston was simply put off as the Senate ignored his calls for a debate and vote on the issue. Preston complained that he sensed an "evident disposition to get rid of the question" and that since he first raised the issue "no friendly voice had been raised from any quarter. He had waited . . . for some disposition to act, but so far had seen none."[137] In order to silence Preston, Samuel Southard of New Jersey moved to lay Preston's measure on the table in the hope that "this question should not come up again during this session."[138] A majority of Senators concurred in Southard's wish to get rid of the question and on June 14, with prominent members from both parties and both sections voting with the majority, the Senate voted by a margin of 24-14 to dispose of the resolution by laying it on the table.[139] The Texas question was so feared that even the motion to table was seen as a threat, and twenty-five percent of the Senate refused

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[136]See Preston's speech of April 24, 1838, in the *Appendix To The Congressional Globe*, 25 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 6, pp. 556-558.

[137]*Congressional Globe*, 25 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 6, p. 453

[138]*Congressional Globe*, 25 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 6, p. 453

[139]*Congressional Globe*, 25 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 6, pp. 452-453.

to have even that much contact with the divisive issue and abstained from voting on the measure to table.[140]

"I shall in due time escape the Texas trap, set for me," wrote Henry Clay well before the Senate took up consideration of Preston's annexation resolution.[141] The vote to table the measure fulfilled that prophecy. Again, Clay could congratulate himself on avoiding a political minefield for himself and the Whig party. Though Clay argued that he would like to see Texas join the Union, the experience of the Missouri Crisis had convinced him that the issue of the extension of slavery was too dangerous to his personal political hopes, his party, and the Union.[142]

Van Buren also had reason to celebrate. In his inaugural address, he had called for caution on the slavery issue, making the maintenance of sectional harmony one of his primary goals. With help from friends in the Senate, as well as the leaders of the opposition party, Van Buren achieved this goal. Looking back nostalgically over the Van Buren years, Thomas Hart Benton concluded that Van Buren's tenure as President "was auspicious to the general harmony and presents a period of remarkable exemption from the sectional bitterness which had so much afflicted the Union for some years before—and so much more so since." Benton praises Van Buren for having the foresight and the ability to have "passed through his term without [giving] offense to the North or the South on the subject of Slavery."[143] Van Buren, with the

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[140]See Norman E. Tutorow, "Whigs of the Old Northwest and Texas Annexation, 1836-April 1844" *Indiana Magazine of History* 66,1 (March 1970), p. 61.

[141]Henry Clay to Peter Porter, January 26, 1838 in Hopkins, *Papers of HC*, vol. 9, p. 136.

[142]Remini, *Henry Clay*, pp. 484-485 and 522; and Van Deusen, *The Life of Henry Clay*, pp. 294-296 and 317.

[143]Benton, *Thirty Years View*, vol. II, p. 208.

help of allies in both political parties, was able to accomplish this feat by assiduously avoiding issues such as the annexation of Texas where any definite stance was sure to offend one section or the other.

CONCLUSION

Its initial overtures being rebuffed, Texas formally withdrew its request for annexation on October 12, 1838.[144] With the leaders of both major parties in America hoping to avoid any discussion of the issue, and Texas coming under the rule of an administration opposed to annexation[145], the question of Texas's acquisition fell off the political map.[146] However, as Thomas Jefferson had warned about the question of slavery in America, this temporary quiescence was "a reprieve only, not a final sentence."[147] As the following chapter will show, the annexation of Texas returned to the political agenda when a party outsider unexpectedly came to power in the United States. As an outsider to both political parties, President Tyler's domestic interests would be best served by upsetting the national coalitions that dominated U.S. politics. Having, like many of his contemporaries, learned the lesson of the Missouri Crisis that the question of the extension of slavery could upset both the Democrats and the Whigs; he seized upon the annexation of Texas as his best hope for furthering his domestic interests.

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[144]Anson Jones to Aaron Vail, October 12, 1838, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence--US*, vol. 12, pp. 173-174. See also R.A. Irion to Memucan Hunt, May 19, 1838, *DCRT*, vol. 1, pp. 329-330.
[145]Siegel, *A Political History of The Texas Republic*, pp. 102, 105 and 121.
[146]For example, Texas, and the question of its annexation played no role in the Presidential election of 1840. On the election of 1840, see Chambers, "The Election of 1840," pp. 643-690.
[147]Jefferson to John Holmes, April 22, 1820 in Ford, *Writings of TJ*, vol. 10, p. 157.

CHAPTER FIVE
EXPANSION REALIZED: THE MISSOURI CRISIS AND THE ANNEXATION OF TEXAS DURING THE TYLER ADMINISTRATION

"The subject of annexation addresses itself, most fortunately, to every portion of the Union . . . it was because the question was neither local nor sectional, but made its appeal to the interests of the whole Union, and of every State in the Union, that negotiations, and finally the treaty of annexation was entered into"

-John Tyler[1]

In all of President Tyler's pronouncements concerning Texas, he invariably referred to the benefits that annexation would bring to the entire nation. Tyler denied that expansion was a sectional issue; instead, he argued that the acquisition of Texas had "an imposing, if not resistless" allure "to the interests of every portion of the country."[2] While Tyler did not hesitate to mention the advantages that western farmers and northern manufacturing and commercial interests would gain from the opening of a vast new market, he preferred to dwell on how the entire country would profit from annexation. In this vein,

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[1]Message to The Senate and House, December 18, 1844, *Messages and Papers*, vol. 5, p. 2208.
[2]President Tyler's Message to The Senate, April 22, 1844, *Messages and Papers*, vol. 5, pp. 2160-2166. See also his First Annual Message, December 7, 1841, p. 1932; and Message to The House, June 10, 1844, pp. 2176-2180 and 2178-2179. For a discussion of the pro-annexation arguments made by Tyler and other supporters of annexation see Frederick Merk *Slavery and the Annexation of Texas*, pp. 45-53.

Tyler's messages stressed how the acquisition of Texas would greatly enhance the security of the United States by adding the resources of Texas to the Union and, perhaps more importantly, by keeping these resources out of the hands of the British. However, the arguments Tyler gave for why his administration felt compelled to pursue annexation were not new. Even well before Texas had gained its independence from Mexico, many Americans had concluded that the acquisition of Texas would bring these and other benefits. Given this, the key question to ask is why did Tyler move where Jackson and Van Buren had hesitated? Looking solely at the economic and security advantages the United States would gain from annexation is not going to help answer this question, because these same advantages had been present since at least 1836, but had never before moved any previous administration to push for annexation. What had changed? The argument of this section is that the key to understanding why Tyler zealously pursued annexation where Jackson and Van Buren had zealously avoided the issue, can be found in the different domestic positions in which the three found themselves. All three had learned the lessons of the Missouri Crisis concerning the sectional divisiveness of the slavery extension issue and accepted those lessons as the relevant guide for action regarding western expansion. However, as leaders of an intersectional political party, Jackson and Van Buren took the lessons of the Missouri Crisis as a warning and chose to protect their national party by avoiding the issue. In contrast, Tyler, as a President without strong ties to either of the dominant political parties, saw the lessons of the Missouri Crisis as an opportunity to disrupt the national parties that would otherwise surely

thwart his hopes for winning a second term and chose to further his domestic interests by agitating the issue. This is why Tyler rushed in where Jackson and Van Buren feared to tread. This is not to argue that annexation would not offer the economic and security benefits that Tyler argued it would, or that Tyler was being deceitful when he claimed it would. Instead, the argument of this section is that Tyler was only willing and able to pursue these advantages because of his position as a party outsider. Untrammeled by worries of precipitating a rupture in the political coalition that brought him to power and sensing the domestic advantages he could gain by disrupting the Democrats and the Whigs, Tyler pushed for the annexation of Texas against the efforts of party leaders to keep the issue off the political agenda.

TIPPECANOE, TYLER AND TEXAS TOO

In the election of 1840, the Whigs attempted to win the presidency by stealing a page from the playbook of the Democratic Party. Hoping to duplicate the electoral success the Democrats had achieved under General Jackson, the Whigs decided that their standard bearer in 1840 would be a military hero. Meeting in Harrisburg Pennsylvania, the Whigs turned against their acknowledged leader, Henry Clay, and nominated General William Henry Harrison of Ohio. Hungry for victory, the Whigs were hesitant to nominate Clay, a two-time loser in presidential contests (1824 and 1832), and instead opted for Harrison,

who in addition to being the hero of the Battle of Tippecanoe (1811) had also proven to be the strongest Whig candidate in 1836.[3]

The party that Harrison led against Van Buren in 1840 was a diverse coalition composed primarily of two ideologically contradictory factions. United only in their opposition to General Jackson and Martin Van Buren, the Whigs consisted of an odd mixture of Clay nationalists, who supported an increased role for the federal government in the nation's economy as embodied in Clay's American System of high tariffs, a national bank, and federally sponsored internal improvements; and states' righters who had left the Democratic party over the issue of executive usurpation of power, exemplified by Jackson's strong reaction to the nullification crisis.[4] This tension within the party showed in its choice of a vice-presidential candidate.

At first, the Whigs had a great deal of trouble finding someone to fill the second spot on the ticket. Looking to appease Clay and his followers, the vice-presidential nomination was offered to a number of Clay's political supporters, but they all turned it down. Eventually, the convention turned to John Tyler of Virginia, who many saw as a close friend of Clay. While it was true that Tyler had supported Clay's nomination, Tyler's political views were very much in opposition to Clay's. An ardent supporter of states' rights and a former Democrat, Tyler only joined the Whig party out of opposition to what he saw as Jackson's violations of the states' rights doctrine in his handling of the bank war and the nullification crisis. As a states' righter, Tyler

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[3]Remini, *Henry Clay*, pp. 545-551.
[4]See, Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power*, pp. 214-215 and 227; Cooper, *The South and the Politics of Slavery*, pp. 44-56 and 78-79; Cole, *The Whig Party In The South*, pp. 1-38; and Poage, *Henry Clay and The Whig Party*, p. 10.

naturally rejected the nationalistic economic program supported by the majority of the Whigs. This was not enough to keep him off the ticket, however. As a nominee for vice-president his views were not considered terribly important, and it was hoped that his place on the ticket could help keep the states' rights Whigs loyal to the party and might attract some support in the South from conservative Democrats.[5] However, many Whigs soon came to regret his place on the ballot.

Thus, the Whigs entered the campaign of 1840 with the ticket of "Tippecanoe and Tyler Too," a ticket that in the words of one Whig, had "rhyme, but no reason in it."[6] In their attempt to snatch the presidency from the Democrats, the Whigs chose a pair of candidates who offered them "a catchy slogan," but consisted of a presidential nominee who "knew little of the principles of the party" and a vice presidential candidate who "rejected them outright."[7] Not surprisingly then, the Whig campaign of 1840 studiously avoided any discussion or debate on the political issues of the day and chose instead to concentrate on slogans, songs, and General Harrison's popular image as a military hero who was also a modest man of the people. The question of Texas's annexation played no role in the campaign. The earlier efforts by leaders from both parties to keep the issue quiet had been successful and neither of the intersectional parties saw any benefit in raising the issue during a

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[5]On Tyler's nomination see, Remini, *Henry Clay*, pp. 551-552; Norma Lois Peterson, *The Presidencies of William Henry Harrison and John Tyler* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1989), pp. 24-27; Oliver Perry Chitwood, *John Tyler: Champion of The Old South* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1937), pp. 163-164 and 167-173; Robert Seager II, *and Tyler too: A Biography of John and Julia Gardiner Tyler* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1963), pp. 134-135; Cooper, *The South and the Politics of Slavery*, p. 129; and James Paul, *Rift in The Democracy* (Philadelphia: University Of Pennsylvani Press, 1951), p. 7.

[6]This is a quote from New York Whig Phillip Hone, See Allen Nevins, ed., *The Diary of Phillip Hone, 1828-1851* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1927), August 17, 1841, vol. II, p. 553.

[7]Remini, *Henry Clay*, p. 553.

national campaign. Harrison's "log cabin and hard cider" campaign resulted in the Whig party's greatest electoral success: Harrison soundly defeated Van Buren and the Whigs captured both the House and Senate.[8]

This moment of electoral success also initiated a crisis within the Whig party. No longer the opposition, how would the Whigs adapt to the pressures of having responsibility for governing? This crisis was especially acute given the nature of Harrison's victory. The Whigs had captured the Presidency and Congress in a campaign that focused on the appeal of General Harrison's image. Neither the candidate nor the party had made their political principles clear. Add to that, a vice president who flatly rejected the political agenda of the party's Congressional leader, and you have a party in disarray. How would the party react? What would its agenda be?[9] William Henry Harrison, the first Whig to capture the White House, did not have much of an opportunity to deal with this crisis. Within one month of his inauguration, General Harrison became the first President to die while in office and John Tyler advanced to the Presidency.

Even though Harrison had received the Whig nomination in 1840, Henry Clay still considered himself to be the leader of the party. When the second session of the Twenty-sixth Congress opened, Clay was determined to exert his leadership over the newly won Whig majority by

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[8]See Chambers, "The Election of 1840," pp. 643-690. For an alternative view of the election of 1840 see Michael Holt, "The Election of 1840, Voter Mobilization, and the Emergence of the Second Party System: A Reappraisal of Jacksonian Voting Behavior" in *Political Parties and American Political Development: From the Age of Jackson to the Age of Lincoln* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992): 151-191. While not disputing that the Whigs nominated Harrison with the intention of running a "hurrah" campaign, Holt argues that the two parties still offered clearly divergent economic programs and that the economic downturn under Van Buren was the key factor in determining the success of the Whigs.
[9]Poage, *Henry Clay and the Whig Party*, p. 14.

passing legislation to enact what he saw as the principles of the Whig party, his American System. Harrison's death only strengthened Clay in his conviction that he was the leader of the party, and that all Whigs, including the new President, must bow to his will.[10] The first item on Clay's agenda was a bill for the establishment of a new national bank, a move that was sure to put him on a collision course with the anti-bank Tyler. Clay's determination to push his program and demonstrate his dominance of the Whig party, and Tyler's refusal to accept that program or that dominance, created a clear rift between the Senator and the President. A rift that eventually deteriorated into a splitting-up of the Whig party that had just won its first national election.

Ignoring Tyler's well-known anti-bank views, Clay pushed a Bank Bill through Congress that Tyler was bound to find objectionable. Not surprisingly, given Tyler's consistent pro-states' rights inclinations, he quickly vetoed the Bank Bill on constitutional grounds. The breach between Clay and Tyler only worsened over time and became virtually irreparable after Tyler vetoed a second Bank Bill; a bill that had been drafted and framed to satisfy Tyler's constitutional scruples. In this struggle with Tyler over the Bank, Clay demonstrated that his claim to leadership of the party was well founded. When the open break came between Clay and Tyler, Clay took the vast majority of Whigs with him. The party rallied around Clay and denounced "His Accidency," the President, for his betrayal of Whig principles. Even Tyler's own cabinet rejected him. With the sole exception of Secretary of State

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[10]For Clay's relationship with Harrison after the election and his determination to be the dominant leader of the Whig party before and after Harrison's death see Remini, *Henry Clay*, pp. 567-580 and Poage, *Henry Clay and the Whig Party*, pp. 14-32.

Daniel Webster, who was involved in negotiations with Great Britain over the border between Maine and Canada, within a few days of Tyler's second bank veto, under pressure from Whigs in Congress, Tyler's entire cabinet resigned. To make matters worse, shortly after the cabinet resignations, a number of Whigs in Congress caucused and issued a manifesto stating that President Tyler should no longer be considered a member of the Whig party.[11]

Tyler's repudiation by his own party made it clear that Clay was indeed the undisputed leader of the Whigs. The Senator from Kentucky was lauded by party members as "the Embodiment of Whig Principles" and he looked ahead to the presidential election of 1844, confident that he would be the nominee of a now united Whig Party.[12] However, Clay's victory came at a steep price. First, by casting Tyler aside, the Whigs abandoned the benefits of their presidential victory in 1840. More ominously though, Tyler's dismissal from his party also produced a situation that Clay, and leaders from both parties had desperately been trying to avoid. By leaving the presidency in the hands of a man who had no strong ties to either of the major parties, Clay's victory over Tyler created the conditions under which the annexation of Texas could now become a political issue.

As long as the government remained in the hands of politicians with well-established connections to either of the two major political

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[11]*National Intelligencer*, September 15, 1841.

[12]For Clay's struggles with Tyler over the bank leading to Tyler's dismissal from the Whig party, see Remini, *Henry Clay*, pp. 580-599; Peterson, *The Presidencies of William Henry Harrison and John Tyler*, pp. 57-93; Chitwood, *John Tyler: Champion of The Old South*, pp. 208-251; Seager, *and Tyler too*, pp. 149-160; Cooper, *The South and the Politics of Slavery*, pp. 150-166; Poage, *Henry Clay and the Whig Party*, pp. 33-106; Van Deusen, *The Life Of Henry Clay*, pp. 344-357; Cole, *The Whig Party In The South*, pp. 90-93; and Carl Schurz, *Henry Clay* (New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1889) vol. II, pp. 201-211 and 213-219.

parties, the Texas issue was unlikely to appear on the political agenda. Fearing a sectional split within their national parties, leaders from both parties could agree on the importance of avoiding the issue. However, Tyler, abandoned by his Cabinet and run out of his party, was now unencumbered by such worries. Finding himself in the peculiar position of being a president without a party, Tyler pursued the annexation of Texas without fear; he had no party to disrupt.

Provoking a debate over the possible extension of slavery was not only not a threat to the partyless President, but agitating the Texas issue also offered Tyler a clear opportunity. If the party leaders had their way and the next presidential election became a straightforward struggle between the contrasting economic programs of the Whigs and the Democrats, Tyler's chances for re-election would be non-existent. Having abandoned the Democrats for the Whigs, and in turn having been abandoned by the Whigs, Tyler had no hope of becoming a viable candidate in an election that focused on the safe issues that had traditionally separated Whigs from Democrats, like a national bank or federally sponsored internal improvements. Each party would offer its own candidate, probably Van Buren for the Democrats and Clay for the Whigs, and Tyler would be shut out. The President's best shot at re-election was to find a way to disrupt those parties, which would open the door for new coalitions to dominate the political scene; coalitions that might brighten Tyler's domestic prospects. Following the lessons of the Missouri Crisis for a party outsider, Tyler believed that the best way to disrupt the existing political alignments that were blocking his chances of re-election was to incite a debate over the extension of slavery with the

Texas issue. As a result of these calculations, Tyler, along with other party outsiders, including, most prominently, John C. Calhoun, endeavored to make the question of Texas's annexation the key issue of the election of 1844.[13]

After being forced into opposition with the party that had elected him, Tyler restructured his Cabinet and his entire administration. Using the patronage resources available to the President, Tyler began creating a political coalition loyal to him, which could give him a political base for his quest for re-election. However, Tyler realized that he would need a lot more than patronage and a states' rights based opposition to the Whig's economic program if he was to be a serious contender in 1844. The Whigs were implacably hostile to him, and while the Democrats were more than happy to join him in his attacks on Clay's national political agenda, it was unlikely that they would be willing to

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[13]On Tyler's and Calhoun's determination to make Texas the key issue in 1844, believing it to be their best hope domestically see; Michael A. Morrison, *Slavery and The American West: The Eclipse of Manifest Destiny and The Coming of the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), pp. 15-16; Brauer, *Cotton Versus Conscience*, pp. 49-76; Cooper, *The South and the Politics of Slavery*, pp. 176-190; Holt, *The Political Crisis of The 1850's*, pp. 40-41; Holt, "The Democratic Party 1828-1860," pp. 515-518; Michael A. Morrison, "Westward the Curse of Empire: Texas Annexation and The American Whig Party" *Journal of the Early Republic*, 10,2 (Summer 1990), pp. 225-226; Foner, "Politics, Ideology and The Origins of The American Civil War," pp. 23-24; Paul, *Rift in The Democracy*, pp. 27-29, 81-83, 94, 106-107 and 118-119; Charles Sellers, "The Election of 1844" in Schlesinger, *History of American Presidential Elections 1789-1968*, vol. 2, pp. 759-760; and St. George Leakin Sioussat, "John Caldwell Calhoun" in Bemis, *The American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy*, vol. 5, pp. 130-135. While Frederick Merk, in *Slavery And The Annexation of Texas*, lists Tyler's domestic interests as one possible reason why he pursued annexation, he also emphasizes the role played by Tyler's fear of a British plot to increase its influence and eventually abolitionize Texas and the threat that presented to the United States, especially the southern states, pp. 11-34. For similar analyses, see Pletcher, *The Diplomacy of Annexation*, pp. 85-86, 114, and 120-127; Rives, *The United States and Mexico*, vol. 1, pp. 557-584; and Smith, *The Annexation of Texas*, pp. 101-115. For arguments that Tyler's international calculations regarding the alleged British threat was more important than his domestic calculations see, Chitwood, *John Tyler: Champion of The Old South*, pp. 342-349; Seager, *and Tyler too*, pp. 210-211, 218-219 and 228-229; Langley, *Mexico and The United States*, p. 3; and Lyon G. Tyler, *The Letters and Times of the Tylers*, 3 vols. (Richmond: Whittet and Shepperson, 1885) vol. 2, pp. 271-278. The validity of this alternative explanation, emphasizing the importance of the threat from Great Britain, is discussed below.

place at the head of their ticket a man who earlier in his career had .deserted the party and went over to the opposition.

Given this predicament, Tyler turned to the slavery extension issue as his salvation and the annexation of Texas as the best way to increase his chances for re-election. If the debate over the acquisition of Texas precipitated sectional conflict within both of the national parties, as the Missouri Crisis analogy predicted it would, then Tyler's domestic prospects would immediately brighten. While a Tyler-led third party devoted to states' rights and expansion might have been doomed to defeat in an election against two nationally unified parties, it stood a much better chance of capturing the presidency in a race against two sectionally divided parties. Moreover, if things went well, a third party might not be necessary. If, as seemed likely, Van Buren came out against annexation, Tyler hoped that support for annexation within the Democratic party would be powerful enough to block the New Yorker's nomination and create a fissure in the party. In the wake of such a split, Tyler hoped that all Democrats opposed to Van Buren's nomination would unite around his candidacy based on states' rights and expansion. In this way, Tyler entertained hopes of becoming the nominee of a reborn Democratic party that was no longer under the control of the Van Buren wing of the party.[14]

One reason Tyler had for hoping that the Democratic party could be persuaded to accept his candidacy and his platform of expansion was that a program of territorial acquisition fit far more easily within the ideology of the Democratic party than the ideology of the Whig party.

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[14]See Cooper, *The South and the Politics of Slavery*, pp. 175-180.

Styling itself as the party of liberty; spurred on by the Jeffersonian ideal of a United States populated by free, independent, and self sufficient farmers; and afraid of the consequences that urbanization and industrialization would have for American democracy; Democrats stressed that access to cheap land was vital to the preservation of liberty. Thus, given America's growing population, westward expansion was essential if the country was to remain free. In contrast, the Whig party designated itself as the party of improvement. Stressing the importance of economic, industrial, and technological growth; the Whigs resisted territorial expansion believing that it would only hinder efforts to perfect the vast territory already controlled by the United States.[15] Thus, Tyler could hope that after he forced the issue upon the Democrats and the party split over it, many Democrats would choose Texas over Van Buren and support Tyler's candidacy.

After Tyler's dismissal from the Whig party, he put together a coalition of moderates and states' righters that he hoped could gain support from segments of both the Democratic and Whig parties. The first cabinet Tyler put together after the mass resignations was, to the surprise of many in Congress, strikingly moderate. While Tyler did add a few ardent states' righters, the cabinet itself reflected Tyler's desire to create a moderate alternative to the Whigs and the Van Buren Democrats. Like Tyler himself, four of the newly appointed department heads were former Democrats who had joined the Whigs out of

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[15]For a discussion of the position of landed expansion within the ideology of the Democrats and the Whigs, see Morrison, "Westward the Curse of Empire," pp. 221-249 and *Slavery and The American West*, pp. 16-17 and 19-26; and Watson, *Liberty and Power*, pp. 186, 241-242 and 245. See also, Thomas R. Hietala, *Manifest Design: Anxious Aggrandizement in Late Jacksonian America*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 5-6 and 96-122, which focuses mainly on the Democrats.

opposition to Jackson. The cabinet itself was evenly split between Northerners and Southerners, and the most prominent Whig leader in the North, Daniel Webster, remained at the State Department.[16] Tyler also employed the patronage resources available to the presidency to help solidify a coalition behind him.[17]

However, Tyler's attempt to create a national coalition under his leadership proved exceedingly difficult. Prominent men from both parties were understandably hesitant to risk the wrath of their party by befriending the administration. As his term wore on, Tyler turned increasingly to the Democratic Party as his main hope for re-election. While he quietly contacted Democratic leaders from various states to discuss the possibility of a Tyler-led Democratic ticket and made his case that he was more electable than either Van Buren or Calhoun, his administration's newspaper, *The Madisonian*, publicly came out for his nomination as a Democrat. In addition, over time, Tyler's cabinet became more Democratic in flavor. Regarding Tyler's Texas policy, it made little difference whether Tyler was looking towards the creation of a third party or hoping to attain the Democratic nomination in 1844, either way he had to push for annexation. Expansion was the only issue powerful enough to disrupt the existing parties, which would be necessary whether he was looking to construct a third party or take a large portion of the Democratic Party away from Van Buren.[18]

Congressman Henry A. Wise, a fellow Virginian and close friend of the Tyler administration has claimed that the annexation of Texas was

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[16]Peterson, *The Presidencies of Harrison and Tyler*, pp. 87-89.

[17]Seager, *and Tyler Too*, pp. 170-171, 209-210, 219, 228 and 232-234.

[18]For Tyler's approach to the Democrats, see Peterson, *The Presidencies of Harrison and Tyler*, pp. 165-184. See also, pp. xiii, 52-55, 111, 198, 210 and 231.

on the President's agenda from his very first days in office. Wise argues that from day one of the Tyler administration, the President's inner circle, of which Wise considered himself to be a member, had concluded that Tyler was bound to break from the Whig Party and that once that break came, one good way for Tyler to protect his interests domestically would be to push for the annexation of Texas.[19] Charles J. Ingersoll, a Democrat from Pennsylvania and the Chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs concurs in Wise's judgment. Ingersoll, who became one of Texas's most important supporters in the House, had no doubt concerning the administration's motivations. In describing his talks with Tyler on the Texas issue, Ingersoll argued that Tyler, "Talks big always, and I believe he is almost beside himself with [a] wish to run for the presidency."[20] Ingersoll asserts that the President revealed to him the plan that Tyler believed would fulfill his hopes for a second term:

> He said that Texas would infallibly elect a democratic president and crush Clay, and that he Tyler is the person to bring it about because he is a president without a party. I said something of it causing a new organization of parties, which he desired . . . Tyler is intensely eager and sanguine to be the democratic candidate for president, and considers Texas his stepping stone.[21]

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[19]Henry A. Wise, *Seven Decades of The Union* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Company, 1881), pp. 181-182. For an interesting discussion of this circle of adviser's, declaimed by Henry Clay as Tyler's "corporal's guard" and "kitchen cabinet," see Peterson's *The Presidencies of Harrison and Tyler*. Peterson argues that this group over-emphasized its own influence over Tyler and that many of the members of this group were far more loyal to Calhoun than Tyler and supported the South Carolinian's bid for the presidency, see pp. 55, 81, 187 and 196.

[20]William M. Meigs, ed., *The Life of Charles Jared Ingersoll*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Company, 1900), May 7, 1844, p. 266.

[21]Meigs, *The Life of Charles Jared Ingersoll*, March 15, 1844, pp. 263-264

Tyler's first overt move towards annexation came exactly one month after the resignation of the Cabinet he had inherited from Harrison and just a little under a month after his expulsion from the Whig Party. On October 11, 1841, Tyler wrote to Secretary of State Webster concerning the possibility of acquiring Texas. Tyler instructed Webster to consider annexation and rhetorically asked whether any other move would "throw so bright a lustre around us?"[22] Webster's response must not have been very encouraging for there is no evidence that Webster ever seriously considered pursuing annexation.

Webster's reluctance to pursue Tyler's suggestion is not surprising. As the most prominent Whig leader in the Northern states, Webster was understandably hesitant to advance the cause of the extension of slavery. Unwilling to bow to Clay's will, Webster had decided to buck the trend within the Whig Party and remain in the Tyler administration. This decision to support Tyler exposed Webster to attacks that he too was disloyal to the Whig Party. Even his own constituency, the Whigs of Massachusetts, had formally expelled Tyler from the party and was actively pushing Webster to resign and disown the administration. Webster defended his decision to stay by arguing that he was engaged in delicate negotiations with Great Britain and would be derelict in his duty if he simply abandoned the State

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[22]John Tyler to Daniel Webster, October 11, 1841, in Harold D. Moser, ed., *The Papers of Daniel Webster: Correspondence, vol. 5 1840-1843* (New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1982), pp. 166-167.

Department before these talks had been completed. While Webster had decided to stay in the administration, he clearly did not want to further alienate himself from his base in the Whig Party by pushing as controversial an issue as the annexation of Texas.[23]

The reason for Webster's hesitance was not lost on Tyler. He tried to encourage his Secretary of State to pursue annexation by convincing Webster that he need not fear provoking a sectional controversy. Tyler himself did not fear such a controversy, indeed creating a sectional rift within the Democrats and the Whigs over the issue of expansion could only help Tyler's chances in 1844. Recognizing the existing party structure's weakness regarding expansion, Tyler entertained hopes of riding to victory in the next Presidential election on a general program of expansion. For this reason, he not only encouraged Webster to push for Texas, but also encouraged his Secretary of State to push for a settlement with Great Britain over the Oregon territory and with Mexico over California. Like Jackson before him and Polk after him, Tyler hoped to partly defuse the sectional conflict inherent in expansion by joining the annexation of Texas with territorial acquisitions in Oregon or California desired by the Northern states. Tyler believed that if he could tie together all these concerns in a "tripartite treaty" with Mexico and Great Britain, such a treaty would stand an excellent chance of being accepted in the Senate and it would clearly increase the attractiveness of his administration's expansionist coalition. He wrote to Webster that while taking Texas alone might have

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[23]Robert V. Remini, *Daniel Webster: The Man and His Time* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), pp. 446, 570 and 591-593; Brauer, *Cotton Versus Conscience*, pp. 77-84 and Peterson, *The Presidencies of Harrison and Tyler*, pp. 95 and 165-167.

the effect of "stirring up all the agitations which you anticipate"; if Texas could be linked to settlements in California and Oregon it would "satisfy all sections of the country."[24] Understandably hesitant to break with his most prominent political ally and unwilling to disrupt Webster's negotiations with Great Britain, which Tyler saw as an important part of his general expansionist program, Tyler did not force the Texas issue on his reluctant Secretary of State.[25] However, relations between the two became increasingly strained.

The important role that domestic calculations continued to play in U.S. policy towards annexation was still recognized by the Texans. Indeed, Tyler's position as a party outsider seeking an issue that could win him a second term gave increased hope to the Texans by leading them to conclude that the President would support their cause. In the past, the Texans had seen Jackson and Van Buren's domestic calculations as the key obstacle to annexation; however, now they believed that the position Tyler was in domestically improved their prospects. While still nervous that the Senate would not approve any annexation measure, Texas's Minister to the United States, Isaac Van Zandt, explained that Tyler's desire for re-election was a reason to be optimistic. The Texan representatives in Washington wrote home that Tyler was constantly expressing his clear desire to annex Texas and they attributed Tyler's devotion to annexation to his domestic calculations. Once Tyler decided that he could "make political capital" out of the issue he would openly

[24]Tyler to Webster, in Tyler, *The Letters and Times of The Tylers*, vol. II, pp. 261. On the tripartite plan see Remini, *Daniel Webster*, pp. 575-577; Peterson, *The Presidencies of Harrison and Tyler*, pp. 137-140 and 192; Pletcher, *The Diplomacy of Annexation*, pp. 98-100; Seager, *and Tyler Too*, p. 212; and Clyde Augustus Duniway, "Daniel Webster" in Bemis, *The American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy*, vol. 5, pp. 58-63.
[25]Peterson, *The Presidencies of Harrison and Tyler*, pp. 177-178.

push it as part of his plan to "put himself at the head of the annexation party." Alluding to Tyler's concern regarding the next presidential election, Van Zandt declared that Tyler and his supporters "are decidedly in favour of his making the treaty believing it would render him omnipotent in the South and West."[26]

While the Texans were confident that Tyler supported annexation, they were just as confident that the Secretary of State opposed annexation. Looking at the domestic calculations Webster was making, the Texans saw him as their primary opponent within the administration. "Though friendly to us he is very much in the way at present; he is timid, and wants nerve, and is fearful of his abolitionist constituents in Massachusetts." They doubted that annexation would move forward "until there is a change in the office of Secretary of State" because "his sympathies have been tempered by a latitude too high."[27]

Fortunately for the Texans, Webster would not be Secretary of State for much longer. Over time, his position within the administration had become more awkward for both himself and the President. Hoping to retain his position within the Whig Party, Webster found himself increasingly out of place in an administration that was moving closer towards expansion and the Democrats. Tyler also saw the situation as less than ideal. For an administration trying to build a bridge to the

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[26]The "political capital" quote is from Isaac Van Zandt to Anson Jones, March 15, 1842 and the "annexation party" quote is in James Reily to Anson Jones, February 19, 1844 in Anson Jones, *Memoranda And Official Correspondence Relating To the Republic of Texas, it's History and Annexation* (Illinois: The Rio Grande Press, 1966, originally published in 1859), pp. 211-214 and 318-320. The "omnipotent" line is from Isaac Van Zandt to G.W. Terrell, December 23, 1842, *DCRT*, vol. 1, p. 633. In addition see, Reily to Jones July 11, 1842; Van Zandt to Jones, April 19, 1843, March 13, 1843, and September 18, 1843; *DCRT*, vol. 1, pp. 567-569 and vol. 2, pp. 164-167, 132-138 and 207-210.

[27]Isaac Van Zandt to Anson Jones, March 15, 1842 in Jones, *Memoranda and Official Correspondence*, pp. 211-214 and Van Zandt to Jones, April 19 1843, *DCRT*, vol. 2, pp. 164-167.

expansionist wing of the Democratic Party, having Webster at the State Department was a severe handicap. Regarding Texas, Tyler became frustrated with Webster's inaction and complained to the Texans that Webster was dragging his feet.[28] While Webster attempted to stay at State after the completion of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty, without the convincing rationale these negotiations gave him for why he had a duty to stay, his position became untenable. Facing increased pressure from his constituents in the Whig party to resign and sensing that Tyler also wished to be rid of him, Webster resigned on May 8, 1843.[29]

With Webster's restraining influence gone, Texas was now ready to burst upon the political scene. Tyler replaced Webster with Abel P. Upshur. Upshur was, like Tyler, a Virginian supporter of states' rights who had defected from the Democratic Party under Jackson. Most importantly, the new Secretary of State was an ardent annexationist.[30] Within a few months of assuming his new duties, Upshur began to actively court Texas. Previously, it was always Texas that had taken the initiative in starting annexation talks; however, with Upshur, that pattern was reversed. This time, the Americans anxiously pursued the now demure Texans. On September 18, 1843, Upshur approached Van Zandt with an offer to begin annexation talks, assuring him of his and the President's support. Van Zandt was non-committal.[31] Undeterred, on

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[28]See Isaac Van Zandt to Anson Jones, April 5, 1843, in Jones, *Memoranda and Official Correspondence*, pp. 220-222.

[29]Brauer, *Cotton Versus Conscience*, pp. 77-84 and Peterson, *The Presidencies of Harrison and Tyler*, pp. 180-181.

[30]On Upshur's relatively short tenure as Secretary of State, see Randolph G. Adams "Abel Parker Upshur" in Bemis, *The American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy*, vol. 5: 67-124.

[31]See Isaac Van Zandt to Anson Jones, September 18, 1843, *DCRT*, vol. 2, pp. 207-210.

October 16, 1843, Upshur again raised the issue with the Texan Minister.[32]

This time as well, the Texan response was less than enthusiastic. Having been spurned by the United States before, the Texans were understandably reluctant to start down the path of annexation. Initiating annexation talks would exposeTexas to severe dangers. From the time they had declared their independence, the Texans had been working towards getting Mexico to end its war against Texas and recognize its independence. With the assistance of Great Britain, the Texan government believed it was close to achieving that goal. However, that goal would be jeopardized by agreeing to discuss the prospect of annexation. Both Mexico and Great Britain opposed annexation, and the Texans feared that pursuing annexation would only make the Mexicans less willing to negotiate and the British less willing to support Texas in those negotiations. What if, in spite of Tyler and Upshur's efforts, the Senate refused to assent to annexation? Then Texas would find itself exposed. Rejected by the United States and bereft of support from Great Britain, it would have to face an enraged Mexico alone. Texas was unwilling to give up on the efforts of the British to get the Mexicans to negotiate in return for "the very uncertain prospect of annexation."[33]

The Texas government's estimation that the chances for annexation were slim flowed directly from their diagnosis of the role that the Texas issue occupied in American politics. Given Tyler's position outside the two dominant political parties and his desire for re-

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[32]Abel P. Upshur to Isaac Van Zandt, October 16, 1843, Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence--US*, vol. 12, pp. 53-54.

[33]Anson Jones to Isaac Van Zandt, December 13, 1843, *DCRT*, pp. 232-235. See also, Jones to Van Zandt, January 27, 1844, pp. 248-251.

election, the Texans were confident that Tyler supported annexation; but how would the Senate, dominated by Whigs and Democrats, react to any treaty? Would Tyler be able to create a coalition in the Senate strong enough to secure ratification? The Texans were reluctant to risk their future on what the British Minister to Texas later called a mere "electioneering trick."[34] The Texans recognized that the success of annexation "depends much on the political turns" in the United States and many Texans were unwilling to have Texas become a victim to "the great and only policy of the United States, the policy of President-making."[35] One Texan representative expressed "no doubt that Democrats, Whigs and Tylerites, or Calhoun men would . . . readily make Texas a victim, if it would advance their aims to elect their President."[36] As Texas President Sam Houston put it, Texas did not want to risk a new war with Mexico merely to become "a bone of contention to be worried or gnawed by the influence of conflicting politicians."[37]

Rather than give up on the Texans given their hesitance, Upshur actively sought to alleviate these worries. On January 16, 1844, Upshur, through the U.S. representative in Texas sought to persuade the Texans that any treaty negotiated would be ratified. To reassure the Texans that they would not be spurned, Upshur maintained that he had sources from the Senate, "which do not leave the matter doubtful" and from those

[34]Charles Elliot to Anson Jones, March 22, 1844, in Jones, *Memoranda and Official Correspondence*, pp. 329-331.
[35]Isaac Van Zandt to Anson Jones, March 15, 1842 and James Reily to Jones, February 21, 1845 in Jones, *Memoranda and Official Correspondence*, pp. 211-214 and 434-435. See also Reily to Jones, November 10, 1844, pp. 396-397.
[36]James Reily to Anson Jones, February 19, 1844 in Jones, *Memoranda and Official Correspondence*, pp. 318-320.
[37]Sam Houston to Isaac Van Zandt and J.P. Henderson, May 17, 1844, *DCRT*, vol. 2, pp. 281-283.

sources he has "found that a clear constitutional majority of two-thirds, are in favor of the measure."[38] In addition to seeking assurances that an annexation treaty had a good chance of being ratified, the Texans also sought some insurance in case ratification failed. Specifically, Texas wanted the United States to provide military protection while annexation was pending and guarantee Texan independence should ratification fail.[39] Though such promises of military support Constitutionally require Congressional approval, Upshur, himself a strict constructionist, put aside his constitutional scruples and gave the Texans an oral assurance of military support. A few days later, William Murphy, the U.S. representative in Texas gave a written assurance concerning military support.[40] Armed with these assurances Texas agreed to negotiate. Both sides agreed to keep the negotiations secret.

Once Texas agreed to begin discussion, a treaty was quickly negotiated. As both Upshur and the Texas negotiator were ardent supporters of annexation their talks went smoothly. There was little difference between the two on the terms that would be acceptable and the hardest task they faced was trying to word the treaty in such a way that it could gain Senate ratification.[41] After the bulk of the negotiations had

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[38]Abel P. Upshur to William S. Murphy, January 16, 1844, Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence— US*, vol. 12, pp. 59-65.

[39]Isaac Van Zandt to Abel Upshur, January 17, 1844 and Anson Jones to William Murphy, February 14, 1844, Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence—US*, vol. 12, pp. 324-325 and 326-327.

[40]On Upshur's pledge, see Isaac Van Zandt to Anson Jones, January 20, 1844, *DCRT*, vol. 2, pp. 239-243. For Murphy's pledge see William Murphy to Anson Jones, February 14, 1844 in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence—US*, vol. 12, pp. 327-329. On learning of Murphy's pledge, Tyler was angered primarily because such a clearly unconstitutional written pledge could be used by opponents of annexation to defeat the treaty in the Senate. He quickly reprimanded Murphy for overstepping Constitutional bounds. See John Nelson to William Murphy, April 13, 1844 also in Manning, vol. 12, pp. 70-71. On the military assurances given by the Tyler administration see Merk, *Slavery and the Annexation of Texas*, pp. 36-43.

[41]Isaac Van Zandt and J.P. Henderson to Anson Jones, April 12, 1844, *DCRT*, vol. 2, pp. 269-273. Part of their attempts to ensure ratification was to avoid mention of slavery in the treaty.

been concluded, Secretary of State Upshur was unexpectedly killed in an accident aboard the U.S.S. Princeton. However, Tyler was adamant that the negotiations go forward. As most of the work had already been accomplished, Tyler hoped the negotiations could soon be concluded. Tyler encouraged the Texans to work quickly and expressed his desire that the treaty be completed by the acting Secretary of State, and "not the gentleman to whom he intended to offer the permanent appointment."[42]

That gentleman was John C. Calhoun. As a zealous proponent of the acquisition of Texas, Calhoun could be counted on to support the treaty that was in the making. The most probable explanation for Tyler's desire to complete the treaty before Calhoun assumed his duties is that he did not wish Calhoun to receive the political credit for the treaty. Calhoun was one of the political giants of the era and he still harbored presidential ambitions. Even though Calhoun had formally withdrawn from the presidential contest of 1844, Tyler still feared that he would be overshadowed by the eminent South Carolinian.

Tyler had good reason to be apprehensive about letting Calhoun into his Cabinet, for Calhoun's ambitions and plans were much like his own. Calhoun was also an outsider to the dominant political parties of the day and like Tyler, his interest in increasing his influence domestically would be best served by disrupting those political parties. Moreover, like Tyler, he believed that the best chance he had of disrupting those parties was with the issue of expansion, especially the annexation of Texas. Calhoun and his supporters were making the same calculations that Tyler was making, but in their calculations Calhoun, not

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[42]Isaac Van Zandt to Anson Jones, March 5, 1844, *DCRT*, vol. 2, pp. 261-262.

Tyler, would be the candidate that the country would turn to once the parties were weakened. "It is not to be denied that this question [Texas] will do much to divide the parties sectionally." Therefore, concluded Calhoun's political allies, "our papers ought to take the initiative on this question and begin at once to develop" it.[43] Abel Upshur, whose death created the vacancy at the State Department that Calhoun was selected to fill, was one of Calhoun's political allies and had long been encouraging the South Carolinian to take up the issue of Texas. Upshur believed that if Calhoun was to have a chance of winning the Presidency he would have to move beyond economic issues and find "some more exciting topic." That more exciting topic was the annexation of Texas.

> This is the only matter that will take sufficient hold of the feelings of the South, to rally it on a Southern candidate and weaken Clay and Van Buren. . . . The President has some hopes, that he may become that Southern candidate. But Mr. U[pshur] considers you as the only one, that can be taken up.[44]

The same theme is repeated throughout much of Calhoun's correspondence: the dominant parties are blocking Calhoun's path to increased power domestically and those parties are vulnerable on the slavery issue, therefore the best strategy was to force the issue onto the national agenda despite the efforts of party leaders to keep the issue quiet.[45] This is why Calhoun was willing to accept Tyler's appointment.

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[43]Robert M.T. Hunter to John Calhoun, October 10, 1843, in Clyde N. Wilson, ed., *Papers of JCC*, vol. 17, pp. 495-497

[44]Virgil Maxcy to John Calhoun, December 10, 1843, Wilson, *Papers of JCC*, vol. 17, pp. 599-603.

[45]For examples, see John Calhoun to Robert M.T. Hunter, September 12, 1843; Virgil Maxcy to Calhoun, December 14, 1843; Hunter to Calhoun December 19, 1843; and Dixon H. Lewis to

Indeed, when Tyler initially approached Calhoun about replacing Upshur, Calhoun asked that his job be limited solely to dealing with the Texas issue and someone else be appointed to handle the other responsibilities of the job. When that proved impossible, Calhoun decided to accept the job with the understanding that he would resign after the Texas and Oregon issues had been settled. Like Tyler, Calhoun too had hopes of uniting the expansionists of the country under his leadership.[46] He took the job and made Texas his cause, because he believed that, as he succinctly put it "I can beat Clay and Van Buren put together on this issue."[47]

Calhoun arrived in Washington before the treaty had been completed and he was on hand on April 12, 1844, to sign the treaty for the United States.[48] Ten days later, Tyler submitted the treaty to the Senate for ratification with the message that:

> Under every view which I have been able to take of the
> subject, I think that the interests of our common
> constituents, the people of all the states, and a love of the
> Union left the Executive no other alternative than to
> negotiate the treaty.[49]

Tyler contended that the reason Texas had to be annexed was that if the United States did not act quickly, Great Britain might. An

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Calhoun, March 6, 1844, Wilson, *Papers of JCC*, vol. 17, pp. 431-433, 608-609, 613-615 and 821-825.

[46]Pletcher, *The Diplomacy of Annexation*, pp. 136.

[47]Quoted in Paul, *Rift In The Democracy*, p. 126. For a sketch of Calhoun's career as Secretary of State, see Sioussat's "John Caldwell Calhoun," pp. 127-233.

[48]Under the treaty, Texas was to be admitted to the United State as a territory with the right to later apply for statehood. In addition, the United States was to assume all of Texas's public debts and in return, Texas was to transfer all public lands to the United States. The issue of Texas's borders was left vague. See Merk, *Slavery and the Annexation of Texas*, pp. 56-57 and 271-275.

[49]Tyler's Message to the Senate, April 22, 1844, *Messages and Papers*, vol. 5, pp. 2160-2166.

independent Texas was an inviting target for British intrigue and Tyler maintained that the young republic might be too weak to resist. Instead of the vast resources of Texas going to the United States, Tyler argued that Texas might throw itself into the arms of the U.S.'s most powerful enemy.

Even before Tyler had submitted the treaty to the Senate, he had begun to stress this theme in his public utterances. In his Third Annual Message, Tyler offered a thinly veiled threat to Mexico to stop its intermittent war against the breakaway province or it might force the United States to annex Texas. Tyler insisted that America could not sit idly by while continuing warfare weakened Texas and made it more susceptible to British influence.[50] In his message accompanying the treaty, Tyler argued that Texas must be added to the Union because to do nothing would allow England to complete its encirclement of the United States by gaining a foothold on the county's south-western border.[51]

Tyler's attempt to frame the annexation issue in terms of the threat British designs on Texas posed to the security of the United States was given a boost when America's most revered citizen, former President Andrew Jackson, publicly seconded these fears. During the last two years of the Tyler administration, Jackson wrote a series of letters in favor of annexation. These letters all had a common theme-- that Texas must be admitted to the Union because the national security

[50]December, 1843, *Messages and Papers*, vol. 5, pp. 2110-2125, for his comments on Texas specifically see pp. 2113-2115.
[51]Tyler's Message to the Senate, April 22, 1844, *Messages and Papers*, vol. 5, pp. 2163-2165. See also Tyler's Message to the House, June 10, 1844, and his Message to the Senate and the House, December 18, 1844, also in *Messages and Papers*, pp. 2176-2180 and 2206-2209.

interests of the United States require that Texas not be allowed to fall under British influence. Echoing his arguments in support of the Adams-Onís Treaty by extending the lessons of the War of 1812 to cover Texas as well as Florida, Jackson asserted that annexation "is all important to the safety, and prosperity of our country" and that failure to move now could cost us "oceans of blood" in the future, as Great Britain could use the area as a launching pad for an invasion. To underscore the importance of the issue for the security of the country, the aging hero wrote that the annexation issue "has carried me on until I am gasping for breath whilst using my pen," and that Texas must be obtained, "peaceably if we can, but forcibly if we must."[52] The administration and its supporters were more than happy to publicize Old Hickory's unconditional support for their actions and his endorsement of their motives for doing so.

Further ammunition for Tyler's efforts to portray annexation as a measure necessary to fend off British schemes in Texas was provided by Duff Green, whom the President had sent to Great Britain as his special agent. Ostensibly, Green's primary mission was to advance trade negotiations between Great Britain and the United States. However, Tyler also wanted Green in London so he could keep an eye on the British and any designs they may have on Texas. In 1843, Green wrote a series of alarming letters to the President and Secretary of State Upshur alleging that he had uncovered a British plot to undermine the

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[52]For Jackson's comments on Texas see, Andrew Jackson to Aaron V. Brown, February 9, [12], 1843; Jackson to William B. Lewis, September 18, 1843, Jackson to Francis P. Blair, March 5, 1844; Jackson to Lewis, March 11, 1844; Jackson to Lewis, April 8, 1844; and Jackson to Lewis, May 3, 1844, Bassett, *Correspondence of AJ*, vol. 6, pp. 201-202, 228-230, 271-272, 272-273, 277-278 and 282. On Jackson's opinion on annexation at this time, see Remini, "Texas Must Be Ours," pp. 42-47.

security of the Southern states through the abolition of slavery in Texas. Green maintained that the government of Great Britain had decided to guarantee a loan to Texas and support it in its struggle against Mexico in return for emancipation of all the slaves in Texas. Green saw within this plan a grave threat to the South, because a free Texas would be a haven for escaped slaves.[53] Tyler and his administration seized upon Green's warnings as additional evidence that British actions regarding Texas represented a definite threat to the safety of the United States.

A short time later, a quick exchange in Parliament regarding the issue of the international slave trade would be taken by the President and Secretary of State Upshur as confirmation of Green's warnings. In response to a question regarding what the government was doing concerning the sale of slaves from the United States to Texas, British Foreign Secretary Lord Aberdeen responded cautiously, but did assert that it was well known that the British government desired to see slavery abolished throughout the globe. Armed with this evidence, Tyler argued that the United States had no choice but to thwart the sinister designs of the British by annexing Texas.[54]

However, there are good reasons to believe that despite the claims of the administration to the contrary, this evidence of British intrigue in Texas can not explain why the administration was so eager to annex Texas. Instead, the primary reason Tyler seized upon this evidence of a British conspiracy was that his domestic interests could be advanced by

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[53]Duff Green to Abel P. Upshur, August 3, 1843 in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence--US*, vol. 12, pp. 296-297; Green to John Tyler, July 3, 1843, in Merk, *Slavery And The Annexation of Texas*, pp. 221-224.
[54]On the warnings of Duff Green and the Tyler administration's reactions to the exchange in Parliament see Peterson, *The Presidencies of William Henry Harrison and John Tyler*, pp. 185-190; Merk, *Slavery And The Annexation of Texas*, pp. 11-24 and 225-231; and Hietala, *Manifest Design*, pp. 15-26.

making an issue of annexation. In short, Tyler followed the domestic lessons of the Missouri Crisis and not the international lessons of the War of 1812. Looking ahead to the election of 1844, Duff Green maintained that, "If you go for the Annexation of Texas, we cannot be resisted." As Green saw it, the key to successfully using the Texas issue to advance Tyler's prospects for re-election was to make annexation look like a great national issue and not a self-serving electoral ploy. This is why the alleged British threat to Texas played such a major role in the administration's rhetoric. By focusing on the supposed British threat, annexation could be presented as a question of great national import, and not as a desperate attempt by a president without a party to restore his sagging political fortunes. As Green put it, "If you take the ground that annexation is the only means of preventing Texas [from] falling into the hands of English fanatics . . . Who can take ground against you?"[55]

One indication that it was Tyler's domestic calculations and not his fears concerning an alleged British threat to the United States by way of Texas that led him to favor annexation comes from the very shakiness of the evidence Tyler had regarding Britain's supposedly evil intentions. The United States had no direct evidence that Great Britain was interfering in Texas or endeavoring to undermine the South by forcing abolition upon the Texans. Instead, the strongest evidence the administration had was a statement made in Parliament that it was the wish of Great Britain that slavery be abolished everywhere and

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[55]The first quote is from Duff Green to Abel P. Upshur, November 3, 1843 in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence—US*, vol. 12, p. 313. For Green's suggestions that Tyler make his policy look like a great national measure and not like part of a domestic power play, see Green to John Tyler, February 18, 1843 (confidential) and Green to Tyler, July 3, 1843, which is where the second quotation is taken from. Both letters are in Merk, *Slavery and the Annexation of Texas*, pp. 204-205 and 221-224.

unconfirmed reports of a British loan to Texas transmitted by Duff Green, who both Tyler and Upshur knew to be a vehement Anglophobe and supporter of slavery.

In addition, not only did the administration fail to receive any confirmation of the alleged British scheme, they also received reports from the American Minister in London specifically dismissing the accuracy of these accusations. After reading Green's alarming dispatches and learning of Aberdeen's remarks concerning slavery, Secretary of State Uphsur wrote to William Everett instructing him to look into the question of whether Great Britain was working towards abolition in Texas.[56] Everett responded with three dispatches, each of them declaring that there was no reason to fear that Great Britain had any sinister designs on slavery in Texas. He had discussed the matter with Lord Aberdeen and Ashbel Smith, the representative of Texas in Great Britain, and was confident that America had nothing to fear in this area.[57] Rather than accept these reassurances, Upshur and Tyler simply ignored them and continued to negotiate the treaty and denounce the British. The flimsy nature of the evidence the administration had against Great Britain, the source of much of that information (Duff Green), and the dismissal of Everett's conclusions by the administration led Thomas Hart Benton to conclude that "this whole annexation scheme was organized before the reason was discovered for it in Great Britain."[58]

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[56]Abel P. Upshur to Edward Everett, September 28, 1843, and September 28, 1843, (confidential), in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence--US*, vol. 12, pp. 6-11 and 11-17.

[57]Edward Everett to Abel Upshur, November 3, 1843, November 16, 1843, and November 16, 1843, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence--US*, vol. 12, pp. 246-248, 248-250 and 251.

[58]Benton, *Thirty Years View*, vol. 2, p. 605.

Upon hearing that Tyler was using the threat of British designs on slavery in Texas as a justification for annexation, Lord Aberdeen went out of his way to convince the Americans that such fears were unfounded. However, no matter what Britain did, the Tyler administration, in the words of one of its Congressional opponents, decided that "the English government was not to be allowed to shake off the imputation of dangerous practices or purposes in regard to slavery in Texas which had been fastened upon its forehead."[59] Raising the Texas issue was necessary if Tyler was to have a chance at a second term, and the British threat provided too valuable a pretext to lose.

In the mistaken hope that he could do something to change Tyler's mind regarding British intentions in Texas, Lord Aberdeen tried to reassure the U.S. government that it had nothing to fear regarding British policy towards slavery in Texas. In a letter to Richard Pakenham, the British Minister to the United States, that Pakenham was to transmit to Upshur, Aberdeen argued that while Great Britain opposed slavery and hoped to see it abolished everywhere, Great Britain "will do nothing secretly or underhanded." He pledged that Great Britain would "not seek to compel" Texas to take any particular policy regarding slavery. Further, Aberdeen promised that Great Britain "does not desire to establish in Texas . . . any dominant influence. . . . [or] to act, directly or indirectly, in a political sense, on the United States through Texas."[60]

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[59]Senator William S. Archer of Virginia (Whig), *Appendix to The Congressional Globe*, 28 Cong., 1., sess., p. 695.
[60]Lord Aberdeen to Richard Pakenham, December 26, 1843, Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence--US*, vol. 12, pp. 252-253.

Rather than acknowledge the assurances, the administration used this letter as one more opportunity to publicly accuse Great Britain of having ominous intentions towards Texas. At first, the letter was simply ignored and it sat unanswered in the State Department for over a month and a half. However, after the treaty had been signed, Calhoun, who had accepted the position of Secretary of State following Upshur's death, found it useful to dust off this letter and respond to it. Calhoun came across Aberdeen's letter while he was compiling documents to send to the Senate along with the treaty, and he jumped on the letter as a opportunity to launch an additional attack against the British menace. Instead of focusing on the conciliatory aspects of the letter, Calhoun seized on the passages where Aberdeen had expressed his desire to see slavery eliminated throughout the world to denounce Great Britain and its evil intentions regarding Texas and the Southern States of the Union. He argued that the treaty was simply a matter of self defense forced upon the United States by British machinations. Not content to let the matter end there, Calhoun launched a long and spirited defense of slavery as a positive good, not only for the South, but also for the slaves themselves.[61]

This was the first of Calhoun's "Pakenham letters", and the Secretary of State made sure it was sent to the Senate along with the treaty. Pakenham refused to be drawn into a debate on slavery; in his reply to Calhoun he simply reiterated that Great Britain posed no threat to slavery in Texas and expressed his disappointment that Calhoun had so misunderstood Aberdeen's letter, which was written "to allay whatever

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[61]John C. Calhoun to Richard Pakenham, April 18, 1844, Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence–US*, vol. 12, pp. 18-22.

anxiety" the United States could have regarding British policy towards Texas.[62] Calhoun then wrote the second of his Pakenham letters and sent it to the Senate. Again Calhoun attacked Great Britain, defended slavery, and argued that annexation was necessary to protect slavery and the United States.[63] Realizing that Calhoun was determined to have Great Britain as an enemy, Pakenham stopped writing to Calhoun on the subject.

A third reason for suspecting that it was not the Tyler administration's fear of British schemes in Texas that propelled annexation talks, is that the supposed victims of these schemes, the Texans, had no such fears. While the Texans were more than happy to talk about the British threat to help spur the United States to act more vigorously regarding annexation, at no point did they ever believe that Great Britain posed a threat to slavery in Texas or that Texas was ever in danger of falling under British influence. Moreover, through Everett's contacts with Ashbel Smith, the Texan representative in London, the Tyler administration was well aware that Texas did not feel threatened by Great Britain.[64]

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[62]Richard Pakenham to John C. Calhoun, April 19, 1844, Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence--US*, vol. 12, pp. 256-258.

[63]John C. Calhoun to Richard Pakenham, April 27, 1844, Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence--US*, vol. 12, pp. 22-25.

[64]On the willingness of the Texans to play up the British issue to facilitate annexation see, Isaac Van Zandt to Anson Jones, March 13, 1843, October 16, 1843 and January 20, 1844, *DCRT*, vol. 2, pp. 132-138, 221-224 and 239-244; Henderson to Jones, December 20, 1843, and Jones's comments on William Murphy to Jones, April 4, 1844, in Jones, *Memoranda and Official Correspondence*, pp. 278-279 and 335-336. On Sam Houston using this tactic see, Merk, *Slavery and the Annexation of Texas*, p. 174. For the evidence that the Texan's themselves dismissed these threats see, Ashbel Smith to Jones, August 2, 1843, also in Jones, *Memoranda and Official Correspondence*, pp. 236-237; and Ephraim Adams, *British Interests and Activities In Texas* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1910), pp. 140-141 and 144-145. Throughout much of Jones's memoirs regarding annexation, he attempts to portray himself as the master architect who used the imaginary British threat to force America to act, see Jones, pp. 42-45, 95-97, 78-85 and 127. For Everett's comments see Edward Everett to Abel P. Upshur, November 16, 1843 in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence--US*, vol. 12, pp. 248-250.

However, the best reason for believing that it was not the British threat that forced Tyler to act in 1843 is that the British threat to Texas was nothing new. During their tenures in the White House, both Jackson and Van Buren were convinced that the acquisition of Texas would enhance the security of the United States and that America could not allow Texas to fall into the hands of Great Britain.[65] Moreover, in 1836-1837, the United States had just as much information regarding British designs on Texas as Tyler had in 1843. By 1836-1837, Great Britain had already declared itself an enemy of slavery worldwide, there had been calls in the British Parliament for action on slavery in Texas, and there was talk of using a British loan to enhance the position of the British in Texas.[66] The situation was strikingly similar to 1843. Upshur was not the first Secretary of State to worry about British intentions in Texas. In 1836, Secretary of State Forsyth had instructed the American Minister in London to warn England not to interfere in Texas and to look into whether there was any danger of British intervention. Forsyth received the same response Everett would later send to Upshur: though the British maintained that they were opposed to annexation, they also promised not to interfere in Texas's internal affairs.[67] And just as in 1843, the Texans encouraged fear in America regarding British

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[65]For Jackson, see Andrew Jackson to Aaron V. Brown, February 9, [12], 1843, Bassett, *Correspondence of AJ*, vol. 6, pp. 201-202, and for Van Buren see, Martin Van Buren to Joel R. Poinsett, August 25, 1829, quoted in John Spencer Bassett, "Martin Van Buren" in Bemis, *The American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy*, vol. 4, p. 195.

[66]Adams, *British Interests and Activities in Texas*, pp. 16-18 and 240.

[67]John Forsyth to Andrew Stevenson, September 14, 1836, Stevenson to Forsyth, August 6, 1836, and Stevenson to Forsyth, October 29, 1836, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence--US*, vol. 7, pp. 4-5, 235-236 and 236-238.

influence to promote the cause of annexation, while they remained confident that they had nothing to fear from the British.[68]

In 1843, the threat, if any, that Britain posed to Texas was remarkably similar to the one it posed in 1836-1837. Yet in 1843, citing that threat, Tyler reversed the policies of Jackson and Van Buren. If the international threat had not changed why did U.S. policy change? U.S. policy changed because the British threat to Texas was largely irrelevant to the question of annexation. Tyler did not pursue annexation because the British threat had taken a new and ominous form, he pursued annexation because it was his best chance for enhancing his domestic political prospects. The implications of the Texas issue for the international position of the United States had not changed from 1836 to 1843. What had changed were the domestic implications of the issue for the President. Tyler, the President without a party, would benefit from the intra-party strife the Texas issue would create, whereas Jackson and Van Buren's domestic positions would have been undermined by any moves towards annexation. That is why Tyler's policy towards Texas was different. The British threat did not force him to act; the domestic opportunity impelled him to act.[69] It was the domestic lessons of the Missouri Crisis that drove policy, not a version of the international lessons of the War of 1812.

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[68]J. Pinckney Henderson to Memucan Hunt, December 31, 1836, and William Wharton to Stephen Austin, January 26, 1837, *DCRT*, vol. 1, pp. 161-165 and 169.

[69]The same basic argument can be made for why it was not the threat of war with Mexico that prevented Jackson and Van Buren from acting. Mexico was making the same threats in 1843 as they were in 1836. Jackson and Van Buren never tested those threats because it was not in their domestic interests to do so and Tyler disregarded those threats because it was in his domestic interests to do so. Compare Manuel Eduardo de Gorostiza to John Forsyth, May 24, 1836, to Jose Mararia De Bocanegra to Waddy Thompson, August 23, 1843, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence--US*, vol. 8, Mexico pp. 328-329 and 555-557.

While Tyler continued to insist that he was acting in the best interest of the entire country, few others credited the administration with such lofty motives. Internationally, both the British and the French government dismissed Tyler's treaty as a mere "electioneering trick."[70] And domestically, no matter how much the Whigs and Democrats disliked each other, they could agree on at least one thing: that Tyler had signed the treaty to enhance his political prospects by making Texas an issue in the upcoming Presidential election. This message was spread across the country as party newspapers, both Democratic and Whig, joined in denouncing the treaty and Tyler's motives.[71]

Tyler was also sharply reproached in Congress. John Quincy Adams argued that Tyler negotiated the treaty because of "its bearing on the approaching Presidential election. It is John Tyler's last card for a popular whirlwind to carry him through."[72] Another Whig, a Senator from Tennessee, claimed that the treaty was part of "a desparate presidential speculation" and that Tyler hoped to "bamboozle the American people in the approaching presidential election."[73]

Tyler also faced a great deal of criticism from Democrats in Congress. The most vocal opponent of the treaty in the Senate was Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri. Benton entitled the portion of his memoirs that deals with Tyler's treaty a "Bold Intrigue For the Presidency." In that chapter, he recounts the argument he made against the treaty from the floor of the Senate, namely, that the treaty was a

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[70]For the British response see Charles Elliot to Anson Jones, March 22, 1844, in Jones, *Memoranda and Official Correspondence*, pp. 329-331. For the French response see Pletcher, *The Diplomacy of Annexation*, p. 156.

[71]For examples, see Smith, *The Annexation of Texas*, pp. 171, 175, 180 and 184.

[72]*Memoirs of JQA*, May 4, 1844, vol. 12, p. 22.

[73]*Appendix to The Congressional Globe*, 28 Cong., 1 sess., pp. 687 and 685.

result of Tyler and Calhoun's desire to advance their domestic interests. The treaty "shows the designs of its framers, wholly directed to the extension of slavery . . . What else could be done to get up Missouri Controversies?" He attacked the administration for pushing the Texas question and forcing "its sudden explosion upon us, like a ripened plot and a charged bomb, forty days before the conventional nomination of a presidential candidate." He worried that the "Texas bomb" would "burst and scatter its fragments all over the Union, blowing up candidates for the presidency." Tyler's motive in firing this bomb was to make himself a "Texas candidate anointed with gunpowder for the presidential chair."[74]

A TREATY DEFEATED AND A PARTY SYSTEM DISRUPTED

With Tyler's submission of the treaty to the Senate on April 22, the fate of annexation officially rested with that body. The Senate would begin to debate Tyler's treaty on May 16, and would vote on the treaty on June 8. However, while the question of annexation was ostensibly put in the hands of the Senate, that body initially played only a marginal role in determining the fate of the treaty. The real struggle over the treaty took place not in the Senate, but in the arena of presidential politics. Tyler's timing was impeccable; he put the treaty before the nation at a moment when it could do nothing but intrude upon the upcoming presidential election. This was an auspicious time to inject the question

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[74]Benton's speeches on Texas can be found in the *Appendix to The Congressional Globe*, 28 Cong., 1 sess., pp. 474-486, 497-499, 568-576 and 607-611. The quotes used above can be found on pages 610, 479 and 482. See also Benton's *Thirty Years View*, vol. II, pp. 581-638.

into the election because at the very time that the treaty would be before the Senate, both the Democrats and the Whigs were scheduled to hold their national nominating conventions. With an actual treaty of annexation pending before the Senate, the major presidential candidates would be forced to address the issue. Thus, attention turned not to the peripheral debates in the Senate, but to how the national candidates would react and how their parties would respond.

It did not take long for the major candidates to respond, and not surprisingly, both Henry Clay and Martin Van Buren tried to quiet the controversy and prevent Texas from becoming an issue in the campaign. Clay's response came first. Although Tyler had hoped to keep the negotiations secret until he was ready to present a treaty to the Senate, rumors of the negotiations had leaked out. So even before the treaty had been presented to the Senate, Clay had been approached for his opinion on it. On April 17, his hand having been forced by Tyler, Clay penned the first of a series of letters on Texas he would write during the campaign. In this letter, Clay came out squarely against the treaty. He argued that because Mexico had not recognized Texas's independence, annexing Texas would be equivalent to annexing a war with Mexico. However, Clay's worries were not limited Mexico; he was also quite concerned about what the response would be domestically to the acquisition of Texas. The Whig leader and presidential aspirant argued that even if Mexico could be pacified:

> I do not think Texas ought to be received into the Union . . . in decided opposition to the wishes of a considerable and respectable portion of the confederacy. I think it far more

wise to compose and harmonize the present confederacy as it now exists, than to introduce a new element of discord and distraction into it.[75]

A few days after Clay had written his letter, Martin Van Buren also felt compelled to give his views on the treaty. Van Buren did so on April 20, in a letter to William H. Hammet, a Congressman from Mississippi and an unpledged delegate to the upcoming Democratic convention. Van Buren's letter was far longer than Clay's, however, in most other respects the two letters were strikingly similar. Van Buren also voiced his opposition to the treaty, and the primary reason he gave for his opposition, that annexation at this time could lead to a war with Mexico, was the same reason Clay had given. Also like Clay, the Little Magician kept his eyes on domestic politics. While Van Buren vehemently denied that his stand "on this great national question" would be influenced "by the unworthy purpose of increasing my chances for political promotion," he also stated that if the situation changed and public opinion was found to be all for it, he would favor annexation.[76] Van Buren and Clay came out against the treaty for the same reasons. Both wanted the upcoming presidential contest to revolve around safe economic issues and both feared the consequences of inserting the party-splitting slavery issue into the election.[77]

In a curious coincidence, both letters appeared in public on the same day. Both Clay and Van Buren decided to have their letter

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[75]Clay's letter of April 17, 1844, was published in the *National Intelligencer*, the most prominent Whig paper in the country, on April 27, 1844. For a more accessible copy, see the appendix to Sellers's, "The Election of 1844," pp. 814-817 and Hopkins, *Papers of HC*, vol. 10, pp. 41-46.

[76]Van Buren's letter was published in the Washington *Globe* on April 27, 1844. For a more accessible copy, see the appendix to Sellers's "The Election of 1844," pp. 822-828.

[77]Rives, *The United States and Mexico*, pp. 626-627, 638 and 647.

published in one of their party's newspapers, and on April 27, the country was informed that the men who in all likelihood were going to be the two major-party presidential candidates agreed that the treaty should be defeated. The similarities between the two letters and their appearance on the same day quickly gave rise to suspicions of collusion. Clay and Van Buren were accused of conspiring together to keep the issue off the political agenda. Fueling these accusations was the fact that in May of 1842, while Van Buren was touring the country, he had spent a few days at Ashland, Henry Clay's Kentucky estate. During this visit, according to the conspiracy theorists, Clay and Van Buren reached an agreement that both would oppose annexation. The *Madisonian*, President Tyler's newspaper, devoted much of its editorial space to denouncing Clay and Van Buren for attempting to rig the election and defeat the annexation with the so-called "Treaty of Ashland."[78]

Given the interest both men clearly had in keeping the presidential election clear of the Texas issue, many historians have also voiced their suspicions that there might have been some collusion between the two.[79] When both men wrote their letters, each was confident that the other would also oppose the treaty. For example, when Clay was trying to

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[78]Merk, *Slavery and the Annexation of Texas*, p. 52.

[79]James Paul, in *Rift In The Democracy* argues that "some concurrence must have been reached" between the two, though he admits there is no written evidence for it, pp. 37-38. Relying on Paul's account, David Pletcher argues that the two "appear to have agreed confidentially" not to raise the Texas issue, *The Diplomacy of Annexation*, p. 139. Similarly, Eric Foner concludes that the letters were written "probably after consultation on the subject," "Politics Ideology and the Origins of the American Civil War," p. 24. In contrast, Glyndon Van Deusen concludes that he can find no evidence of such an agreement and Charles Sellers argues that if the two did reach an understanding, it was unspoken. See, *The Life of Henry Clay*, pp. 359-360 and "The Election of 1844," p. 759. Finally, Remini admits that while in some of his earlier works he had accepted the conspiracy theory as true, after looking into it more, he now concludes that "it is totally without foundation," *Henry Clay*, pp. 612-613. All of Clay's correspondence that deals with his visit from Van Buren stresses that the two talked very little of politics. See Clay to Nathan Sargeant, May 31, 1842 and Clay to John J. Crittenden, June 3, 1842 in Hopkins, *Papers of HC*, vol. 9, pp. 704 and 706.

convince one of his political allies that publishing the letter was the correct political move, he argued that the letter could not possibly hurt his electoral chances and that Texas would not be a issue in the upcoming campaign, because he and Van Buren "occupy common ground" on the question.[80] If there was no collusion, critics charge, how could Clay be so confident? However, there is absolutely no evidence that there was any collusion between the two. Perhaps, the most convincing reason for believing that no such plot existed is that such a conspiracy would be extremely dangerous politically, and totally unnecessary. Even if the two men had never spoken, both had good reason to believe that the other would oppose injecting the slavery extension issue into the election. There is no reason to resort to a conspiracy theory to explain why party leaders whose national coalitions would be divided by an issue would oppose its intrusion into the political scene, or to explain why one party leader could be confident that the other too would oppose it. There was no collusion, and no need for it, because, as Calhoun put it:

> Mr. Van Buren and Mr. Clay naturally come together on all questions in which North and South come into conflict. One is a Southern man relying on Northern support, and the other is a Northern man relying on the South. They of course dread all conflicting questions between the two sections, and do their best to prevent them from coming up or evading them.[81]

Thus, as the *Madisonian* protested that the President's treaty was not being given a fair hearing and that it was facing opposition only

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[80]Henry Clay to John J. Crittenden, April 21, 1844, Hopkins, *Papers of HC*, vol. 10, pp. 47-48.
[81]Quoted in Pessen, *Jacksonian America*, p. 178.

because politicians feared "its effects upon the present organization of parties,"[82] Clay and Van Buren hoped that their letters would make the issue simply disappear as it had in 1836 and 1840.

Now that Clay and Van Buren had made their views known, how would their parties react? Clay found out first when the Whig Party's national Convention convened in Baltimore on May 1, 1844. Clay made the reasons for his opposition to the treaty clear to his political allies. He explained that it would be unwise "to allow Mr. Tyler, for his own selfish purposes, to introduce an exciting topic" into this campaign. He considered Tyler's Texas ploy to be "the last desperate move of a despicable traitor." The President, Clay argued, "has neither the confidence of the Nation, or either of the great parties in it" and he was pushing the Texas issue "with the evident view of promoting his own personal interests, by producing dissension, discord and distraction." Clay refused to play into Tyler's hands by making annexation a subject of debate in the convention. As Clay saw it, to embrace the Texas issue "would be utterly destructive" of the party.[83]

In Clay's attempt to avoid such a debate, he was assisted by the fact that the Whig Party was, on the whole, not that interested in landed expansion. As a party, the Whigs stressed commercial expansion and economic development over territorial acquisitions. That predisposition, when combined with the powerful incentive of avoiding a debilitating struggle between the sectional wings of the party over slavery, made it relatively easy for Clay to persuade the party to ignore the treaty.

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[82]April 25, 1844, quoted in Lyon Tyler, *The Letters and Times of the Tylers*, vol. 2, p. 279.

[83]The "traitor" quote is from Henry Clay to Leverett Saltonsall, December 4, 1843, and the rest is from Henry Clay to John J. Crittenden, December 5, 1843, both are in Hopkins, *Papers of HC*, pp. 896-899.

Indeed, even before Clay had said a word about Texas, supporters of the treaty had predicted that Clay would ignore the issue and that he would be able to take the Whigs with him.[84]

The Whig Party had seen Tyler's negotiations for Texas as a threat to sectional harmony from the start. Even before Tyler had made the treaty public, the Whigs were concerned with the possible effects those negotiations could have. On March 16, 1844, the *National Intelligencer*, the leading Whig paper in the country, voiced these concerns. The *Intelligencer* argued that Tyler's attempt to annex Texas was a threat to "the public peace and the national welfare, if not the existence of this Union." It likened this threat to "a pestilence" or "an earthquake" that could not be a subject of partisan differences. In order to preserve domestic harmony all parties should unite to oppose Tyler's intrigue.[85] Many Whigs agreed with Alexander Stephens, a prominent Whig from Georgia, who maintained that "the whole annexation project is a miserable political humbug got up as a ruse to divide and distract the Whig Party."[86] With sentiments like these prevalent throughout the party, it is not surprising that one of Texas's negotiators concluded pessimistically that "all of the leading Whigs are anxious to postpone the subject of annexation."[87]

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[84]See Isaac Van Zandt to Anson Jones, November 30, 1843, *DCRT*, vol. 2, pp. 207-210 and C.J. Ingersoll's diary entry of December 25, 1843, in Meigs, *The Life of Charles Jared Ingersoll*, p. 260.
[85]Quoted in Merk, *Slavery and The Annexation of Texas*, pp. 3-4.
[86]Alexander H. Stephens to James Thomas, May 17, 1844 in Ulrich B. Phillips, ed., *The Correspondence of Robert Toombs, Alexander H. Stephens and Howell Cobb*. Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Years 1911 vol. 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1913), pp. 57-58
[87]J.P. Henderson to Anson Jones, March 30, 1844, Jones, *Memoranda and Official Correspondence*, pp. 333-335.

Given the sectional threat the slavery extension issue entailed, Clay decided that the best strategy regarding Texas was, "to pass it over, if it can be done, in absolute silence."[88] The Whig convention that met in Baltimore agreed; Clay's nomination was unanimous and as Clay wished, the party remained united as the Whig platform of 1844 was silent on the issue of Texas.[89] How successful Clay would be in maintaining that silence throughout the campaign would be determined to a large extent by the outcome of another political convention that was to meet in Baltimore later that month. At that convention the Democrats would select their presidential candidate and the Whigs would see if Van Buren could be as successful in silencing the issue as Clay had been.

In attempting to silence the Texas issue, Van Buren faced a much more difficult task than Clay for the simple reason that the expansionist impulse was much stronger in the Democratic Party than in the Whig Party. Persuading the party to deny that impulse to protect the stability of his national coalition presented Van Buren with a formidable challenge, but not an impossible one. After all, he had succeeded in muting the parties expansionist impulses in the elections of 1836 and 1840. The Little Magician hoped he could pull it off again.

By 1844, annexation sentiment within the Democratic party was strong enough that Van Buren could, at least theoretically, capture the nomination by supporting expansion. However, the coalition that Van

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[88]Henry Clay to John J. Crittenden, December 5, 1843, Hopkins, *Papers of HC*, vol. 9, pp. 897-899.
[89]On the convention and the platform see Remini, *Henry Clay*, pp. 644-645 and Van Deusen, "The Whig Party," pp. 351-352. For general discussions of Henry Clay and the Whig Party's reaction to Tyler's treaty that stress their fears of a sectional division, see Remini, *Henry Clay*, pp. 628-629 and 633-641; Cooper, *The South and the Politics of Slavery*, pp. 210-212; Rives, *The United States and Mexico*, pp. 640-641; Poage, *Henry Clay and the Whig Party*, pp. 133-138; Van Deusen, *The Life of Henry Clay*, pp. 364-367; and Tutorow, "Whigs of the Old Northwest," p. 69.

Buren would have to construct in that case would not be his coalition, it would not be the coalition that had brought him victory in 1836 and brought him the nomination in 1840. Van Buren was reluctant to jeopardize the coalition that he had relied upon throughout his national political career with an attempt to construct a new one on the basis of Texas. As Robert Putnam argues, any political leader:

> has a fixed investment in a . . . particular supporting coalition. If a proposed international deal threatens that investment or if . . . [it] would require him to construct a different coalition, the . . . [leader] will be reluctant to endorse it, even if (judged abstractly) it could be [done][90]

Van Buren had no guarantee that a pro-annexation coalition could be built or even if it could be built, he had no guarantee that he would be the leader of this new coalition. In addition, even if he could construct such a coalition at the convention, would that coalition have a chance of carrying the national election with him as its leader? Moreover, even if the election could be won, what would the long term effects be for the party he had spent much of his life building? What would the effects be for the Union as a whole? The lessons of the Missouri Crisis were not encouraging on either score. For Van Buren, the safest political course was to stick with the coalition he had relied on in 1836 and 1840, rather than attempt to build a new one.[91]

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[90]Robert Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games," p. 458.
[91]For accounts of Van Buren's motivations that contrast with the one offered here, see Niven, *Martin Van Buren: The Romantic Age of American Politics*, p. 526; Charles Sellers, *James K. Polk: Continentalist, 1843-1846* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 64-65; and Paul, *Rift In The Democracy*, pp. 122-3. All three stress Van Buren's moral courage in taking the stand he did, rather than his political interests.

Opposition to Van Buren from within the Democratic ranks sprang from a number of different sources. Some delegates opposed Van Buren because they believed that his economic policy had been disastrous, others opposed him because they believed that Van Buren represented the old guard and his continued dominance only served to shut younger Democrats out from positions of power, and still others opposed him because he had been defeated in 1840 and they were unwilling to saddle their party with a proven loser.[92] However, by themselves, none of these groups were powerful enough to unseat Van Buren. The only issue that had the potential of uniting enough delegates to deny Van Buren the nomination was Texas. Even though forcing the issue on the convention risked dividing the party, Van Buren's opponents saw it as the only hope they had of overthrowing the New Yorker.[93]

As discussed above, one of Van Buren's staunchest foes who was making just such a calculation was John C. Calhoun. He had resigned himself to the fact that the Democratic nomination would go to Van Buren, unless something could be done to raise the slavery question and force Van Buren to take a sectionally divisive stand. He and his advisers agreed that Texas would have to be that issue, even though they knew

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[92]See Morrison, *Slavery and The American West*, pp. 26-31; Cooper, *The South and the Politics of Slavery*, pp. 198-206 and Holt, *The Political Crisis of The 1850's*, pp. 41-42. For an extended account of the events leading up to the Baltimore Convention see Paul, *Rift in The Democracy*; for an account of the proceedings of the Convention itself see Sellers, *James K. Polk: Continentalist*, pp. 67-107.

[93]See Cave Johnson to James Polk, December 30, 1843; April 30, 1844; and Silas Wright to Polk, June 2, 1844 in Wayne Cutler, ed., *Correspondence of James Knox Polk* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1983, 1989) vol. 6, pp. 399-402 and vol. 7, pp. 113-115 and 183-188. See also Amos Kendall to Andrew Jackson, August 28, 1844, Bassett, *Correspondence of AJ*, vol. 6, p. 316; Sellers, *James K. Polk: Continentalist*, pp. 48-66; Paul, *Rift In The Democracy*, pp. 62-63 and 183; Cooper, *The South and The Politics of Slavery*, pp. 198-206; Niven, *Martin Van Buren: The Romantic Age In American Politics*, pp. 512-541; Holt, *The Political Crisis of The 1850's*, pp. 41-42, Smith, *The Annexation Of Texas*, pp. 248-257; Holt, "The Democratic Party, 1828-1860", pp. 517-518; and Sellers, "The Election of 1844," pp. 759-762. In his memoirs, Van Buren also blames his defeat in 1844 on scheming politicians and slave power, Fitzpatrick, *The Autobiography of Martin Van Buren*, p. 8.

such a strategy risked dividing the party. Indeed, the Texas issue had the capacity to defeat Van Buren only because it could be counted on to divide the party sectionally. They hoped that injecting the issue into the convention would lead the Southern delegates to rally around a Southern candidate, like Calhoun, and thus defeat Van Buren.[94] Senator Benton, a Van Buren's ally, argues that it was this underhanded political scheme that accounts for Calhoun's two Pakenham letters. In those letters Calhoun defended the treaty on the sectional ground that annexation was needed to protect slavery. In those letters, Calhoun had made support for the treaty equal to a defense of slavery. Why would Calhoun write these letters? Why would Calhoun endanger the chances for ratification by making it almost impossible for a Northern politician to support the treaty? Benton had an answer. He saw these two letters as part of Calhoun's plot for overthrowing Van Buren. By making the annexation issue a clear choice between defending slavery or attacking slavery, Van Buren would be destroyed no matter what he did. Opposing the treaty would kill him with Southern Democrats and supporting the treaty would ruin him with Northern Democrats.[95]

While Calhoun was working to overthrow Van Buren from the State Department, Senator Robert Walker of Mississippi was doing the same in Congress. Also hoping to defeat Van Buren and replace him

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[94]See Robert M.T. Hunter to John Calhoun, October 10, 1843; Calhoun to Hunter, September 12, 1843; Virgil Maxcy to Calhoun, December 10, 1843 and December 14, 1843; and Hunter to Calhoun December 19, 1843. In Wilson, *Papers of JCC*, vol. 17, pp. 495-497, 431-433, 599-603, 608-609, and 613-615.

[95]Benton, *Thirty Years View*, vol. 2, p. 589. See also Francis P. Blair to Andrew Jackson, May 2, 1844, Basset, *Correspondence of AJ*, vol. 6, pp. 281-282. Charles Sellers argues that Calhoun was compelled to write the Pakenham letters only after a prominent Van Buren newspaper came out in favor of annexation. Sellers argues that Calhoun feared that his plans for overthrowing Van Buren would be ruined if Van Buren came out for annexation. Thus, according to Sellers, Calhoun wrote his Pakenham letters to insure that Van Buren could not possibly support annexation, see, *James K. Polk Continentalist*, pp. 58-60. For a similar account see Holt, "The Democratic Party 1828-1860," p. 518.

with a Southern candidate, Walker and his "nocturnal committee of southrons" were busy using the Texas issue to drum up Southern opposition to Van Buren's nomination.[96] One tactic was to get the most popular politician in the South, the now retired Andrew Jackson, to help bring down Van Buren by voicing his support of annexation. As early as February 1843, Jackson had written a letter, which he intended for publication, in which he came out squarely for the annexation of Texas. However, Jackson's letter was not published immediately. Instead Walker and his colleagues decided to sit on the letter for over a year, and then publish it in the months preceding the Democratic convention.[97] Though Jackson was warned that these letters were only playing into the hands of those who wished to overthrow Van Buren, the candidate who Jackson claimed to support, Jackson continued to write letters in favor of annexation, and Van Buren's opponents continued to use them to attack his candidacy.[98]

Though Van Buren faced serious opposition, even from the hand of his political patron, he remained the favorite to win the nomination. Going into the convention Van Buren was well ahead of any of his competitors as a clear majority of the delegates had already pledged to support his candidacy. Sensing Van Buren's strength, his opponents persuaded the convention to adopt the two-thirds rule, which forced a candidate to win two-thirds of the votes in order to get the nomination as

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[96]Paul, *Rift In The Democracy*, pp. 125-128 and 136-137.

[97]This letter, Andrew Jackson to Aaron V. Brown, February 12, 1843, Bassett, *Correspondence of AJ*, vol. 6, pp. 201-202, was not published until March of 1844. Benton was vocal in denouncing the publication of the letter, again accusing the supporters of Texas of using it as a pretext to beat Van Buren, *Thirty Years View*, vol. 2, pp. 514. On the Southrons and the letter, see Cooper, *The South and The Politics Of Slavery*, pp. 190-193 and Paul, *Rift In The Democracy*, pp. 82-83 and 109-110.

[98]For this warning, see Francis Blair to Andrew Jackson, May 2, 1844, Bassett, *Correspondence of AJ*; vol. 6, pp. 281-282. For more of Jackson's letters on Texas see footnote 52 above.

opposed to a simple majority. This way, the minority opposed to Van Buren could still block his nomination. On the first vote taken on the nomination, Van Buren won a clear majority, but fell short of gaining the needed two-thirds. As delegates began to doubt that Van Buren would be able to gain the necessary number of votes, his strength dwindled with each successive vote. However, even as Van Buren weakened, no other candidate was coming close to the required two-thirds. Annexation had deadlocked the convention.

Even before the convention, Democrats had begun to worry that the Texas issue would disrupt the party. Thomas Ritchie of Virginia was alarmed by the divisions he was seeing within the party over Texas and lamented that, "never have I seen the Republican party in so much danger. We are breaking up."[99] Throughout the convention, Van Buren's supporters continued to call for silence on the annexation issue. Warning the delegates that the Texas issue was a "firebrand" that had been injected into the contest by the "mongrel administration in Washington," they maintained that Texas must be ignored if the Democrats were to remain united.[100] However, despite these calls for unity, the convention remained deadlocked.

One man who was glad that the Democrats deadlocked over the Texas issue was John Tyler. Tyler entertained hopes that once the Democrats divided over the Texas issue, the annexationists in the party would turn to him. In order to be in position to take advantage of any disarray in the Democratic Convention, a Tyler for President

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[99]Thomas Ritchie to Howell Cobb, May 6, 1844 in Phillips, *The Correspondence of Robert Toombs, Alexander H. Stephens and Howell Cobb*, pp. 56-57.

[100]Comments of Mr. Young of New York, quoted in Benton, *Thirty Years View*, vol. 2, p. 593

Convention was also held in Baltimore, at the same time as the Democratic Convention. However, the chances of Tyler becoming the Democratic candidate were extremely low and there is no evidence that the Democrats ever considered him as a possibility. The Tyler Convention quickly re-nominated the President and launched his re-election bid with the slogan of "Tyler and Texas."[101]

Eventually the Democrats settled on a compromise pro-Texas candidate, but despite the President's hopes, that compromise candidate was not John Tyler. Instead, the Democrats turned to James K. Polk of Tennessee to be their standard bearer in 1844. At the start of the convention, Polk was considered a prominent possibility for the vice-presidential nod, but was not considered to be a candidate for the top spot. Though his name did not appear on the ballot until the eighth vote, on the ninth, the dark horse from Tennessee stampeded to the nomination. Polk was a compromise candidate; he was a Van Buren supporter, yet he was also an annexationist.[102]

Once the Texas issue played a pivotal role in overthrowing Van Buren, the Democratic Party no longer had the option of ignoring it. This meant that the Democrats could no longer escape the sectional divisiveness of the expansion issue as they had done in 1836 and 1840. The best that Polk and his supporters could hope to do now was to try

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[101]See Paul, *Rift in The Democracy*, p. 145; Seager, *and Tyler too*, p. 228; Rives, *The United States and Mexico*, p. 635; and Meigs, *The Life of Charles Jared Ingersoll*, p. 264. Lyon Tyler, in his glowingly positive recounting of John Tyler's presidency argues that while Tyler knew that Texas could help his standing domestically by disrupting the Whigs and the Democrats, that is not why he launched the bid for Texas. See *The Letters and Times of The Tyler's*, vol. 2, pp. 304-307. In volume two, Lyon Tyler offers a letter from John Tyler to Henry Wise in which the President calls Texas "the great scheme that occupied me" in order to beat Van Buren, pp. 169-171 and 317. Interestingly, when this letter appears in the third volume, the word "scheme" is replaced by the word "theme," p. 170.
[102]See Sellers, *James K. Polk Continentalist*, pp. 69-73 and 97-98; and Sellers, "The Election of 1844," pp. 764-772.

minimize the damage that this question would inflict upon the Party and the Union. The solution that Polk hoped would defuse the issue was the same one that had occurred to Jackson and to Tyler, namely, to appease the Northern opponents of annexation by pairing the acquisition of Texas with an expansionist program favored by the North, in Polk's case, the acquisition of Oregon.[103]

After the drawn out battle over the nomination, the decision on the platform was anticlimactic. The opponents of Van Buren had succeeded in using the Texas issue to defeat the New Yorker. The Democratic coalition that selected Van Buren in 1836 and 1840 on a platform designed to quiet the expansion issue had been defeated and a new Democratic coalition committed to the re-annexation of Texas and the re-occupation of Oregon had triumphed.[104] Polk's victory at the head of this expansionist coalition precipitated an important change in the role that the Texas issue played in U.S. politics. With Henry Clay opposing annexation, and the Democrats committed to a program of territorial expansion, the days where the two major parties had agreed to keep the slavery extension issue off the political agenda had come to a close. The Texas issue was becoming something it had never been before, a partisan issue.

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[103]It is important to note that while such a compromise, similar to the pairing of Maine and Missouri during the Missouri Crisis, had always been a possibility, for an intersectional party leader, this was a distinctly second best solution because it would still lead to dangerously divisive debates on the issue. While such a balanced approach to expansion was certainly safer than supporting the annexation of Texas by itself, a far safer solution was to avoid the dangerous balancing act entirely by avoiding the issue completely. Polk use of the Texas issue to dethrone Van Buren forced him to accept this second best solution.

[104]Sellers, *James K. Polk Continentalist*, pp. 99-100. For the Democratic Platform adopted in 1844 see the appendix to Sellers, "The Election of 1844," pp. 799-801.

For almost a decade party leaders had worked to prevent annexation from becoming an issue in American politics. The Missouri Crisis had taught them to fear the effects of the slavery extension issue. Now that their efforts to quiet the question had failed, would their worst fears be realized? What would be the effects of making Texas a party measure? The question for the immediate future was, now that Texas had become a matter of party struggle, what would be the fate of annexation? Ultimately, however, the more important question was, now that slavery extension had become an issue on the political agenda, what would be the fate of the American political system? Could the Democratic coalition survive the sectional strains of supporting the extension of slavery? Could the Whig party survive the sectional strain of having to openly oppose the extension of slavery? Finally, could the Union survive the strain of having to debate the issue? Polk and those around him believed that the debate could be survived. The eventual resolution of the Missouri Crisis gave them hope that the Texas storm too could be weathered. The motivational bias in favor of believing what one wants to believe must have made this relatively rosy interpretation of the Missouri Crisis attractive to the supporters of annexation. Interpreting the lessons of Missouri to suggest that sectional debates over the extension of slavery could eventually be resolved obviated the need to face the emotionally stressful conclusion that any attempts to use the Texas issue to advance one's domestic political prospects could endanger the stability of the Union. Rather than face

this painful choice, the Missouri analogy was interpreted to eliminate the need for such a choice.[105]

The first test Texas received as a partisan issue took place in Congress. With the nominating conventions finished, attention shifted back to the Senate and its vote on Tyler's treaty. That vote, which took place just a matter of days after Polk had received the nomination, did not bode well for the stability of Polk's expansionist Democratic coalition. Tyler's treaty was overwhelmingly rejected in the Senate by a count of 35 against and only 15 for.[106] Instead of the two-thirds majority needed for ratification, close to two-thirds of the Senate voted against the treaty. The vote did have a definite partisan flavor: the Whigs voted overwhelmingly against the treaty and the Democrats largely supported it. However, the divided votes of the Democratic Senators showed that Polk's party was far from united.

The final tally against the treaty must have given Clay increased hope that his party would weather the Texas storm. Not only was annexation defeated by a huge margin, but the Whigs also displayed an ability to remain united in the face of the sectionally loaded question. Of the twenty-nine Whigs in the Senate, twenty-eight of them voted against the treaty, fourteen of them from Southern states.[107] In contrast, the final tally must have given Polk reason to pause. Not only was annexation defeated, but the vote also revealed a breach in his party. Just under one-third of the Democratic Senators opted to break what was

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[105]On this interpretation or re-interpretation of the Missouri Crisis see Hietala, *Manifest Design*, pp. 209-210 and 267, and Morrison, *Slavery and The American West*, pp. 31-33.

[106]For a breakdown of the vote see, *Congressional Globe*, 28 Cong., 1 sess., p. 652 and Merk, *Slavery and the Annexation Of Texas*, pp. 78-81.

[107]The lone Whig defector was John Henderson of Mississippi.

now the party line and voted against the treaty[108]. Moreover, this breach in the party was sectional. Southern Democrats voted almost unanimously for the treaty, while their Northern counterparts split, with five Northern Democrats voting for the treaty and six voting against.[109] The Democrats who voted against the treaty were supporters of Van Buren, who by their votes showed that they had yet to be won over to the cause of annexation. If the Democratic party suffered such defections in the upcoming election, they were sure to be defeated.

Clay saw the rejection of the treaty as a cause for rejoicing. His party had faced the issue and survived. He was confident that the danger had passed or as he put it, Tyler's Texas "bubble" had burst, "and its bursting has injured nobody but Mr. Van Buren."[110] However, the struggle was far from over. Two days after the treaty's defeat, President Tyler sent a message to the House asking it to take up consideration of the Texas issue. He argued that a joint Congressional resolution in favor of annexation was a Constitutionally acceptable alternative to a treaty as a means of acquiring Texas.[111] Tyler's message to the House came very late in the Congressional session, too late for any action to be taken. However, it did serve to keep the question alive. With the Democratic candidate for president in favor of annexation and the Whig candidate opposed, Texas was sure to be a major issue in the upcoming election. Tyler's bubble had not finished bursting, and despite his confidence, this time its bursting would also injure Mr. Clay.

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[108]Of the twenty-two Democratic votes in the Senate, 7 were cast against the treaty.
[109]The only Democrat from a slave state to vote against the treaty was Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri.
[110]Henry Clay to Stephen Miller, July 1, 1844, Hopkins, *Papers of HC*, vol. 10, pp. 78-79.
[111]Tyler's message to the House, June 10, 1844, *Messages and Papers*, vol. 5, pp. 2176-2180.

Given the popularity of annexation throughout much of the South, the campaign strategy of the Democrats in that region was to focus heavily on Polk's support for annexation and contrast it with Clay's hesitance. Whigs in the South began to worry that Clay's opposition to annexation would throw the South to the Democrats. After receiving information that his first public letter on Texas was damaging his electoral chances in the South, Clay responded by writing two more letters on annexation, which came to be known as his "Alabama letters." In those letters, Clay tried to go as far as he could on the question to please Southerners, without going so far as to alienate voters in the North. Unfortunately for him, his efforts failed. The more Clay danced around the issue, the more difficult it became for him to maintain his position on the fence.

To appease annexationists in the South, Clay denounced the actions of anti-slavery agitators and argued that such people had no role in his campaign. He argued that personally, he had "no objection to the annexation of Texas," that slavery should have nothing to do with questions of expansion, and that as president he would certainly consider annexation if he believed it could be done safely. To appease opponents of annexation in the North, Clay argued that he opposed annexation at this time, that slavery was a dying institution, and that "national dishonor, foreign war, and distraction and division at home were too great a sacrifice to make for the acquisition of Texas." In his attempt to find a middle ground between the two sections, Clay ended up disappointing both. Clay's supporters in each section complained that his stand on Texas was costing him votes and that his letters were only

making the situation worse by creating confusion as to where he stood and leaving himself open to accusations of waffling.

Clay responded to these complaints with yet another letter on Texas, which, given his middle of the road position, was as unsatisfying as his previous letters had been. If there was a bright spot to be found in this letter for a Clay supporter, it probably was Clay's promise that hereafter he would write no more letters on the subject. In this final letter Clay defended himself against charges of waffling and endeavored to explain how his stand on Texas had been consistent throughout the campaign. As one of Clay's biographers has put it, Clay was correct, his stand had been "consistent throughout--a consistent straddle." The difficulties these letters created for Clay help explain why he had been so eager to avoid the Texas question in the first place, nothing he could possibly say could please Whigs in both sections.[112]

After Clay had succeeded in having Tyler dismissed from Whig ranks, he was at the height of his influence in the party and the Whigs were united behind him and his program to an unparalleled degree. Ironically, this victory also contained within it the seeds of Clay's eventual undoing. By stripping the sitting President of his party affiliation, Clay had created the very situation he had otherwise been trying to avoid: he had created a situation where Texas could become a

[112]Henry Clay to Stephen F. Miller, July 1, 1844 is the first of Clay's Alabama letters. The second is Clay to Thomas M. Peters and John M. Jackson, July 27, 1844. Clay's final letter on Texas, dated September 23, 1844, was addressed to the *National Intelligencer* and published on October 1, 1844. All three can be found in Hopkins, *Papers of HC*, vol. 10, pp. 78-79, 89-91 and 122-124. On Clay's letters and the reaction to them see, Remini, *Henry Clay*, pp. 659-661; Cooper, *The South and The Politics of Slavery*, pp. 209-218; Van Deusen, *The Life of Henry Clay*, pp. 373-376; Poage, *Henry Clay and The Whig Party*, pp. 143-147; and Cole, *The Whig Party in the South*, pp. 109-115. The "consistent straddle" quote is from Van Deusen, p. 375.

political issue. In the election of 1844, Henry Clay paid the costs of creating a president without a party.

A PRESIDENT ELECTED AND A JOINT RESOLUTION PASSED

Tyler had calculated that his support for annexation could force the issue into the upcoming presidential campaign and help pave the way for an expansionist candidate. In many ways his calculations were correct. He did force Texas onto the agenda and the election of 1844 did feature an expansionist candidate. However, contrary to the President's hopes, the expansionist was not John Tyler. On the day the Democrats nominated Polk, Tyler's hopes for re-election were shattered. With the Democrats in favor of annexation, Tyler was deprived of the one issue on which he had based his candidacy. After Tyler was given assurances by prominent Democrats that his followers would be welcomed back into the Democratic fold, Tyler abandoned his third-party candidacy. The Democrats were more than willing to give such assurances because they feared that a Tyler ticket would only draw votes away from Polk and give the election to Clay.[113] However, Tyler's withdrawal did not make it a two man race, as the Texas issue opened the door to the candidacy of James Birney of the anti-slavery Liberty Party. With Texas, and therefore slavery, an important issue in the campaign, the Liberty Party was able to create a niche for itself in the North as the anti-slavery alternative to both parties.

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[113]Peterson, *The Presidencies of William Henry Harrison and John Tyler*, pp. 237-241; Sellers, *James K. Polk Continentalist*, pp. 133-137; and Seager, *and Tyler too*, pp. 231-232 and 235-236.

Polk won the the election 1844 with 170 electoral votes to Clay's 105 and Birney's zero. However, this total in the electoral college masked what was an extremely tight race. Of the approximately 2.7 million ballots cast, Polk managed only a plurality of about 38,000 votes. Looking at individual states, the contest was even closer. In New York, whose electoral votes would have been enough to swing the election to Clay, Polk defeated Clay by a mere 5,000 votes out of the half-million cast.

Students of the election of 1844 have long debated the role played by the Texas issue in driving these results. The question is a complicated one because the election of 1844 was not a simple referendum on Texas. Texas was only one of the many important issues involved in the campaign.[114] One fact however, is virtually beyond dispute: in 1844 the results of the election were interpreted as a referendum on expansion and Polk's victory was seen as a mandate for annexation. While such an interpretation seems questionable at best, after all more Americans voted for the two candidates that opposed annexation than voted for Polk,[115] it was the interpretation that was largely accepted at the time; and as the

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[114]For the election totals given here, see the appendix to Sellers, "The Election of 1844," p. 861. While most historians admit that the election was a complicated one, many agree that Texas was the most important of those issues or among the most important issues. For those studies that put the Texas issue as the key issue in the campaign, see Poage, *Henry Clay and The Whig Party*, pp. 150 and Rives, *The United States and Mexico*, pp. 640 and 649. For those that place Texas among a number of other issues see Remini, *Henry Clay*, pp. 663-667; Peterson, *The Presidencies Of William Henry Harrison and John Tyler*, p. 242; Cooper, *The South and The Politics Of Slavery*, pp. 217-219; Merk, *Slavery and the Annexation Of Texas*, p. 101 and Cole, *The Whig Party In The South*, pp. 115-116. For a study of the election in the pivotal state of New York that discounts the role of the Texas issue, see Lee Benson, *The Concept of Jacksonian Democracy: New York as A Test Case* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), pp. 254-269. Even if one grants that annexation only determined the stand of a small number of voters, one could still argue that it was the key issue. In such a close election, even a small shift in votes could have been enough to influence the outcome of the election.
[115]Adding Birney's votes to Clay's total would have given him an electoral majority of about 24,000 votes. Even if only one-third of Birney's voters would have switched their votes to Clay in New York, that would have been enough to swing the election to Clay.

accepted interpretation, it had political effects. As Justin Smith put it, the election of Polk probably played a greater role in leading to annexation, than annexation played in electing Polk.[116]

One political player who clearly interpreted Polk's razor thin plurality as vindication for the supporters of annexation was the outgoing President. In his last annual message, Tyler argued that the election of 1844 was a referendum on annexation and that annexation had won:

> The decision of the people and the states, on this great and interesting subject has been decisively manifested. . . . A controlling majority of the people, and a large majority of the states have declared in favor of immediate annexation. . . . It is the will of both the people and the states that Texas shall be annexed to the Union promptly and immediately.[117]

As a supporter of immediate annexation, Tyler clearly had an interest in interpreting the election as a popular vindication of his policies. However, Tyler was far from alone in interpreting the election in this fashion. Even many of the defeated Whigs conceded that they had been beaten because of the Texas issue.[118] This interpretation of the election gave annexation a needed boost in Congress, especially in the Senate, which just a few months ago had rejected annexation by close to a two-thirds majority. The Congress sitting in Washington in early 1845 was a lame duck session. The new members who had been elected along

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[116]Smith, *The Annexation of Texas*, pp. 318-321.
[117]Tyler's Fourth Annual Message, December 3, 1844, *Messages and Papers*, vol. 5, pp. 2196-2197. Charles Ingersoll, the Democratic head of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, also a keen supporter of annexation interpreted the election in the same way, Rives, *The United States and Mexico*, p. 687.
[118]Morrison, "Westward the Curse of Empire," pp. 221-222.

with Polk were not to take their seats until later in the year. Thus, if the joint resolution for annexation was to be passed in this session, many of the same Senators who had just voted against annexation had to be persuaded to change their votes. The interpretation of the election as a referendum in favor of annexation persuaded a number of them to do so. Most importantly it would encourage the Van Buren Democrats who had rejected annexation before the election, to bow to the new party line once Polk's coalition had proven itself in the electoral arena.

Polk's victory also helped advance the cause of annexation through the access to Presidential patronage that his victory gave to the Democratic Party. Northern Democrats who were reluctant to support the annexation of a large slave-holding territory could be persuaded to support the measure in return for Presidential favors down the road or a prominent position in the new administration. The arrival of the President-elect in Washington greatly aided the cause of annexation as many Democrats who otherwise might have opposed annexation were eager to gain the favor of the incoming president, or at least avoid his wrath.[119]

In addition to the impetus for annexation that grew out of Polk's victory, the recalcitrant Northern Democrats, were also enticed into the Texas fold with a series of compromises designed to make their about-face on the Texas issue more palatable. One area of compromise involved the matter of Texas's public debt. Many Senators, most notably Thomas Hart Benton, had objected to Tyler's treaty in part because it required the U.S. government to pay huge sums of money to those who

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[119]Peterson, *The Presidencies of William Henry Harrison and John Tyler*, p. 256.

had speculated in Texas bonds. To appease those objectors, the supporters of annexation were willing to strike that provision from the joint resolution, which would force Texas to retain its public debt and use its own public lands to pay it off.[120] For those objectors, like Benton, who had argued that Tyler's moves toward Texas had left too many open questions, such as the question of boundaries and the possibility of war with Mexico, they were appeased with a compromise that allowed the President (which they all assumed would be Polk) to decide whether to offer Texas annexation on the terms of the joint resolution or to re-open negotiations to resolve such issues. Later, a number of Senators claimed that they had only voted for the joint resolution because they had been promised by Polk that he would re-open negotiations with Texas and Mexico once he assumed office.[121]

While these two concessions may have helped some reluctant Senators support annexation by giving them credible reasons why the joint resolutions were preferable to Tyler's treaty, neither of these inducements touched upon the core issue involved in the question of annexation, the extension of slavery. To get the northern votes needed for passage, the pro-Texas faction needed a compromise on the issue of slavery. In looking for such a compromise, the supporters of annexation needed to look no further than the Missouri Crisis. To make it easier for Northerners to support annexation, the Missouri Compromise line of 36° 30' was included in the Texas bill.[122] Given the size of Texas, it was

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[120]Merk, *Slavery and the Annexation of Texas*, pp. 152-153. For Benton's objection on these grounds see his speeches cited in footnote 74 above.

[121]See Sellers, *James K. Polk: Continentalist*, pp. 206-208 and 215-220; Benton, *Thirty Years View*, vol. 2, pp. 636-638; and Hietala, *Manifest Design*, p. 219-220.

[122]Merk, *Slavery and the Annexation of Texas*, pp. 152-153, and Hietala, *Manifest Design*, pp. 218-219.

assumed that the territory of Texas would eventually be formed into a number of states. In a seeming concession to opponents of the extension of slavery, the joint resolution stated that all states formed out of the territory in Texas located north of 36° 30' would be prohibited from allowing slavery. However, this concession was more illusory than real as there was very little Texan territory north of 36° 30'. The actual boundaries of Texas were vague, but even if one accepted the expansive boundaries Texas claimed for itself, no matter how specious those claims actually were, only a tiny sliver of territory would lie north of the Missouri Compromise line.

However, even if the Missouri Compromise restriction did very little or no restricting, it was still a politically useful concession. Northern Democrats could claim that they had protected the interests of the North as well as their predecessors had in 1820. And more importantly, agreeing on the Missouri Crisis line now would, they hoped, prevent similar sectionally divisive debates from arising in the future. As observers to the debates that had wracked the nation in 1820 during the Missouri Crisis, people like Senator Benton had seen the dangers of the slavery extension question. Unable anymore to simply ignore the question, he and other Northern Democrats decided to do the next best thing, which was to quiet the question by instituting a new Missouri Compromise.[123] Rather than abandon the lessons of the Missouri Crisis, they decided to apply them to the changed circumstances brought about by Tyler's treaty and Polk's election by facing the issue in the least disruptive way possible. Part of that strategy was to use the

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[123]For Benton's views on the Missouri Crisis see his, *Thirty Years View*, vol. 1, p. 10. On the application of the Missouri Compromise line to Texas see vol. 2, pp. 632-638.

Missouri Compromise line as a focal point for compromise, even though in this case the line itself represented no compromise at all. As Senator James Buchanan, soon to become Polk's Secretary of State, put it, he supported the inclusion of the Missouri Compromise line in the joint resolution because:

> That controversy had nearly shaken this Union to its center in an earlier and better period of our history; but this compromise, should it now be re-established would prevent the recurrence of similar dangers hereafter. Should this question now be left open for one or two years, the country could be involved in nothing but one perpetual struggle. We should witness a feverish excitement in the public mind: parties would be divided on the dangerous and exciting question of abolition and the danger might reach such an extreme as to endanger the existence of the Union itself.[124]

The joint resolution on Texas had a rather easy time of it in the House. The large Democratic majority in that body assured that the bill passed without too much trouble. Even though a relatively large number of Northern Democrats did break party lines and vote against annexation, a larger number of Northern Democrats were persuaded to support the measure, and that, combined with solid support from Southern Democrats was enough to give the bill a majority of 120 to 98.[125]

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[124]Quoted in Benton, *Thirty Years View*, vol. 2, pp. 633.

[125]This vote took place on January 25, 1845. *Congressional Globe*, 28 Cong., 2 sess., p. 193. Twenty-eight Northern Democrats opposed the measure and fifty-three Northern Democrats approved of it. As for the Southern Democrats, fifty-eight out of fifty-nine of them voted for the measure. As for the Whigs, all fifty-two Northern Whigs opposed the measure and the Southern Whigs split, with nine voting for the measure and seventeen opposing it. Jennifer Roback, "An Imaginary Negro In An

The fight in the Senate was much closer. However, on February 27, 1845, by a vote of twenty-seven for and twenty-five against, that body reversed its earlier stand and approved of annexation.[126] The key to the passage of the joint resolution in the Senate was the votes of the Van Buren Democrats who had earlier opposed annexation. Believing that Polk's victory had demonstrated the popularity of annexation, under pressure from party members to adhere to the party line, persuaded by promises of Presidential patronage, and appeased by a series of concessions; all the Northern Democrats who had joined with the Whigs to defeat Tyler's treaty reversed their position and voted for annexation.[127] However, even with all twenty-four Democrats in the Senate in favor of annexation, the supporters of annexation were still short of a majority. This margin of victory was provided by three Whig Senators from the South. The popularity of annexation in that region, reinforced by the results of the previous election was enough to persuade three Whigs to cross party lines and vote for annexation.[128] The vote on the joint resolution in the Senate was thus in one way a mirror image of the earlier vote on Tyler's treaty; however, this time it was the Democrats who remained united and the Whigs who suffered from serious defections.

Impossible Place: The Territories and Secession," (November 1993 paper), pp. 28-29. The version of the bill passed here by the House did not include within it the compromise of allowing the President to choose between offering annexation now or re-opening negotiations. Once the Senate passed its bill, which included that stipulation, the House voted on February 28, 1845 to concur with the Senate bill by a vote of 132-76, *Congressional Globe*, 28 Cong., 2 sess., p. 372.

[126]*Congressional Globe*, 28 Cong., 2 sess., p. 362.

[127]Merk, *Slavery and the Annexation of Texas*, pp. 81, 155 and 157 and Hietala, *Manifest Design*, pp. 219-220.

[128]Cooper, *The South and The Politics Of Slavery*, pp. 222-223 and Cole, *The Whig Party In The South*, pp. 116-118. One of these Whigs, John Henderson of Mississippi had also voted for Tyler's treaty.

The final terms of the joint resolution passed by both houses were as follows: the territory of Texas, whose boundaries were left vague, was to be admitted as a State; Texas was to retain its public debt and public lands; up to four states could be carved out of the territory of Texas; slavery would be prohibited in any states thus formed north of the Missouri Compromise line of 36° 30'; and finally, the President could decide whether to offer annexation to Texas upon these grounds or re-open negotiations.[129] When Congress passed this resolution it was assumed that the President who would make that decision would be President Polk. However, Tyler chose not to leave the decision to the incoming President and after signing the joint resolution into law, he took advantage of his last day in office to offer Texas annexation on the terms offered by Congress.[130]

While Polk had the power to reverse Tyler's decision, after some initial hesitation, he decided merely to second Tyler's orders. Rather than re-open negotiations he thought it best to simply offer annexation to Texas on the terms provided by the joint resolution. His reason for this was simple, if negotiations were to be re-opened, the results of those talks would have to be approved by Congress, most likely by a two-thirds majority in the Senate. The joint resolution had only barely received a majority in the Senate, so rather than agitate the question

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[129]For a copy of the joint resolution see Merk, *Slavery and The Annexation of Texas*, pp. 289-290.
[130]John C. Calhoun to Andrew J. Donelson, March 3, 1845, Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence--US*, vol. 12, pp. 83-85. See also, Peterson, *The Presidencies of William Henry Harrison and John Tyler*, pp. 257-259 and Tyler, *The Letters and Times of The Tylers*, vol. 2, pp. 364-365.

further and push his luck in the Senate, Polk decided that the safest course was simply to second Tyler's orders.[131]

Though Texas still had to approve of the terms offered by the United States, its decade long wait was over. The tacit agreement among party leaders to keep the slavery extension issue out of national politics had broken down. That agreement to keep Texas off the political agenda could not be sustained after the Presidency fell into the hands of a leader without a political party. With nothing to lose from raising the issue, and potentially a great deal to gain, Tyler thrust Texas into the national spotlight. With the occupant of the White House determined to make an issue out of Texas, the efforts of Whig and Democratic leaders to keep the issue out of the national political arena were doomed to failure. The first casualty of the Texas issue was the Van Buren led Democratic Party. Opponents of his leadership used the Texas issue to overthrow him and create a new Democratic coalition favorable to expansion. That coalition was able to hold together at least long enough to defeat Henry Clay and the Whig Party in the election of 1844 and push a measure for annexation through a divided Congress in 1845. The success that this coalition experienced and the surprising degree of unity it showed in 1844 and 1845, leads to a number of related questions: Had the most dire lessons of the Missouri Crisis been misleading? Could an intersectional political party survive the sectional strains of the slavery extension issue? Could the second party system and the Union survive territorial expansion and all the questions it raised, as Polk and his

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[131]James Buchanan to Andrew J. Donelson, March 10, 1845, Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence— US*, vol. 12, pp. 85-88. See also Buchanan to Donelson, April 28, 1845 and Donelson to Ebenezer Allen, March 31, 1845; both are in Manning, pp. 90-91 and 393-397.

supporters hoped? Unfortunately, as the following fifteen years of sectional strife demonstrated, the answer to all of these questions was no.

COMPETING EXPLANATIONS AND COUNTERFACTUALS

The preceding three chapters have examined U.S. policy towards the possibility of adding Texas to the Union, from John Quincy Adams and James Monroe's decisions to trade Texas for Florida in the Adams-Onís Treaty (Chapter 3), through Andrew Jackson, Martin Van Buren and Henry Clay's decisions to refuse Texas's request for annexation after it achieved its independence from Mexico in 1836 (Chapter 4), to John Tyler, John C. Calhoun and James Polk's decisions to promote the annexation of Texas, eventually securing its admission by 1845 (Chapter 5). The argument put forward in each of these chapters has been that to understand U.S. policy, one must examine the analogies policy makers used to interpret the situation and the reasons why they saw certain analogies as more relevant than others.

However, critics of the analogical approach could easily come up with somewhat convincing interest-based arguments to explain the same pattern of behavior. Adams and Monroe traded Texas for Florida because of the pressing international interest the U.S. had in protecting its southern flank against a future foreign threat; Jackson, Van Buren and Clay rejected Texas's offers to be admitted to the Union because of their pressing domestic interests in not upsetting their political coalitions; and Tyler, Calhoun, and Polk advocated annexation because of their pressing domestic interests in disrupting the political coalitions

that were blocking their path to further advancement domestically. These explanations are partially convincing, because they are partially correct. Adams and Monroe were certainly trying to advance the international security interests of the country; and Jackson, Van Buren, Clay, Tyler, Calhoun and Polk, were all certainly looking to protect their own domestic interests.

However, by themselves, these interest-based explanations are incomplete and can not explain U.S. behavior towards Texas. Interests, by themselves, did not lead to preferences for one policy option over another. To determine what particular policies would best advance their interests, these policy makers needed beliefs and expectations regarding the likely impact of different options on their interests. Historical analogies provided these beliefs and thus played a crucial role in determining U.S. policy.

Only by defining the negotiations with Spain in terms of an analogy to the British invasion of Florida during the War of 1812 and its lesson regarding the danger that Florida in foreign hands posed to America did Adams and Monroe come to conclude that trading Texas for Florida would best advance the international interests of the United States. Had they chosen a different analogy, such as the Louisiana Purchase, the Hartford Convention, or later the Missouri Crisis, they would have chosen a very different policy as being in their best interests. For example, had they seen the current situation in terms of the Louisiana Purchase, they would have refused to trade Texas for Florida believing that the interests of the United States would be best served by avoiding current concessions and waiting for further turmoil in Europe

and increased American penetration of the area to make Spain more amenable to a treaty with fewer U.S. concessions. Why did Adams and Monroe see the invasion of Florida analogy as most applicable? In short, the answer lies in their judgments about relative levels of international and domestic threats and their judgments regarding causal similarities. The relative weakness of America in relation to Great Britain immediately following the war of 1812, the ongoing era of good feelings and destruction of the Federalist Party, the inability of the United States to wait for a better offer with regard to Florida, and the absence of a war-time threat that would raise the domestic costs of sectionalism, all combined to convince Adams and Monroe that the invasion of Florida analogy was the soundest basis for action.

Similarly, only by defining U.S. policy towards an independent Texas in terms of the Missouri Crisis analogy were Jackson, Van Buren, and Clay convinced that their interests as national party leaders would be best served by attempting to ignore the issue by not responding to Texas's offers; and were Tyler, Calhoun and Polk convinced that as party outsiders their interests would be served by putting Texas on the political agenda. Had they seen a different analogy as relevant, they would have seen other policies as in their best interests. For example, had Jackson, Van Buren, and Clay seen the Hartford Convention analogy as relevant, they would have pushed annexation believing that advancing the international position of the country was domestically more rewarding than bowing to sectional grievances. Why was the Missouri Crisis now seen as the most relevant analogy? Again the answer is their judgments regarding international and domestic threats and causal

similarities. America's growing strength as a nation, the embedding of the lessons of the Missouri Crisis in the developing second party system, and the absence of a war time threat that would raise the domestic costs of sectionalism (which rendered the Hartford Convention inapplicable), all combined to convince these men that now the Missouri Crisis analogy was the most applicable historical parallel.

To better understand the role that analogies played in driving America's policy towards Texas in this period it is useful to consider a number of counterfactual scenarios.[132] What if, for example, the Missouri Crisis had heated up a short time earlier or the negotiations with Spain had occurred a short time later so that before the Adams-Onís treaty was signed, the administration had already witnessed the Missouri Crisis? Would this have changed America's position with regard to the treaty? Would Adams and Monroe have been less eager to add more slave territory (Florida) to the Union had the full extent of the Missouri Crisis been known to them? Most likely the answer is no. Had the Missouri Crisis preceded negotiations, it would have made little difference. The mere occurrence of the Missouri Crisis would not have been enough to make the Missouri analogy acceptable as a basis for Adams and Monroe's policy. That occurrence would have done nothing to alleviate America's international weaknesses in relation to Great Britain, nor would it have automatically transformed the dying first party system into the stronger second party system that made the slavery issue so threatening to Adams and Monroe's successors in Washington.

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[132] On the role of counterfactual reasoning in political science see James D. Fearon "Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science" *World Politics* 43,2 (January 1991): 169-195; and Philip E. Tetlock and Aaron Belkin, eds. *Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics: Logical, Methodological and Psychological Perspectives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

Only after America had strengthened itself as a nation and the second party system had developed would the Missouri Crisis come to be accepted as the relevant analogy with regard to U.S. policy towards continental expansion. Transporting the event alone, and not the conditions that later made it the relevant analogy would not have been enough to seriously change the outcome of the treaty. Even in the period immediately following the Missouri Crisis, when the Adams-Onís Treaty was presented for its second ratification (following Spain's long delayed ratification) the administration and many in the Senate continued to support the treaty.

To move to a later period, what if the Panic of 1837 had not occurred to distract and divide the Democratic Party early in the Van Buren administration? Could Van Buren have, as the Texans hoped he would, use this time to "manage his cards and consolidate his strength," and thus make him more willing to accept the immediate costs of supporting annexation when the next presidential election was still a few years off?[133] Again, I think the answer is no. Such an argument ignores the long term dangers that are the very heart of the Missouri analogy. The problem of Texas for party leaders like Van Buren was never the lack of strength necessary to push annexation through a divided Congress. It was not fear of failure or fear of short term political costs that kept Texas off the political map in the United States for so long, but fear of its long term consequences. Pushing annexation through in the early days of one's administration would not mean that the problem would go away by the next election. The gist of the Missouri analogy

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[133]William Wharton to Sam Houston, February 2, 1837, *DCRT*, vol. 1, pp. 179-80. I would like to thank Professor James E. Lewis for raising this possibility to me.

was that once introduced, the problem would not go away quickly. After you annex Texas, then what? Do you rule it as a territory? If so, does Congress have the right to legislate about slavery in the territory? Do you make it a state and thus add a slave state to the Union? Do you make it many states thus repeating the process many times over? What happens when Texas writes its state constitution and Congress has to approve of that? Regardless of short term strength or the fact that the next presidential election might be years away, party insiders continued to think it best not to start down that road at all.

Other possible counterfactual scenarios could focus on so-called accidents of history or the possibility that close calls could have fallen the other way. For example, what if President Harrison had not died, a crucial event because it put the treaty making powers of the nation in the hands of "His Accidency," President Tyler, a party outsider? What if only a simple majority had been needed to win the Democratic nomination in 1844, which would have secured the victory of Van Buren on the first vote and kept Texas out of the election? What if the deadlocked Democratic convention had not settled on the pro-annexation Polk? What if Clay had won the closely contested election? Undoubtedly, each of these events significantly influenced the timing of changes in America's policy towards Texas. However, changing any or all of them would not have altered the underlying political dynamic of the era, which flowed directly from the lessons of the Missouri Crisis.

What these counterfactuals point to is the intrinsic instability of the party leaders' favored equilibrium of keeping the second party system alive by keeping the expansion issue out of national politics.

Their ability to maintain that tenuous equilibrium was always in danger of being challenged and overthrown. As American settlers continued to march across the continent, formal expansion was always a possibility. Moreover, the growing strength of the abolitionist movement in the North increased the number of Americans who saw opposition to slavery as a moral duty, which thus greatly increased their eagerness to commence the struggle over slavery in the territories. As slavery came under increased attack from the abolitionists in the North, many in the South reacted by increasing their commitment to slavery as a moral good and their demands that the rights to hold slaves anywhere in the country be formally recognized. To make matters worse for the party leaders who benefited from the current organization of parties, the second party system also created political losers who would welcome the opportunity to use the expansion issue to overthrow the existing alignments. For all these reasons, the political dynamic based upon the lessons of the Missouri Crisis was inherently unstable, and that instability eventually overwhelmed the system.

CONCLUSION

"Men who would endanger, by a postponement, such great benefits to our country, for political objects have no patriotism or love of country, and ought to be publicly exposed . . . [and sent] to their own native dunghills to rest there forever"

       -Andrew Jackson on the annexation of Texas (1844)[134]

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[134]Andrew Jackson to William B. Lewis, April 8, 1844, Bassett, *Correspondence of AJ*, vol. 6, pp. 277-278.

In 1845, Texas was finally admitted to the Union, but why had it taken so long? Why did Tyler, Calhoun and Polk rush in where Jackson, Van Buren and Clay had feared to tread? Why did Tyler, Calhoun and Polk put so much emphasis on an area that Adams and Monroe had considered to be of secondary importance? The central argument advanced in the last three chapters is that U.S. policy towards the annexation of Texas can only be understood by focusing on the lessons of history policy makers judged as applicable and then used to figure out what particular policies would further their interests.

The acquisition of Texas undoubtedly offered "great benefits" to the United States. Incorporating this vast expanse of rich land into the Union would greatly expand the resource base of the growing republic, it would take the growing empire one step closer to the lands of the Pacific, it would preempt the possibility of an independent Texas becoming an imperial competitor, and most importantly, it would help to further limit European influence on the North American continent. However, judging the British invasion of Florida during the War of 1812 to be the soundest guide for action regarding continental expansion, Adams and Monroe decided that these benefits paled in comparison to the benefits of acquiring Florida and thus were willing to trade U.S. claims to Texas for Florida.

The Adams-Onís Treaty only temporarily foreclosed the possibility of America's acquisition of Texas. By 1836, that possibility was revived by Texas's revolution against Mexico. However, at this point, while the "great benefits" annexation would provide the United

States still existed, these international advantages were largely irrelevant to the question of whether or not America would annex Texas. From the first days of the Texan revolution, the question of its possible admission to the Union was treated as a domestic issue. Politicians did not calculate the advantages and disadvantages of annexation in terms of how it would advance the national interests of the country, but in terms of how annexation would affect domestic politics.

This is not to argue that the question of annexation did not have international ramifications, it did. What the United States decided to do about Texas affected the possibility of war with Mexico, it influenced America's relationship with Great Britain, and it helped determine the future course of the American empire. However, these possible international consequences paled in comparison to the domestic dimension of the issue at the time. How the question of annexation was handled would determine not only a leader's future political prospects, but also the stability of the two major parties of the era, and ultimately the future harmony of the Union itself. Facing an issue that could destroy one's political career, disrupt the national party system, and endanger the stability of the Union; politicians naturally kept these domestic consequences in the forefront of their calculations when formulating their policies.

In order to predict what consequences would follow from various policies towards Texas at this time, policy makers turned to the historical analogy of the Missouri Crisis. The basic lesson of that analogy was that the issue of the extension of slavery could disrupt the two dominant national political parties by splitting them into sectional

blocs. This lesson had different implications for politicians depending on the position they found themselves in relative to the national parties. For the leaders of these intersectional coalitions, the lesson of the Missouri Crisis instructed them to avoid any issue that could raise the divisive question of the extension of slavery. For party outsiders, whose path to greater political power was being blocked by the national parties, this lesson led to the exact opposite policy prescription. The Missouri Crisis analogy encouraged them to raise the slavery extension issue, which could improve their domestic prospects by disrupting the political institutions that were in their way.

As long as the government, especially the executive branch, remained safely in the hands of political leaders interested in maintaining sectional harmony within the national parties, the hopes of Texas for annexation went unfulfilled. Such was the fate of Texas under both Andrew Jackson and Martin Van Buren. As leaders of the Democratic Party, both wished to keep their intersectional political coalition intact by avoiding sectionally divisive issues. Despite the positive international benefits that annexation could reap for the country, both did their best to avoid the issue, fearing that any moves towards Texas would have unacceptable domestic costs: it would force a debate over the extension of slavery that could divide their party, and possibly the nation, on a geographical basis. In their attempts to keep the issue off the political agenda, Jackson and Van Buren were abetted by the leaders of the opposition Whig party. To protect the stability of the national Whig coalition, men like Henry Clay also had an interest in avoiding the sectionally divisive Texas issue.

Thus, Jackson's charge that certain politicians were seeking to postpone annexation to advance their domestic interests was absolutely correct. For a prominent example he needed to look no further than to his own tenure in the White House. However, Jackson's accusation is also incomplete. What the former president fails to mention is that this motivation also animated many of the proponents of annexation. The Texas issue attracted party outsiders not because of the great benefits annexation would bring to the country, but because their domestic political prospects could be advanced by using the issue to disrupt the national parties. Though such party outsiders were certainly happy to realize these international gains for their country, the crucial difference between them and the party leaders was not that the outsiders valued these international gains more than the leaders. Instead, the crucial difference between these two groups was that in place of unacceptable domestic costs, the party outsiders stood to gain domestically by the annexation of Texas.

However, while party outsiders had an interest in raising the annexation issue, under the Jackson and Van Buren administrations they simply did not have the capability to force the issue onto the resistant political parties. This state of relative powerlessness changed with the ascendancy of John Tyler to the Presidency. With his expulsion from the Whig Party, the treaty making powers of the Presidency were put into the hands of a political outsider. Tyler took advantage of these powers and attempted to improve his prospects for re-election by injecting the issue into the upcoming presidential campaign.

While party leaders had been able to brush aside disquieting resolutions on Texas when they came from disgruntled members of Congress, a treaty submitted by the President was far more difficult to ignore. However, that did not stop the party leaders from trying. By coming out against the treaty, both Clay and Van Buren hoped to elbow the issue out of the political spotlight. However, their efforts failed. Democrats hostile to Van Buren's leadership used the treaty issue to disrupt his coalition, oust him as the head of the party, and create a new Democratic coalition committed to expansion. This coalition then made annexation a key component of its platform, which forced Clay and the Whigs to face the issue. While this new expansionist coalition could not garner the necessary two-thirds majority in the Senate, it was able to squeak by in a three-way presidential contest and after a series of compromises in the Senate, modeled in part on the Missouri Compromise, was able to get a bare majority in favor of a joint resolution authorizing annexation.

Texas was now one with the United States, but could the United States remain one with Texas? In the quote from Jackson that opens up this section he singles out those who wished to postpone annexation as having "no patriotism or love of country." However, taking into account the fifteen years of sectional conflict over slavery in the territories that followed annexation, that judgment should probably be reversed. Party leaders like Van Buren and Clay had argued that the Missouri Crisis demonstrated that their national parties could not withstand the sectional strain of the slavery extension issue, and that the Union could not survive the dissolution of the national parties. Their

pessimism was vindicated by the next fifteen years. In contrast, those, like Polk, who thought they could manage the sectional conflict were proven wrong. The major events that followed upon the heels of annexation are well known. The war with Mexico, the fight over the Wilmot Proviso, the defection of both Whigs and Democrats to the Free Soil Party in 1848, the continuing struggle over how to dispose of the land won from Mexico, the bitter quarrel over the Compromise of 1850, the battle over the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, bleeding Kansas, and the failure of popular sovereignty would all help lead to the collapse of the Whig party, the sectional rupturing of the Democratic Party, the rise of the sectional Republican Party and eventually Civil War. In Polk's First Annual Message to Congress he hailed the annexation of Texas because "This accession to our territory has been a bloodless achievement."[135] Unfortunately for the United States, the Civil War that annexation helped usher in was far from bloodless.

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[135]December 2, 1845, *Messages and Papers*, vol. 5, p. 2237.

CHAPTER SIX

THE RISE AND FALL OF ANALOGIES:
THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION AND THE HOSTAGE CRISIS

"The image of U.S. weakness generated by months of humiliating setbacks and frustrations was not healthy for relations with allies or adversaries. In domestic politics, continued passivity not only condemned the president to self-immolation at the polls but it risked generating a popular backlash in favor of forces who opposed everything Vance and Carter represented."

-Gary Sick[1]

In the morning hours of November 4, 1979, a crowd of Iranian protesters gathered outside the U.S. embassy in Tehran. Protests against the U.S. presence in Iran were nothing new. Since the overthrow of the American supported regime of the Shah earlier in the year, anti-U.S. rallies had become the norm rather than the exception. With news reaching Iran that the United States had admitted the deposed Shah into America for medical treatment and that Carter's National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, had recently met in Algeria with Iranian Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan and the Foreign Minister Ibrahim Yazdi, the American diplomats in Iran were anticipating another round

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[1] Gary Sick, *All Fall Down: America's Tragic Encounter with Iran* (New York: Random House, 1985), p. 295. Sick was on Carter's National Security Council staff where he specialized in Iranian affairs.

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of protests against what was seen as America's interference in Iran's internal affairs. In fact, that very morning the U.S. chargé d'affaires, Bruce Laingen, was meeting with Iranian officials at the Foreign Ministry to discuss how security could be enhanced at the embassy compound. At the very time that Laingen and his associates were leaving the Foreign Ministry, the crowd that had been gathering outside the embassy, which now numbered close to three thousand, began to climb over the embassy wall and storm the compound. While most of the staff at the embassy were able to barricade themselves in a secure office on the upper floor of the main building on the compound, after approximately two hours they were forced to surrender themselves to the attacking mob. By the afternoon of November 4, this mob, consisting mainly of militant Iranian college students, had seized control of the embassy and taken over sixty Americans hostage.[2]

Due to the time difference between Washington and Tehran, most of the Carter administration's foreign policy team was asleep as events began to unfold in Iran. As the wake up calls spread across the capital, few of the decision makers involved had any premonition that this phone call would be the beginning of the most dramatic and frustrating foreign policy crisis of the Carter years; most of the hostages taken that morning remained in captivity for 444 days.[3] The Hostage Crisis came to

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[2] 63 Americans were taken hostage at the embassy itself and Laignen and two associates, who had returned to the Foreign Ministry to seek help once they had been alerted to the takeover were also detained. Six Americans, later to be termed "the Canadian six" who were also at the embassy at the time of the attack were able to escape the compound unnoticed and sneak out of Iran with the help of the Canadian embassy. In mid-November the students released 13 female and black hostages and in July of the following year one other hostage was released due to sickness, making the number of hostages that were held full time 52.

[3] A good place to begin studying the foreign policy of the Carter administration is numerous memoirs written by members of the administration. See in particular, Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs Of A President* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982); Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices: Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983); Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and*

dominate the administration's attention, and the continued failure of the world's foremost power to liberate its citizens from the hands of a small group of militant students would, as the above quote from Gary Sick notes, make the United States look weak internationally and Jimmy Carter look inept domestically.

Thus, from Jimmy Carter's perspective, the seizing of the hostages represented an international and domestic threat. If his administration failed to resolve the crisis in a way that avoided humiliating concessions to the hostage takers, American prestige abroad would suffer and Carter's prospects for re-election in 1980 would be dismal. Carter had to get the hostages out, without being seen as giving in to the terrorists. But how could he do this? What type of policy would get the hostages out in a way that would advance, or at least not further damage America's interest in its international reputation and Carter's domestic interest in winning re-election?

Not knowing what particular policies would further these interests, the members of Carter administration turned to historical

Principle: *Memoirs of the National Security Adviser 1977-1981* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1983); Jody Powell, *The Other Side Of The Story* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1984); and Rosalynn Carter, *First Lady From Plains* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1984). For memoirs that focus mostly on events surrounding the Hostage Crisis see Sick, *All Fall Down*; Hamilton Jordan, *Crisis: The Last Year of The Carter Presidency* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1982); and for a number of first hand accounts on various aspects of the Hostage Crisis see Warren Christopher et al, *American Hostages In Iran: The Conduct Of A Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). Interestingly, virtually all of these first hand accounts begin their discussion of the crisis with the early morning wake up call. On the memoirs of the Carter administration see Walter LaFeber, "From Confusion To Cold War: The Memoirs of the Carter Administration" *Diplomatic History* 8,1 (Winter 1984): 1-12. For an excellent secondary account of Carter's foreign policy see Gaddis Smith, *Morality, Reason, and Power: American Diplomacy in the Carter Years* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986). For overall appraisals of Carter's presidency see, Douglas Brinkley, "The Rising Stock of Jimmy Carter: The 'Hands On' Legacy of Our Thirty-Ninth President" *Diplomatic History* 20, 4 (Fall 1996): 505-529; John Dumbrell, *The Carter Presidency: A Re-evaluation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993); Erwin C. Hargrove, *Jimmy Carter as President: Leadership and The Politics of the Public Good* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988); and Burton I. Kaufman, *The Presidency of James Earl Carter, Jr.* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993).

analogies for guidance. As the rest of this chapter will demonstrate, they looked at lessons derived from previous experiences of international hostage taking and used those lessons to decide which particular polices were in the best interest of the United States and the Carter administration. As a result, the policies of they pursued towards the Hostage Crisis were heavily influenced by what they saw as the lessons of history regarding the international taking of hostages.

In addition, the Carter administration's handling of the crisis provides a particularly good illustration of the argument advanced in this work that instead of seeing policy makers as prisoners of any particular analogy, as is the case in most of the literature on analogies and foreign policy, decision makers should be seen as active selectors of analogies. They are selectors not in the cynical sense that they simply choose any analogy that will help sell a policy that they have decided to pursue for other reasons, because policy makers need analogies to tell them what particular policy will further their interests. You have to know what policy you want before you can decide how to best sell it. Instead, policy makers are active selectors of analogies in the sense that they can pick and choose among existing analogies based on their assessment of which particular analogy offers the most valid lessons for their current situation. The members of the Carter administration needed analogies to determine what particular policy would best further their interests, but they were not captive to any particular analogy. They were able to consider a number of different analogies and make a judgment concerning which particular one provided the soundest guide for action, and this judgment could and did change over time. During

the crisis, different historical analogies rose and fell in influence. An historical analogy that was seen as a valid guide for action one day, could be discarded on another, and could return to prominence later.

Moreover, the reasons behind the rise and fall of different historical analogies offers strong support for the model of analogical choice presented in the first chapter. Lessons that focused on the domestic implications of different policies were more influential when the domestic threat inherent in the crisis was high and were less influential when the domestic threat was relatively low. Conversely, lessons that focused on the international implications of the crisis were more influential when the international threat inherent in the crisis was relatively high and became less influential when the international threat was relatively low. Additional evidence for the importance of the international/domestic threat distinction offered here as a key component of the analogical selection process is that some advisers, who by bureaucratic position are more attuned to the international ramifications of foreign policy, focused on international lessons while those policy makers more attuned to the domestic implications of foreign policy turned to domestically focused lessons. In short, Carter's domestic advisers favored lessons that emphasized the domestic implications of different policies and his international advisers favored lessons that focused on the international implications of different policies.

In addition, when deciding on the validity of different international or domestic analogies, the members of the administration, as predicted in the model of analogical reasoning offered here, focused on causally relevant information when deciding what analogy offered the

soundest guide for action. They rejected analogies when they had information that led them to believe that the causal factors that produced the outcome in question were not currently present and they accepted analogies when the causal factors that had produced the historical outcome in question were present. The importance of causal relations in the analogical choice process can also be seen in the efforts of the Carter administration to create an analogy where none initially existed, between the current situation and the Israeli experience at Entebbe. During the crisis, the Carter administration actively sought to make the situation they faced in Tehran more causally similar to the Israeli raid at Entebbe, so they could use that analogy as a valid guide for action.

Thus, the policy of the Carter administration towards the Hostage Crisis not only demonstrates the importance of historical analogies in the policy making process, it also offers strong support for the particular model of analogical choice offered here. However, before turning directly to the Hostage Crisis itself, the following section will briefly examine the recent historical record regarding the taking of hostages on the international scene. These are the cases that are likely to be in the mental repertoire of the policy makers in the Carter White House, from which they are expected to draw their historical lessons.

THE HISTORICAL REPERTOIRE IN 1979

The seizure of hostages is not a new nor particularly rare occurrence on the world stage. Indeed, foreign policy makers in the United States had been forced to deal with international hostage incidents

from the earliest days of the republic. For example, the Washington administration negotiated a ransom deal, which included trading arms for hostages, to secure the release of American sailors captured by the Barbary pirates; President John Adams carried on his predecessor's policy and continued to pay protection money to the Barbary pirates to protect American sailors; President Jefferson sent a team of mercenaries to Tripoli to rescue 307 American sailors, but eventually agreed to pay a $60,000 ransom to secure their release; and President Madison used an expanded U.S. navy to put down any further threats from the Barbary pirates in 1815.[4] And more recently, as will be discussed below, the Truman, Johnson, Nixon and Ford administrations were all confronted with international hostage situations.

Thus, while many of the members of the Carter administration have argued that the situation they faced in Iran was unprecedented, this was not the case.[5] The history of the United States alone offers a number of parallel examples. Not surprisingly however, the members of the Carter administration did not reach back into the nineteenth century for historical lessons to help them formulate their policy. Instead, as predicted by the literature on historical analogies and foreign

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[4]For evidence that at least one member of the Carter administration was aware of these cases, although he did not use them as a source of historical lessons, see Stansfield Turner, *Terrorism and Democracy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991), pp. 5-9.

[5]For an account of Carter's handling of the crisis that stresses how the administration saw it as unprecedented, see David Patrick Houghton "The Role of Analogical Reasoning in Novel Foreign Policy Situations" Paper prepared for delivery at the 1994 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association. Although Houghton's account of the analogies used by the Carter administration is largely consistent with the account offered here, the focus of the two accounts are quite different. Houghton is more concerned with the question of why policy makers use analogies at all and making a point about the prevalence of analogical reasoning, whereas the account offered here is more concerned with explaining why policy makers select the particular analogies they do. Furthermore, at the end of his paper, Houghton argues that what the analogical literature needs is an account of the analogical reasoning process that takes into account the role of domestic politics, a void that this work is attempting to fill.

policy and the model of analogical choice presented here, they looked to more recent cases, cases that were emotionally involving, and cases that they had some personal experience with, as sources for historical lessons. This section has two intersecting purposes; the first is to use the ideas of recency and emotional vividness to construct a list of historical analogies that the model of analogical choice presented here predicts would be salient analogies for the members of the Carter administration when confronted with a hostage situation. The second is to determine if these analogies were in fact the salient ones, or if other unexpected analogies made it on to the historical repertoires of the decision makers charged with determining U.S. policy.

With two exceptions, evidence on the actual historical repertoires of the members of the Carter administration supports the first step in the model of analogical choice used here. As predicted, Carter's foreign policy team chose their historical analogies from a relatively small reservoir of historical events and this stockpile of historical analogies consisted of recent and emotionally involving cases. The first exception to the predictions of the model, the Angus Ward affair, involves a case that unexpectedly made it on to the Carter administration's historical repertoire; and the second exception, the Munich Olympics disaster, unexpectedly did not make it on the repertoire. Both exceptions are discussed below.

Rather than divide the analogies in the historical repertoire into domestic or international analogies, as was done in the second chapter, for presentational purposes it is easier to divide the Carter administration's repertoire between those analogies that pertain to

diplomatic solutions and those that pertain to rescue attempts. This does not mean that the international/domestic distinction central to the model of analogical choice presented here was irrelevant to the analogical choice process in this case; indeed as will be shown later in this chapter this distinction remains crucial. The literature on foreign policy decision-making often talks about historical analogies, but it is often more precise to talk about historical lessons. Any analogy (the Vietnam analogy for example) can contain any number of historical lessons. Some of those lessons may focus on the international implications of different policies, while other lessons in the same analogy may focus on the domestic implications of different policies. Thus, many analogies will not be purely international or domestic, but will contain both international and domestic lessons. Such is the case with the analogies discussed here; rather than being purely international or domestic in focus, these analogies contain both international and domestic lessons. Sometimes the domestic and international lessons contained in the same analogy support the same policy and sometimes they offer contradictory advice. The following sections discuss three analogies, the Angus Ward Affair, the *Pueblo* affair and the February assault on the U.S. embassy in Tehran, where hostages were released as a result of diplomacy; and six analogies, the Son Tay raid, the *Mayaguez* incident, the Entebbe assault, the Mogadishu raid, H. Ross Perot's successful attempt to free some of his employees being held prisoner in Iran, and the Munich Olympics disaster, where an attempt was made to rescue the hostages.

THE ANGUS WARD AFFAIR: The oldest event that made it on the Carter administration's historical repertoire occurred in 1948-49 when Chinese Communist troops overran Manchuria and took a number of Americans hostage for over a year, including Angus Ward, the American Consul General in the city of Mukden. In the midst of the defeat of the Nationalist Chinese forces by the Communists, the United States decided to keep Ward's consulate open to keep tabs on the evolving revolutionary situation. In November 1948, in a dispute over the consul's radio transmitter, Communist troops seized the consulate and took 20 people, including Ward, hostage.[6] While the event attracted little popular attention in the United States, in China it became an important event in the revolution and the Communists claimed they had discovered "a big American spy ring" engaged "in a plot against the Chinese people and against the Chinese people's revolutionary enterprise."[7] According to Ward and his vice consul, the hostages were used as tools in the revolutionary movement to promote revolutionary

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[6]On the Ward affair see Bernard Gwertzman, "The Hostage Crisis: Three Decades Ago" *New York Times Magazine*, May 4, 1980, pp. 40-44 and 101-106; Marshall Green, John H. Holdridge and William N. Stokes, *War and Peace With China: First Hand Experiences in the Foreign Service of The United States* (Maryland: DACOR Press, 1994), pp. 3-18; Chen Jian, "The Ward Case and the Emergence of Sino-American Confrontation, 1948-1950" *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 30 (July 1993): 149-170; and Thomas J. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization and Sino-American Conflict, 1947-1958* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 99-105.

[7]These quotes are from a Communist newspaper in China, quoted in Gwertzman, "The Hostage Crisis: Three Decades Ago," p. 101.

fervor and to "drive a wedge between the United States and sympathetic elements" in China.[8]

President Truman considered, but rejected the use of military force to rescue the hostages or punish the Chinese and opted to be patient and apply diplomatic pressure. Recognition of the new Communist government was made contingent, at least in part, on the release of Ward and his colleagues and the State Department tried to get the international community to express its disapproval to China regarding the holding of hostages. During his detention, Ward and his staff were tried and found guilty, not of spying but of beating up a Chinese citizen who worked at the consulate, and were sentenced to a short jail term. Rather than have them serve that sentence the Chinese authorities ordered them deported and they left China on December 12, 1949.

What the Ward analogy taught was that patient diplomacy could secure the release of hostages. After a year of diplomatic pressure and after the hostages had served their purpose in the revolutionary movement, the hostages were all safely released without the use of force. Regarding the international and domestic lessons of the Angus Ward analogy, the experience showed that a strategy of patient diplomacy could be implemented to free the hostages without doing much, if any, damage to America's international reputation or Truman's domestic standing. Because the detention of Ward and his associates never attracted any sustained attention either overseas or at home (for example the New York Times only ran one story on it[9]), Truman's decision to use diplomacy did not result in any accusations that the United States was

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[8]Gwertzman, "The Hostage Crisis: Three Decades Ago," p. 106.
[9]Gwertzman, "The Hostage Crisis: Three Decades Ago," pp. 44.

too weak to lead its allies or any recriminations against Truman for being too weak to lead the nation, or at least it did not add significantly to the chorus of recriminations against Truman for "losing" China.

The presence of the Ward affair in the Carter administration's historical memory is somewhat unexpected given the model of analogical choice offered here. That an event from the late 40's, which garnered little attention at the time, would pop up thirty years later as a source of historical lessons is surprising. The reason that the Ward case became familiar to the members of the Carter administration was that Secretary of State Cyrus Vance forced it into the repertoire. Vance was fond of speaking about what he called the "institutional memory" of the State Department, which he saw it as a valuable source of ideas for policies and a safeguard against bad policies.[10] Vance plucked the Ward analogy from the State Department's institutional memory and presented it to the rest of the administration. While the Ward affair attracted little attention throughout the rest of the nation, it was an important event from the standpoint of the State Department. After all it was its people who were being detained, threatened, and put on trial. In order to see that Carter benefited from the State Department's institutional memory in this case, Vance made sure Carter was aware of the Ward analogy by sending him copies of memos that were prepared for President Truman regarding the detention of Ward.[11] The presence of the Angus Ward analogy in the historical repertoire of the Carter administration underscores the importance of what Neustadt and May call "placing

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[10]See Kenneth W. Thompson, *The Carter Presidency: Fourteen Intimate Perspectives of Jimmy Carter* (New York: University Press of America, 1990), p. 144 and Dumbrell, *The Carter Presidency*, p. 196.
[11]Vance, *Hard Choices*, pp. 408-409 and 498-500.

organizations," when compiling any policy maker's historical repertoire. "Placing organizations" entails figuring out how members of particular organizations will have historical memories different from those outside the organization.[12] The presence of the Ward analogy in the Carter administration's historical stockpile can only be accounted for by referring to the State Department's institutional memory.

THE *PUEBLO* AFFAIR: In contrast to the Ward affair, the presence of the *Pueblo* analogy in the Carter administration's debates is not surprising. The case is relatively recent, did capture the attention of the nation, and at least one member of the Carter administration played a personal role in the crisis (Cyrus Vance was sent to South Korea as President Lyndon Johnson's personal envoy to explain America's action regarding the crisis and restrain the South Koreans from taking more militant actions).[13]

The *U.S.S. Pueblo* was a ship in the U.S. navy that was, in early 1968, engaged in gathering intelligence on North Korean and Soviet naval activity and the status of North Korea's radar systems. On January 23, 1968, while the *Pueblo* was in international waters off the coast of North Korea, the ship was assaulted, forced to surrender, and escorted to the port of Wonsan where the North Korean government took the crew of the *Pueblo* hostage. North Korea demanded that the United

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[12]Neustadt and May, *Thinking in Time*, pp. 212-231.

[13]On Vance's role in the crisis see Trevor Armbrister, *A Matter of Accountability: The True Story of The Pueblo Affair* (New York: Coward-McCann Inc., 1970), pp. 276-278; David S. McClellan, *Cyrus Vance* (New Jersey: Rowman and Allanheld Publishers, 1985), p. 16; Robert R. Simmons, *The Pueblo, EC-121, and Mayaguez Incidents: Some Continuities and Changes* (College Park: University of Maryland Contemporary Asian Studies Series, 1978) Number 8, 20, p. 18; and Gaddis Smith, *Morality, Reason and Power*, p. 40.

States admit to spying, apologize for the incident, and promise that it would not happen again. The United States refused.[14]

To attain the release of the hostages, President Johnson opted for a policy of diplomatic pressure and negotiations with the North Koreans. In addition to holding direct talks with representatives of North Korea, the United States mobilized its troops in the area, threatened to take the case to the International Court of Justice (the World Court), and appealed to the United Nations and to over one hundred different nations, including the Soviet Union, to put pressure on North Korea to release the crew of the *Pueblo*.[15]

A breakthrough in the bilateral negotiations occurred when both sides accepted, as a basis for a settlement, a solution that was successful in resolving an earlier hostage incident involving two downed U.S. helicopter pilots. Using that case as a precedent, the United States and North Korea were able to defuse the crisis by developing a formula both sides found acceptable.[16] To satisfy North Korea, the United States signed a document admitting that the *Pueblo* was engaged in illegal espionage activity in North Korean waters. However, immediately before signing the document the U.S. representative made a statement that the United States considered everything in the document he was

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[14]The crew of the *Pueblo* numbered 83, one of whom was killed in the initial assault on the ship and the remaining 82 where held hostage for the duration of the crisis. For the most complete account of the *Pueblo* affair see Armbrister, *A Matter of Accountability*. See also Simmons, *The Pueblo, EC-121, and Mayaguez Incidents*, and Clark Clifford with Richard Holbrooke, *Counsel To The President: A Memoir* (New York Random House, 1991), pp. 465-467.

[15]Armbrister, *A Matter of Accountability*, pp. 247-248, 266, and 284-285; and Simmons, *The Pueblo, EC-121, and Mayaguez Incidents*, pp. 8-18.

[16]On the precedent see Armbrister, *A Matter of Accountability*, pp. 273-274 and 299; and Simmons, *The Pueblo, EC-121, and Mayaguez Incidents*, pp. 15-16 and 18-19.

about to sign to be false.[17] As a result of this bizarre diplomatic ceremony, the crew of the *Pueblo* was released on December 23, 1968, after 341 days of captivity.

Similar to the Ward affair, the *Pueblo* analogy also offered evidence that patient negotiations, combined with diplomatic pressure, could secure the release of hostages. While some international and domestic actors did accuse the Johnson administration of weakness for signing a humiliating confession, there is little evidence that the *Pueblo* affair had much of a negative effect on the international credibility of the United States or the domestic standing of the president. However, the reason for this relatively benign outcome had less to do with the actual substance of the *Pueblo* incident and more to do with the fact that throughout the crisis, the *Pueblo* affair was overshadowed by America's and the President's continued troubles in Vietnam, including most prominently the Tet offensive, and Johnson's decision not to seek re-election. Without the "benefit" of a war to distract attention away from the hostage situation, could America's international standing or a President seeking re-election so easily survive a prolonged hostage crisis that resulted in possibly humiliating negotiations and concessions?

THE FEBRUARY ASSAULT: November 4, was not the first time that the U.S. embassy in Tehran had been overrun and its occupants taken hostage. Earlier that year, on February 14, 1979, an armed mob of Iranians had stormed the embassy and taken its staff hostage. However, this incident had little time to develop into a full fledged

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[17]For the text of the contradictory statement and document see Armbrister, *A Matter of Accountability*, pp. 339-340.

hostage crisis because soon after the embassy was taken, government troops under the lead of the Ayatollah Khomeini's newly appointed foreign minister, Ibrahim Yazdi, forcefully expelled the captors and restored the embassy to U.S. control.[18]

This case is placed under the heading of a diplomatic solution, even though force was used to free the hostages, because from the U.S. viewpoint it was a diplomatic solution. The United States did not need to use force, it only had to remind the Iranian government of its obligation to protect the embassy and wait for the Iranian government to resolve the situation. The lesson of the February assault was straightforward, even if the embassy's staff were taken hostage again, there need be no crisis for the United States or threat to it or President Carter's interests. The proper course of action was to alert the Iranian government to the problem and wait for it to fulfill its international obligations by restoring the embassy to U.S. control.

RESCUE ATTEMPTS

SON TAY: In the decade before the Hostage Crisis the United States had also made two dramatic attempts to secure the release of American hostages by launching rescue attempts. The first of these occurred in 1970 when the U.S. military launched a raid into North Vietnam to rescue 70 American POW's being held at Son Tay. The camp at Son Tay was picked for the assault because of its relatively

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[18]On the February assault see Vance, *Hard Choices*, pp. 342-343; Gaddis Smith, *Morality, Reason and Power*, p. 194; and "Armed Iranians Rush U.S. Embassy: Khomeini's Forces Free Staff of 100" *New York Times*, February 15, 1979, pp. A1 and A16.

isolated location. While most American POW's were being held in Hanoi itself, Son Tay was located 23 miles west of Hanoi and it was believed that its location would allow the U.S. assault force to take the camp by surprise, rescue the hostages, and escape before North Vietnamese reinforcements could be sent to the scene.

The military considered the raid itself, which was launched on the night of November 20, 1970, to have been well executed. U.S. forces took the North Vietnamese by surprise and were able to secure the camp and then evacuate without the loss of a single American life and only one man wounded. The only problem was that the camp was empty. The POW's that had been held at the camp had been moved close to four and a half months before the assault, so the raid failed to rescue a single American.[19] While Son Tay demonstrated that under the right circumstances a well-executed rescue attempt could be successful, it also highlighted the need to have accurate intelligence on the precise whereabouts of the hostages.[20]

THE *MAYAGUEZ*: The second attempt made by the United States to resolve a hostage incident with a rescue attempt in the decade prior to the Hostage Crisis occurred in 1975, when President Gerald Ford employed the U.S. military to secure the release of the 39 man crew of the *S.S. Mayaguez*, which had been captured by Cambodian authorities. The *Mayaguez* was a U.S. merchant ship that was seized on May 12, 1975, while in transit from Hong Kong to Thailand. The next

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[19]On Son Tay see Benjamin F. Schemmer, *The Raid* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1976) and Richard A. Gabriel, *Military Incompetence: Why The American Military Doesn't Work* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1985), pp. 35-60.
[20]See Turner, *Terrorism and Democracy*, p. 71.

day the ship and crew were moved to Tang Island and on the following day the crew was taken to the Cambodian mainland.[21]

Unwilling to see a replay of the protracted negotiations involved in the *Pueblo* affair, Ford decided to act quickly to insure that the crew was not moved to the mainland where a rescue attempt would be close to impossible.[22] Ford ordered warplanes in the area to prevent the transfer of the crew to the mainland and the implementation a rescue operation as quickly as possible. On the night of May 14, an assault force of approximately 200 Marines launched an attack on Tang Island to retrieve the crew and ship. In addition to the assault on the island, the United States also conducted bombing runs on the Cambodian mainland to prevent any reinforcements from reaching Tang Island, to punish Cambodia, and perhaps most importantly to demonstrate that America was not afraid to use military force when threatened. The actual assault on Tang Island proved costly in terms of American lives lost and ultimately unnecessary in freeing the hostages. Almost immediately before the assault was launched, the entire crew of the *Mayaguez*, which despite the administration's interdiction efforts had been moved to the Cambodian mainland, had been released by the Cambodian authorities. While the threat to use force and the limited use of force the administration did employ in its attempt to prevent the transfer of the crew to the mainland may certainly have persuaded the Cambodians to

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[21]On the *Mayaguez* incident see Christopher Jon Lamb, *Belief Systems and Decision Making in the Mayaguez Crisis* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1989); Simmons, *The Pueblo, EC-121 and Mayaguez Incidents*, pp. 33-46; Turner, *Terrorism and Democracy*, pp. 15-18; and Robert T. Hartmann, *Palace Politics: An Inside Account of The Ford Years* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1980), pp. 324-328.
[22]On the influence of the *Pueblo* analogy see Lamb, *Belief Systems and Decision Making*, pp. 1, 83-4, 98-99, 122, 147-148, 159, 176-177, 179-180, 183-184, 194-196, 198-203, and 245-246; Simmons, *The Pueblo, EC-121, and Mayaguez Incidents*, pp. 43 and 47; Neustadt and May, *Thinking In Time*, pp. 58-66; and Hartman, *Palace Politics*, pp. 324-328.

release the hostages, the actual assault/rescue attempt, which cost the lives of 18 servicemen, rescued no one.[23]

The effects of the *Mayaguez* incident on the international credibility of the United States were slightly positive. Though some allies may have been a bit disturbed by what they saw as a precipitate and somewhat reckless use of force; following, as the assault did, the twin blows of the fall of South Vietnam and Cambodia to communist forces, it did help signal to the rest of the world that the United States was not afraid to use force to protect its interests. Indeed, the restoration of American credibility following its defeat in Vietnam was arguably the administration's primary motive in the crisis.[24] Domestically, the crisis was a huge success for Ford. Approximately eight out of every nine phone calls received by the White House approved of the assault and the President's approval rating made a dramatic jump of 11 points.[25] Thus domestically, the lessons of the *Mayaguez* were clear; a bold attempt to rescue the hostages, even if it was costly and had mixed results would be enormously popular. To a lesser degree, internationally the lesson was much the same, American credibility could be protected and perhaps even slightly enhanced by a dramatic use of force.

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[23]In addition to the 18 lives lost in the assault, an additional 23 lives were lost in a helicopter crash during the planning stages of the operation, which has given rise to the criticism that more lives were lost in the rescue attempt than could have been saved. On the rescue attempt see Gabriel, *Military Incompetence*, pp. 61-83.

[24]This argument is well sustained by Lamb, in *Belief Systems and Decision Making*. Lamb (pp. 149, 174 and 260) argues that the assault was successful in the sense that it did substantially increase the U.S.'s international credibility, especially by deterring North Korea from taking any precipitate action against South Korea. For a more mixed account of the effects of the crisis on the U.S.'s international standing see Simmons, *The Pueblo, EC-121 and Mayaguez Incidents*, pp. 45-46.

[25]Neustadt and May, *Thinking In Time*, pp. 61-65; Lamb, *Belief Systems and Decision Making*, pp. 30 and 157-166; Simmons, *The Pueblo, EC-121, and Mayaguez Incidents*, pp. 44-46; and Turner, *Terrorism and Democracy*, pp. 17-18.

ENTEBBE AND MOGADISHU: While the vast majority of hostage rescue attempts result in failure[26] and while the two recent attempts by the United States to rescue their hostages had mixed results at best, the historical record does offer some evidence that rescue attempts can succeed. In fact, the years immediately preceding the Hostage Crisis witnessed two remarkably successful rescue attempts: one by the Israelis at Entebbe airport and one by the Germans at the Mogadishu airport. Not surprisingly, given the recency of these stunningly successful raids, both Entebbe and Mogadishu were in the historical repertoire of the Carter administration.

On June 27, 1976, Air France's flight 139 from Tel Aviv to Paris was hijacked shortly after a stopover in Athens. The hijacked plane then landed in Libya to refuel before traveling to Entebbe where the hostage takers where afforded the protection of the Ugandan government under Idi Amin. The hijackers eventually released all the non-Israeli passengers and detained the remaining hostages in an old terminal building at Entebbe airport. A few minutes after midnight on July 4, 1976, an Israeli assault force landed at Entebbe airport and stormed the old terminal building in an attempt to rescue the hostages. The attempt was a dramatic success, the Israeli assault force quickly eliminated all the captors and a number of Ugandan troops protecting the old terminal building and rescued over 100 hostages. Three hostages and one member of the assault team were killed in the raid.[27]

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[26]See Paul B. Ryan, *The Iranian Rescue Mission: Why it Failed* (Annapolis, Naval Institute Press, 1985), pp. 97 and Schemmer, *The Raid*, pp. 237-238.

[27]On the Entebbe raid see William Stevenson, *90 Minutes At Entebbe*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1976) and Max Hastings, *Yoni: Hero of Entebbe* (New York: The Dial Press, 1979). A fourth

In the following year, the Germans had a similar success at Mogadishu. On October 13, 1977, a Lufthansa plane was hijacked on its way to Frankfurt from Spain and 86 people were taken hostage. The hijacked aircraft then made brief stops in Italy, Cyprus, Bahrain, Dubai and Aden before finally arriving at Mogadishu in Somalia. At Mogadishu, with the help of Somailian military forces, 29 members of a German anti-terrorist force (GSG-9) stormed the hijacked plane and succeeded in rescuing all the hostages. Three of the captors were killed in the raid and the fourth was wounded, only one hostage was wounded.[28]

What both the Entebbe and Mogadishu raids had demonstrated was that under the right circumstances a military rescue attempt could result in dramatic success. In both of these cases a crisis was resolved and the hostages saved as a result of military action, which boosted the international prestige of the forces who undertook the missions and the domestic stock of the leaders who ordered the raids. Crucial to the success of both of these rescue missions was the isolation of the two targets, which allowed the raids to be launched with secrecy and allowed the assault forces a relatively quick and easy way in and out. In the case of Entebbe, the hostages were held at a terminal building right next to a functioning airstrip. This airstrip allowed the Israeli airborne assault force a path of entry that gave very little warning to the hostage takers. Moreover, the functioning airfield also gave the Israelis a quick way out of Entebbe after the operation. Also, the relatively isolated nature of the

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hostage who was not in the terminal building at the time of the rescue died at a Ugandan Hospital shortly after the raid. Yoni Netanyahu, the only member of the assault team killed in the raid, was the brother of Benjamin Netanyahu, who would later become Prime Minister of Israel.
[28]On the Mogadishu raid, see Turner, *Terrorism and Democracy*, pp. 3 and 43-47.

airport itself meant that the strike force could be in and out before there was a chance for reinforcements to be sent in. What was crucial about the location of the Lufthansa aircraft at Mogadishu was that the Somalian government was willing to give its permission and assistance to the German raid. In fact, the German assault force had been following the plane around during its various stops waiting for one of the host governments to grant them permission to act. The assistance of the host government meant that the Germans could get to the doorstep of the plane without alerting the terrorists and that they did not have to worry about making a quick exit or the danger of the terrorists being reinforced. Mogadishu and Entebbe showed that if it was possible to take the captors by surprise, prevent them from being reinforced and make a quick exit, a rescue attempt was a viable possibility.

THE PEROT PLAN: In the midst of the Iranian revolution, two American employees of the Texas businessman H. Ross Perot were arrested and jailed on questionable grounds in Iran. To secure the release of his employees Perot bankrolled a rescue attempt that was successfully implemented in February 1979. A small rescue team, posing as businessmen, was inserted into Iran, where they paid demonstrators to foment a riot at the prison where Perot's employees were being held. During the confusion at the prison, the rescue team then liberated the two Americans. Once free of the prison the two hostages and the five-man rescue team traveled overland to Turkey where they left Iran by bribing the border guards. News of Perot's success in securing the release of the hostages reached the administration

through newspaper reports and Perot and his rescue team were eager to offer the administration their advice during the Hostage Crisis.[29]

THE MUNICH OLYMPICS: Before turning to the Hostage Crisis itself, there is one other case of a prominent rescue attempt that surprisingly did not seem to have made it into the Carter administration's historical repertoire, the disaster at the Munich Olympics in 1972. In September of 1972, a small group of Palestinian terrorists took nine Israeli athletes hostage during the Munich Olympics. A rescue attempt by the West German police failed and resulted in the deaths of all the hostages. As a recent and dramatic attempt to secure the release of hostages on the international stage, by the predictions offered in the first step in the model of analogical choice offered here, this is one case that should have been in the administration's repertoire. However, there is little if any evidence that the members of the Carter administration ever considered this case as a candidate analogy to derive lessons from concerning what to do or what not to do during the Hostage Crisis.

While necessarily speculative, the most likely explanation for the absence of this analogy in the Carter administration's debates is that the Munich assault had been conducted by German police forces, not a specialized professional, anti-terrorist military unit. Thus, the colossal failure at Munich could easily be mentally classified as a domestic police action, not an international hostage rescue mission. During the Hostage Crisis, there was never any question that, if a military rescue attempt

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[29]Turner, *Terrorism and Democracy*, pp. 23 and 39-41.

was launched, it would be conducted by a specialized anti-terrorist military unit. Therefore, international rescue attempts by professional military forces, like Son Tay, *Mayaguez*, Entebbe and Mogadishu were possible parallels, and actions towards hostage situations conducted by local police forces were not.[30]

The rest of this chapter is an attempt to test the remaining steps of the model of analogical choice offered here. When confronted with the Hostage Crisis, did U.S. policy makers use the lessons in their historical repertoire as a basis for their policies? Were the internationally focused lessons more influential when the international stakes were relatively high? Conversely did the domestically focused lessons become more influential as the domestic threat inherent in the crisis became more pronounced? Did policy makers primarily concerned with the international ramifications of the crisis turn to different lessons than those concerned primarily with the domestic ramifications? And finally, did the policy makers judge the relevance of the candidate lessons in terms of what is known about the current situation and the factors that were seen as causally important in driving the outcomes of the analogies in question.

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[30] It should be noted that the failure of the German police to adequately handle the taking of the Israeli athletes spurred the German government to create the specialized anti-terrorist unit that successfully pulled off the Mogadishu raid. Similarly, the success of the Germans at Mogadishu provided an impetus for the creation of a similar anti-terrorist force in the United States, called Delta Force.

444 DAYS AND 4 ATTEMPTS TO FREE THE HOSTAGES

"I have studied all the previous occurrences in my lifetime where American hostages have been taken--in Mongolia [*sic*] when President Truman was in office, and the *Mayaguez* incident under President Ford, and the *Pueblo* incident under President Johnson--to learn how they reacted and what the degree of success was"

-Jimmy Carter[31]

The Hostage Crisis was a direct result of the revolution in Iran. The militants who took the hostages and those who supported the seizure saw it as a way to strike back at America, which, by its steadfast support for Shah Muhammad Reza Pahlavi, had made itself an enemy of the revolution. Iran's size, which makes it a contender for hegemony in the Middle East; its strategic location, sharing borders with both the Persian Gulf and the Soviet Union; its vast oil reserves; and its willingness to sell some of that oil to Israel all combined to make Iran a valuable ally for the United States in the post-World War II period. As the Shah was willing to pursue a foreign policy largely consistent with U.S. goals, it became the policy of the United States to help the Shah retain power in Iran. Following a 1953 coup, which had some CIA support and which helped the Shah return to power in Iran, the United States replaced Great Britain as the most influential foreign power in Iran. Each succeeding administration considered it in the best interests of the United

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[31]*Public Papers of The Presidents of The United States: Jimmy Carter 1980-81* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980), April 19, 1980, Vol. 1, p. 744.

States to support the Shah; a policy that was greatly accelerated during the preceding Nixon/Ford years with the implementation of the Nixon doctrine, which tabbed Iran to be one of America's regional surrogates.[32] Between 1953 and 1972 the Shah had bought close to $1.2 billion worth of U.S. weapons and in the seven years in which the Nixon doctrine was implemented, the Shah's purchases skyrocketed to close to $19.5 billion worth of U.S. arms.[33]

Despite the incoming Carter administration's emphasis on promoting human rights and curbing arms sales, like all previous administrations it too accepted the importance of Iran as an ally and decided it had no choice but to continue the U.S. policy of strong support for the Shah; a policy that put it on the losing side of a revolution.[34] Although there were clearly differences within the administration regarding how to respond to the revolution, the one constant of U.S. policy up to the time that the Shah was forced to flee Iran was to support whatever moves the Shah thought necessary to keep himself in power.[35] The administration's surprise at the revolution, intra-administration disputes regarding the proper U.S. response, and the fact that as Gary Sick argues, the United States had no relevant

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[32]For U.S. policy towards Iran in the post-war period see Mark J. Gasiorowski, *U.S. Foreign Policy And The Shah: Building a Client State in Iran* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991) and James A. Bill, *The Eagle and The Lion: The Tragedy of American Iranian Relations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

[33]George W. Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1982), pp. 454-455.

[34]On the Carter administration's decision to continue the U.S. policy of support for the Shah see, Carter, *Keeping Faith*, pp. 435-436, 439-440, and 443-445; Vance, *Hard Choices*, pp. 316 and 326; Sick, *All Fall Down*, pp. 19-23 and 41-42; Bill, *The Eagle and The Lion*; pp. 226-234; Dumbrell, *The Carter Presidency*, pp. 161-162; and Kaufman, *The Presidency of James Earl Carter*, pp. 124-125.

[35]On U.S. policy towards the revolution and the Shah see, Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, pp. 354-398; Sick, *All Fall Down*, pp. 43-174; Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion*, pp. 236-257; Mclellan, *Cyrus Vance*, pp. 126-133; Hargrove, *Jimmy Carter as President*, pp. 137-140 and Dumbrell, *The Carter Presidency*, pp. 161-167.

analogy by which to judge a religious based revolution,[36] all made U.S. policy towards the revolution less than ideal. However, while some of the administration's opponents, such as Henry Kissinger, were quick to blame Carter for "losing Iran,"[37] there was little the United States could have done to influence the revolution. Perhaps the most accurate characterization of the administration's handling of the revolution in Iran was offered by historian Gaddis Smith who argues that "Carter inherited an impossible situation and made the worst of it."[38]

While American support for the Shah's regime was the long term cause of the seizure of the hostages, two more recent events provided the immediate sparks. The first was Carter's decision to admit the Shah into the United States for medical treatment. Hesitant to have the United States turn its back on a dying man who had long been a trusted friend and ally, and under pressure from prominent American friends of the Shah, such as Henry Kissinger and David Rockefeller, to allow the Shah to come to America, the administration, after initially trying to discourage the Shah from coming to the United States, eventually decided to permit the Shah to come to New York for medical treatment in late October 1979.[39] The Carter administration made this decision despite its belief that the admission of the Shah would complicate its

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[36]Sick, *All Fall Down*, pp. 165-168.

[37]Sick, *All Fall Down*, pp. 153 and 179-180.

[38]Gaddis Smith, *Morality, Reason, and Power*, p. 188.

[39]On Carter's decision to admit the Shah see Carter, *Keeping Faith*, pp. 425-427; Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, pp. 471-475; Sick, *All Fall Down*, pp. 176-186; Rosalynn Carter, *First Lady From Plains*, p. 308; Rose McDermott, *Risk Taking In International Politics: Prospect Theory in American Foreign Policy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, forthcoming), Chapter 4; and McClellan, *Cyrus Vance*, pp. 149-151. For an account that stresses the role of the pressure from Kissinger and Rockefeller see Terence Smith, "Why Carter Admitted The Shah" *New York Times Magazine* May 17, 1981: 36-46; and for a discussion of the Shah's health situation see Lawrence K. Altman, "The Shah's Health: A Political Gamble" *New York Times Magazine* May 17, 1981: 48-52.

relationship with the new revolutionary government of Iran under the Ayatollah Khomeini and could present a risk to the Americans still in Iran.[40] The second event that helped provide an immediate impetus for the embassy's seizure was a meeting in Algiers on November 1, between the President's National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, the Iranian Prime Minister, Mehdi Bazargan, and the Iranian Foreign Minister, Ibrahim Yazdi; a meeting that quickly made headlines in Iran.[41]

The reason these events were taken with such seriousness in Iran was that the history of U.S. support for the Shah had convinced the Iranians that America was hostile to the revolution and many feared that these two events were part of a U.S. plan to restore its influence in Iran and possibly stage a repeat of the 1953 coup and return the Shah to power.[42] These fears were not pure fantasies, as Brzezinski, who was convinced that the historical record demonstrated that revolutionary movements could be defeated as long as the established powers remained steadfast, did explore the possibility that the United States could repeat the success of the 1953 coup. However, CIA Director Stansfield Turner convinced him that the degree of support Khomeini possessed in

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[40]See Cyrus Vance's response to a question on admitting the Shah on September 27, 1979 in *American Foreign Policy: Basic Documents, 1977-1980* (Washington: Department of State, 1983), pp. 736; and Harold Saunders Testimony in *Iran's Seizure of The United States Embassy: Hearings Before The Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 97th Congress, First Session* February 17, 19, 25 and March 11, 1981 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1981), p. 5; Sick, *All Fall Down*, pp. 176-186; Pierre Salinger, *America Held Hostage: The Secret Negotiations* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1981), pp. 24-25; and Kaufman, *The Presidency of James Earl Carter*, p. 159.
[41]On this meeting see Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, pp. 475-476; Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion*, pp. 294-295; Russell Leigh Moses, *Freeing the Hostages: Reexamining U.S.-Iranian Negotiations and Soviet Policy, 1979-1981* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996). pp. 1-4 and 9; Gaddis Smith, *Morality Reason and Power*, p. 197; and John Kifner, "How A Sit-in Turned Into A Siege" *New York Times Magazine*, May 17, 1981, p. 60.
[42]See Bill, *The Eagle and The Lion*, p. 267; Sick; *All Fall Down*, p. 7; and Moses, *Freeing The Hostages*, pp. 9.

comparison to the relatively meager influence the CIA possessed made a repeat of the 1953 coup impossible.[43]

While the United States eventually gave its grudging recognition to the revolution, it hoped that moderate factions within the revolution would prevail over the more radical religious factions. In effect, the United States transferred its support from the Shah to the moderate western-oriented politicians in the revolution, men like Bazargan and Yazdi. Given the degree to which the United States was an object of mistrust in Iran, rather than help the moderates, U.S. support undermined them. In the image offered by James Bill, America suffocated the moderates by embracing them.[44] The seizure of the embassy on November 4, should be seen in this context. It was part of the ongoing revolutionary struggle in Iran that could be used by the more radical anti-U.S. elements in the revolution to defeat the more moderate and western oriented politicians.

U.S. policy towards the seizure of the Embassy can be usefully divided into four stages corresponding to four attempts by the Carter administration to secure the freedom of the hostages. Consistent with the model of analogical choice offered here, the administration's policies changed as the historical lessons they based their policy on changed, and the historical lessons they based their policies on changed as the relative level of international or domestic threats related to the crisis varied and

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[43]Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p. 355; Turner, *Terrorism and Democracy*, pp. 76-77; Bill, *The Eagle and The Lion*, p. 253; Gaddis Smith, *Morality Reason and Power*, p. 189; and Moses, *Freeing The Hostages*, p. 95. For an argument that the influence of the CIA in the 53' coup was greatly exaggerated both in Iran and the United States see Amir Taheri, *Nest of Spies: America's Journey To Disaster in Iran* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), pp. 35-47.

[44]Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion*, pp. 263-304; see also Sick, *All Fall Down*, pp. 188-190.

as the administration gained more information about the cause and effect relationships present in the crisis.

ATTEMPT NUMBER ONE: THE OPENING HOURS OF THE CRISIS

When the initial news reached Washington that the embassy in Tehran had been overrun by an Iranian mob and most of the staff taken hostage, the members of Carter's foreign policy team were concerned but not alarmed. As discussed above, a similar takeover had occurred earlier in the year and was quickly resolved by the intervention of Iranian government forces. The experience and lessons learned as a result of that February attack on the embassy and the resolution of that crisis through the intervention of the Iranian authorities dominated the thinking of the Carter administration during the first hours of the crisis. The administration expected this takeover to end quickly and in the same manner as the February assault had. In their first attempt to secure the release of the hostages, the administration decided to repeat the policy that had worked in February: to remind the Iranian government of its obligations and wait for them to quickly restore the embassy.

The power of the February analogy on the thinking of the administration in the early stages of the crisis meant that the administration was confident that the current takeover could be weathered more easily than the February one, because now they had the experience of the earlier assault to guide them. Following the assault on the embassy in February, security at the embassy was reviewed and steps taken to insure that the embassy could survive a repeat performance.

The security measures added to the embassy were premised on the fact that any future attacks would closely resemble the February experience as they were all designed to allow the embassy to protect itself until the Iranian authorities arrived.

> Our thinking on protection took off from the fact that, during the February 14 takeover, the Foreign Minister himself came to the Embassy compound to take charge of American personnel and to clear the compound. . . . On the security side, we proceeded on the basis of the following strategy: Since our protection ultimately depends on the willingness of the host government to provide protection we would harden the Embassy to enable our people to take refuge safely for a period of time until help could come.[45]
>
> You will recall that in the takeover of the Embassy on February 14 almost immediately our people fell into the hands of the attacking mob. The objective of the hardening of the Embassy was to prevent that from happening and to keep people out of the hands of the mob until the Government could bring help.[46]

To a man, the members of Carter's foreign policy team were confident that what they were witnessing during the early morning hours of November 4, was a repeat of the February assault. The President was

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[45] Memo from Gary Sick to Jerry Schecter, "American Hostages in Iran, 11/7/79-11/30/79" quoted in McDermott, *Risk Taking in International Politics*, p. 94. See also Sick, *All Fall Down*, p. 186.
[46]Testimony of Harold Saunders, in *Iran's Seizure of The United States Embassy*, p. 4.

"deeply disturbed, but reasonably confident that the Iranians would soon remove the attackers."[47] Secretary of State Vance believed "that their release would be obtained within a few hours once the Iranian authorities intervened as they had done on February 14."[48] National Security Adviser Brzezinski remembered that "on February 14 the Iranian government had acted properly" and that now the United States should simply "demand that the Iranian government take appropriate action."[49] Director of the CIA Stansfield Turner noted that when he was informed of the takeover he "wasn't sure whether I was awake or dreaming, because the CIA duty officer's report was so close to a repeat of the previous Valentine's Day."[50] Chief of Staff Hamilton Jordan reminded his senior staff that "this same thing happened last February" and that the current crisis "would end the same way."[51]

Unfortunately for the Carter administration, events quickly demonstrated that the current crisis was not going to be a repeat of the February assault. In the days that followed the takeover, Ahmed Khomeini, the Ayatollah's son, arrived at the Embassy to endorse the seizure, the Ayatollah himself announced his support for the takeover, and the Government of Prime Minister Bazargan and Foreign Minister Yazdi, the two men the United States were counting on to direct the

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[47]Carter, *Keeping Faith*, p. 457.

[48]Vance, *Hard Choices*, p. 375.

[49]Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p. 477; see also p. 470.

[50]Turner, *Terrorism and Democracy*, p. 26; see also pp. 26-27 and 29.

[51]Jordan, *Crisis*, pp. 19 and 22. For other examples see the remarks by Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher in Christopher et al., *American Hostages in Iran*, pp. 2-3; Assistant Secretary of State Harold Saunders in the same volume, p. 41; National Security Council Staff member for Iran Gary Sick in his *All Fall Down*, pp. 175-176; and First Lady Rosalyn Carter in her *First Lady From Plains*, p. 310. On the influence of the February analogy see also Gaddis Smith, *Morality, Reason, and Power*, pp. 194; Houghton, "The Role of Analogical Reasoning in Novel Foreign Policy Situations," pp. 7-8 and 197-8; and Moses, *Freeing The Hostages*, p. 10.

liberation of the Embassy, resigned over their inability to end the takeover. The massive outpouring of public support for the seizure of the Embassy, the extent of which surprised even those who planned and lead the assault, radically altered the situation for the Iranians. The thousands of Iranians who flocked to the Embassy and voiced their support of the seizure made the takeover a focal point in the revolutionary struggle, which meant that in the context of Iranian domestic politics, one could not afford to appear to be "soft on the hostages." This meant that the situation was not the same as it was in February. The authorities in Iran were now unable or unwilling to restore the Embassy.[52]

The Carter administration did not fail to grasp the implications of Khomeini's support for the hostage takers and the resignation of the moderate Bazargan government. Once these ominous bits of news reached them, they correctly concluded that the hostages had become enmeshed in the domestic revolutionary struggle in Iran. The moderate, pro-western faction of the revolution was powerless to work against a measure that clearly had the mass support of the Iranian people, and the more extreme factions of the revolution had no incentive to resolve a crisis that was working in their favor domestically by discrediting any pro-western rivals. As expected by the model of analogical choice offered here, this new information on the cause and effect relationships operating in Iran led the members of the administration to reassess the applicability of the February analogy and ultimately reject it. Crucial to

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[52]On the domestic situation within Iran regarding the hostages see Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion*, pp. 295-296; Taheri, *Nest of Spies*, pp. 123-4; Moses, *Freeing the Hostages*, p. 264; and Kifner, "How A Sit-In Turned Into A Siege," pp. 54-73.

the outcome of the February crisis had been the fact that the governmental authorities in Iran had the ability and the desire to end the crisis by restoring the embassy. Now that that crucial causal factor was missing, the February analogy was no longer a valid guide to action. The members of Carter's foreign policy team did not remain prisoner to the misleading analogy. Once they received information that the current causal relationships differed in an important way from the causal relationships that had produced the desired outcome in February, they concluded that their first attempt to free the hostages based on the February analogy would not work and that they had to look for a more appropriate analogy to determine what policy would best protect their interests.[53]

ATTEMPT NUMBER TWO: THE NEGOTIATING PATH

Once the administration concluded that simply waiting for the Iranian authorities to fulfill their international obligations was not going to free the hostages, they began the search for a new policy. Of the military and diplomatic options at their disposal, what type of policy would resolve the crisis in a way that would advance, or at least not further damage America's national interest in maintaining its international reputation and Carter's domestic interest in winning re-election? Broadly speaking, the administration considered three

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[53]See Jimmy Carter's comments in an interview on *Meet The Press* on January 20, 1980 in the *Department of State Bulletin*, 80, 2036 (March 1980), p. 31; Saunders's testimony in *Iran's Seizure of The United States Embassy*, pp. 5 and 36; Vance, *Hard Choices*, p. 377; Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p. 471 and 479; Sick, *All Fall Down*, pp. 196-198 and 204-209; and Moses, *Freeing The Hostages*, pp. 10-14.

different types of policies: 1) negotiations with the Iranian authorities combined with some degree of diplomatic pressure, 2) a rescue attempt, or 3) a punitive military strike.[54]

At this point in the crisis, the administration faced a relatively benign domestic situation and an increasingly ominous international one, which, as predicted in the model offered here, led Carter's foreign policy making team to focus on the international lessons available in its historical repertoire. In addition, the administration had also gathered information on the current crisis that allowed it to determine which of the candidate analogies was most similar to the current crisis in terms of the causal factors in operation. These factors combined to convince the Carter administration that the Angus Ward and *Pueblo* analogies provided the soundest guides for action. These analogies, suggesting as they do that patient negotiations and diplomatic pressure could secure the release of the hostages, led the Carter administration to implement the first policy option listed above. Negotiations with the Iranians combined with diplomatic pressure on Iran constituted Carter's second attempt to free the hostages.

One option that the Carter administration passed on at this time was a rescue attempt. Given what was known about the current situation in Tehran, the administration concluded that the United States could not implement a Son Tay, Entebbe or Mogadishu style raid and that the less militaristic rescue plan that had worked for Ross Perot would also not work under current conditions. Causal factors that were crucial in

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[54]See Turner, *Terrorism and Democracy*, p. 18; and Rose McDermott, "Prospect Theory in International Relations: The Iranian Hostage Rescue Mission" *Political Psychology* 13,2 (June 1992), pp. 242-243; which discusses 5 options which I have condensed to three.

making those rescue attempts possible simply did not exist in the crisis at hand. Therefore, the administration rejected the applicability of these analogies and discarded, for the present, the possibility of freeing the hostages in a rescue attempt.

From the first moments of the crisis, members of the administration, the military, and the press all considered the possibility that Carter could resolve the crisis by launching an Entebbe-style raid. Within the administration, National Security Adviser Brzezinski, who had been in Israel meeting with the Defense Minister Shimon Peres the night before the Entebbe raid,[55] was perhaps the analogy's strongest advocate.[56] However, the possibility that the United States, at this time, could repeat Israel's success at Entebbe was rejected almost as soon as it was seriously considered. The basic problem was the location of the hostages. Instead of being at an isolated airfield or a remote prison camp, they were being held deep inside a hostile country in the center of a major city. Moreover, at this point in the crisis, the embassy compound was regularly surrounded by thousands of demonstrators. Given this, there was little chance that a rescue team could get to the walls of the embassy undetected and get the hostages out of the area before being engulfed by an angry mob or other forms of Iranian reinforcements.

In 1970, Son Tay had been specifically selected as the site for a rescue attempt because its remote location allowed the rescue team to get in secretly and out quickly.[57] At Mogadishu, this was possible because

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[55]Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p. 84; and Stevenson, *90 Minutes at Entebbe*, p. 56-57.

[56]Turner, *Terrorism and Democracy*, p. 31.

[57]Schemmer, *The Raid*, pp. 24, 36, 39 and 53.

the Somalian government cooperated with the German assault force, allowing it to get right up to the hijacked plane without raising any alarms and eliminating the possibility that the captors would receive reinforcements. At Entebbe, the holding of the hostages at an isolated, but functioning airfield allowed the Israelis to get in and out secretly and quickly, even though the Ugandan government supported the hostage takers. In the absence of the causal factors that in these three cases had allowed the assault teams to get to the site secretly enough to surprise the captors and out quickly enough to escape any reprisals, a rescue attempt was unlikely to work.

President Carter and his advisers saw the actual assault on the embassy and seizure of the hostages as the easiest part of any proposed rescue operation. The problem, which the administration saw as insurmountable in the opening weeks of the crisis, was getting the commando team in secretly and getting them out quickly.[58] The military was perhaps the most pessimistic group within the administration concerning the possibility of a rescue attempt. James Kyle, an Air Force Colonel whose task it was to figure out a way to get the U.S. assault team in and out of Tehran, maintained that any rescue attempt, "couldn't be compared to Entebbe or Mogadishu, both of which had been raids on remote airports. Our people were being held in a bastion at the center of a major city, thousands of miles away and surrounded by their captors and hordes of screaming mobs that were armed to the teeth."[59]

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[58]Carter, *Keeping Faith*, pp. 459-460 and 509; Carter's briefing for Members of Congress, January 8, 1980 in *Department of State Bulletin*, 80, 2036 (March 1980), p. 33; Turner, *Terrorism and Democracy*, pp. 32-34; and Sick, *All Fall Down*, p. 509.

[59]Colonel James H. Kyle, USAF (Ret.) with John Robert Eidson, *The Guts To Try* (New York: Orion Books, 1990), p. 42.

If a rescue mission was ordered, the task of storming the embassy and freeing the hostages would fall on a Special Forces unit named Delta Force that had been organized and trained to deal with hostage situations. However, that training did not prepare them well for the current situation because in all their training exercises they had assumed that when operating overseas they would, like the Germans at Mogadishu, have the support or at least the acquiescence of the host government. Given the location of the embassy and the difficulty of reaching it quietly and exiting quickly, Colonel Charlie Beckwith, the commander of Delta Force was pessimistic about the prospects for a rescue attempt. "There were the vast distances, nearly 1,000 miles, of Iranian wasteland that had to be crossed, then the assault itself, against a heavily guarded building complex stuck in the middle of a city of 4,000,000 hostile folks. This was not going to be any Entebbe or Mogadishu."[60]

General David Jones, the Chairman of The Joint Chiefs of Staff, met with his Israeli counterpart to confer about the possibility of a rescue attempt, but the Israeli General, "after reviewing the location of the embassy in an urban environment far from an airport, had concluded that such a mission would be much more difficult than the Entebbe raid."[61] A discouraging assessment that General Jones passed on to the administration by reminding them that, "downtown Tehran was not the same thing as Entebbe airport."[62] Secretary of Defense Harold Brown

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[60]Colonel Charlie A. Beckwith, USA (Ret.) and Donald Knox, *Delta Force* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), pp. 200 and 188.

[61]Sick, *All Fall Down*, pp. 353 and 214. See also Sick "Military Options and Constraints" in Christopher et al., *American Hostages in Iran*, p. 145

[62]This is Cyrus Vance's quote on General Jones's recommendation, see Terence Smith, "Putting the Hostages Lives First" *New York Times Magazine* May 17, 1981, p. 78.

presented the military's pessimistic conclusions to the President and his foreign policy team by cautioning that, "Tehran wasn't Entebbe, where the Israelis had been able to fly in and snatch up their citizens from an airfield where they were being held. Our hostages, he explained, were locked up in a compound in the middle of a city of more than four million people, with the nearest airport nine miles away."[63]

The opinion of Jimmy Carter's civilian adviser mirrored that of the military. The absence of certain causal factors that had made the raids at Son Tay, Entebbe and Mogadishu possible made those analogies poor guides for the current situation. According to Harold Saunders, a rescue mission was ruled out as a possible option because, "It was recognized quickly that this situation was quite different from that at Entebbe airport where the Israelis had mounted their spectacular rescue attempt. An isolated airport lounge was far different from a building surrounded by raging mobs in the center of a city of several million people."[64] Jody Powell, the President's Press Secretary, quickly passed the word on to the media that a rescue attempt was not currently under consideration. "You don't have to be a military expert to realize that there is no way for the United States to pull an Entebbe. The hostages there were at an airfield that was poorly defended. This time there are thousands of Iranian students surrounding the embassy which is far from any airstrip."[65]

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[63]In Jordan, *Crisis*, p. 52. On the military's estimate that Tehran was not like the isolated locations hit in the Entebbe, Mogadishu and Son Tay raids see also U.S. Department of Defense, Special Operations Review Group of The Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral James Holloway, "Rescue Mission Report" (August 1980)(hereafter, "The Holloway Report"), pp. iv, 13, 17, and 27; Kyle, *The Guts To Try*, pp. 31-32, 70-71 and 74; Salinger, *America Held Hostage*, p. 50; and Ryan, *The Iranian Rescue Mission*, pp. 25-26 and 40.

[64]See his testimony in, *Iran's Seizure of The United States Embassy*, pp. 13-14 and 89.

[65]*New York Times*, November 7, 1979, p. A14.

The initial consideration, but ultimate rejection of the Entebbe analogy was not limited to the administration. *Time* magazine reported that many were asking, "Why can't the U.S. . . . act as boldly as did Israel in July 1976?" However, after discussing the current crisis with over two dozen military experts, *Time* concluded that the absence of certain crucial factors that had allowed the Entebbe raid to be pulled off with speed and surprise made a rescue attempt impossible under current conditions. "In contrast to the Entebbe situation, where the Israelis were being held at a relatively lightly guarded airport . . . the American hostages were in downtown Tehran. To get to the embassy, U.S. forces would have to fight their way through streets probably deliberately clogged by huge crowds . . . . By the time the rescuers reached the embassy, there would be scant hope of finding any hostages alive."[66] Similarly, *The New York Times* also cautioned that, "Iran is not Entebbe airport."[67]

Thus, rather than be ensnared by an attractive but misleading analogy, the administration concluded that because of crucial differences between previous successful rescues and the current situation, the rescue option was not an attractive one at this time. With a rescue mission, as Colonel Beckwith succinctly put it, "the probability of success is zero and the risks are high."[68] Unless the military could figure out some way to get a rescue team in and out secretly and quickly, the United States would not get a chance to pull an Entebbe.

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[66]*Time*, November 19, 1979, p. 18.
[67]Editorial on November 9, 1979, p. A34.
[68]Jordan, *Crisis*, p. 258.

At the same time that an Entebbe style raid was rejected, the administration also rejected the possibility of launching a rescue attempt along the lines of the one that had successfully freed two of Ross Perot's employees from an Iranian jail earlier in the year. Perot and the men he had hired to pull off the rescue contacted the administration and offered to provide information and advice. They met with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Stansfield Turner, and other members of the CIA to discuss the possibility of having a rescue team secretly infiltrate Iran posing as American businessmen and then hit the embassy before moving the hostages out overland, as had worked for Perot's team in February. However, the administration concluded that given the differences in size between the two operations, a repeat of the Perot plan was not feasible. While it may have been possible to insert a small team and transport two hostages secretly overland, how could over fifty U.S. soldiers pass through customs, hide out in Tehran and then transport over 50 hostages across miles of Iranian territory without raising alarms? Given these crucial causal differences, the Perot plan was also rejected as an analogical guide.[69]

At this stage in the crisis, the administration also rejected the option of hitting Iran with a punitive military strike. The administration considered a number of possible ways to use the military forces of the United States to inflict pain upon Iran in response to the seizure of the Embassy. The administration considered mining Iran's principal harbors, bombing some of their airfields, destroying Iran's main oil refinery at Abadan, and capturing Kharg Island, which was a major

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[69]See Turner, *Terrorism and Democracy*, pp. 23, 39-42 and 68; Kyle, *The Guts To Try*, p. 36 and Terence Smith, "Putting The Hostages Lives First," p. 78

terminal from which most of Iran's oil was shipped.[70] The problem with each of these punitive military options was that the administration did not think any of them had much of a chance of persuading the Iranians to release the hostages. There was no historical analogy available to them that showed that such punitive measures could secure the release of the hostages. While theoretically one could imagine that the costs of these strikes could lead the Iranian authorities to conclude that the price of holding the hostages was too high, in the absence of any concrete historical example where such an approach had worked, this was not seen as a workable solution. As Jody Powell put it, "If we seize Kharg Island, then what? We have Kharg Island and they have the hostages."[71]

Analogies are useful to policy makers because they provide information on the likely results of different policy options. In the case of punitive military strikes, there was no analogy telling the administration that such strikes could make the release of the hostages more likely. The American experience in Vietnam also weighed against this option because that experience alerted U.S. policy makers to the danger of getting slowly sucked into a constantly escalating military confrontation. With the possibility that the punitive strikes would not persuade the Iranians to release the hostages and the Vietnam experience in mind, CIA Director Turner wondered, "What would happen if he [President Carter] tried mining harbors, bombing Abadan, or both, and the Iranians still hung on to the hostages?" In answer to his own

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[70]Turner, *Terrorism and Democracy*, pp. 32-34.
[71]Quoted in Terence Smith, "Putting The Hostages Lives First," p. 83. See also Sick, "Military Options and Constraints," p. 145.

question he maintained that Carter, "would then have to choose between widening the operation and retreating. I was concerned that Jimmy Carter might be dragged slowly and almost involuntarily, into an increasing use of force, as we had in Vietnam."[72]

At this stage in the crisis, it was only the Angus Ward and *Pueblo* affairs that the administration accepted as a basis for current policy. In its second attempt to free the hostages the Carter administration implemented the policy suggested by these analogies; negotiations combined with diplomatic pressure. Unlike the February or the Entebbe analogy, whose lessons relied on causal factors absent in the current situation, the cause and effect relations that were seen as operating in the Ward and *Pueblo* cases were seen as similar to those operating in the present crisis. In each of those cases a revolutionary regime had seized a number of Americans, claimed they had uncovered a "nest of spies" plotting the overthrow of the revolution, and held the hostages until they had outlived their usefulness in the revolutionary struggle. Since this was the administration's interpretation of the present crisis, that the hostages had become pawns in the domestic struggle for power in Iran, these experiences were seen as valid guides for action.

On the basis of these two experiences Secretary of State Vance recommended that the United States apply diplomatic pressure to Iran until the Ayatollah concluded that, "the revolution had accomplished its purpose, and that the hostages were of no further value."

> I . . . believed strongly that the hostages would be released
> safely once they had served their political purpose in Iran.

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[72]Turner, *Terrorism and Democracy*, p. 72. See also Sick, *All Fall Down*, p. 237.

I found support for this conclusion in what had happened in two similar cases where Americans were held hostage. These were the Angus Ward incident, involving the seizure of our consular staff at Mukden at the end of World War II, and the case of the USS *Pueblo*.

To familiarize the administration with the history of the Ward affair, Vance sent the President a copy of a memo prepared for President Truman in 1949 recommending against the use of force to free Ward and his colleagues.[73] As a result of Vance's efforts, this relatively obscure incident became a part of President Carter's historical repertoire. At a White House press briefing on the crisis, the President cited, in support of his administration's policy of negotiations over the use of force, the case of "one of our Ambassadors who was captured in Manchuria," who had, "stayed imprisoned for more than a year."

There President Truman--I've reread the history on it and even the private memorandum that were exchanged within the White House--and President Truman did ask the Joint Chiefs and others to analyze how he might, through physical action if necessary, cause the release of our Ambassador and his staff. It was not done and eventually the Ambassador was released.[74]

The *Pueblo* analogy worked alongside the Ward analogy to support the option of negotiation and diplomatic pressure. At a November 9, 1979, meeting of Carter and his advisers, Vance argued that "negotiation is the only way to free" the hostages and he "harked

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[73]Vance, *Hard Choices*, p. 408. See also pp. 498-500.
[74]*Public Papers of The Presidents, 1979*, December 13, 1979, Vol. 2, p. 2242.

back to the Pueblo incident, which had plagued the Johnson
Administration but which had finally been resolved honorably without
the loss of life."[75] Carter later maintained that during this stage of the
crisis he saw himself as having "followed the Johnson example of being
restrained and trying through peaceful means to gain the release of the
Americans."[76]

However, even at this stage of the crisis, when the lessons of the
Ward and *Pueblo* experiences helped to determine the Carter
administration's policy, these analogies did not go unquestioned.
Criticism of the negotiation option these analogies recommended focused
primarily on the dubious domestic consequences of such a policy.
Although Truman and Johnson had not been seriously damaged
domestically by being forced to wait close to a year for their respective
hostages to be released, in each case there were a number of special
circumstances. The Ward affair occurred immediately after Truman
had upset Thomas Dewey in the Presidential election of 1948 and during
the period of Ward's continued captivity, the issue received little public
attention and was overshadowed by attacks on the administration for
"losing" China. Similarly, in 1968, the *Pueblo* affair was overshadowed
by the war in Vietnam and President Johnson's decision not to seek
another term. Regarding Carter's domestic interests, the question raised
by the policy of negotiation, diplomatic pressure and waiting for the
domestic situation in Iran to work itself out, was could the Carter

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[75]Jordan, *Crisis*, p. 45. See also, Ryan, *The Iranian Rescue Mission*, p. 11.

[76]January 1984 interview with Reginald Ross Smith in his unpublished 1984 M.A. Dissertation at
Emory University, "A Comparative Case Analysis of Presidential Decision Making: The Pueblo, The
Mayaguez and The Iranian Hostage Crisis", p. 144. Quoted in Houghton, "The Role of Analogical
Reasoning in Novel Foreign Policy Situations," p. 19.

Presidency survive a well-publicized and protracted stalemate during an election year?

Hamilton Jordan, the President's former and future campaign manager and now his Chief of Staff, was the first to raise such questions. As the President's chief political adviser, from the start of the crisis Jordan thought about the hostage issue in terms of its domestic political consequences. When he was first told about the seizure of the embassy, one of his first thoughts was, "what would it do to the campaign?"[77] As predicted by the model of analogical choice offered here, Jordan's primary emphasis on the domestic consequences of different policies led him to focus on domestic lessons. Contrasting President Ford's jump in popularity after his attempt to rescue the sailors held by Cambodia in 1975 and the domestic beating the Johnson administration took as a result of the Vietnam War, the question for the administration, as Jordan phrased it, was whether the Hostage Crisis would "be Carter's Mayaguez or Vietnam?"[78]

Given his focus on Carter's domestic interests, Jordan found the negotiation option troubling. At the above mentioned meeting on November 9, where Vance raised the *Pueblo* analogy to argue that negotiation could result in the release of the hostages and the protection of America's national honor, Jordan reminded everyone in attendance of the possible domestic consequences of the negotiation option by adding that during the year long *Pueblo* negotiations, "Johnson wasn't in the middle of a re-election campaign."[79] Following this meeting Vance

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[77]Jordan, *Crisis*, p. 19. See also pp. 36-37, 60, and 80.
[78]Jordan, *Crisis*, p. 25.
[79]Jordan, *Crisis*, p. 45.

asked to talk privately to Jordan and to Jody Powell, who like Jordan was a close political adviser of the President, because he feared that their emphasis on the domestic implications of the crisis would lead them to push Carter towards a military response to satisfy any domestic political pressure on the President.[80]

However, during these first few months, Jordan and Powell's emphasis on the possible domestic dangers suggested by the *Pueblo* and Ward analogies had little, if any, impact on the administration's policy, because at this time, the crisis was not seen as an immediate threat to the President's domestic interests. The election was still a year away and all the early indications were that Carter's handling of the crisis was helping him politically. Benefiting from the tendency of the electorate to support the President in a time of crisis, Carter's popularity was skyrocketing. In a *Time* magazine poll taken before the seizure of the embassy Carter had trailed Senator Edward Kennedy, his challenger for the Democratic Party's nomination by ten percentage points. However, by December, Carter had surged ahead to lead Kennedy by twenty points. Similarly, in a poll against likely Republican Presidential nominee Ronald Reagan, Carter had gone from four points behind to fourteen points ahead.[81] The same trend was shown in a Gallup poll taken in early December that indicated that 75% of the American people approved of the way the President was handling the crisis.[82] Though temporary, this "rally round the flag" effect did give the administration

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[80]Jordan, *Crisis*, p. 53.

[81]*Time*, December 31, 1979, pp. 12-13.

[82]George H. Gallup, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1979* (Wilmington, Scholarly Resources Inc., 1980). p. 287. See also, Karen J. Callaghan and Simo Virtanen, "Revised Models of the 'Rally Phenomena': The Case of The Carter Presidency" *Journal Of Politics* 55,3 (August 1993): 756-764.

some breathing space domestically, which allowed it time to negotiate.

Consistent with the lessons of the Ward and *Pueblo* analogies, the administration implemented a two-track strategy of negotiation and diplomatic pressure. "On one track would be all those efforts designed to maximize communication with Iran about conditions and arrangements for the release of hostages . . . On the other track would be efforts to increase the costs to Iran of holding the hostages."[83]

On the negotiation front, Carter sent former Attorney General Ramsey Clark and former foreign service officer, William Miller on a mission to Iran to meet with the Ayatollah. However, Khomeini's refusal to meet and his orders that no one else in the Iranian government meet with the U.S. envoys caused the Clark-Miller mission to collapse without having reached Iran.[84] The United States did succeed in making indirect contact with Khomeini through the Pope and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The PLO channel did play a role in securing the release of thirteen women and black hostages who the Iranian authorities did not consider to be spies. This channel remained partly open for over two months, but resulted in no further breakthroughs and eventually was discontinued when the PLO decided that they would not make any further progress until the domestic

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[83]Harold Saunders, "Diplomacy and Pressure Nov. 1979-May 1980" in Christopher et al., *American Hostages In Iran*, p. 73. For an overview of U.S. policy during this stage of the crisis see pp. 72-102; Saunders's testimony in, *Iran's Seizure of the United States Embassy*, pp. 14 and 39-54; Carter, *Keeping Faith*, pp. 459-470; Vance, *Hard Choices*, pp. 377-383; Sick, *All Fall Down*, pp. 213-246; and Moses, *Freeing The Hostages*, pp. 43-59.

[84]On the Clark and Miller mission see Saunders, "Diplomacy and Pressure," pp. 74-77 and Moses, *Freeing The Hostages*, pp. 43-45. One foul-up with the Clark and Miller mission involved the size of the plane the U.S. envoys were planning to take to Iran, which led the Iranians to fear that it could be used to launch an "Entebbe-style operation." See Moses, p. 45.

situation in Iran had become more settled.[85] In addition to attempts to make contact with Khomeini, the United States also endeavored to open channels to other members of the revolutionary government in Iran. State Department officials held secret talks with Iran's Foreign Minister Bani-Sadr through the UN, and following Bani-Sadr's replacement by Sadegh Ghotbzadeh, the new Foreign Minister continued to exchange messages with the United States through a number of intermediaries.[86]

On the second track, the United States implemented a series of non-military measures designed to make a continuation of the crisis costly to Iran. The administration encouraged foreign governments to voice their disapproval of the embassy seizure, introduced measures to the UN Security Council condemning Iran, brought a case against Iran to the International Court of Justice, suspended purchases of oil from Iran, froze all Iranian assets in U.S. banks (including foreign branches and subsidiaries), halted most trade with Iran (including, most importantly, already purchased military equipment), threatened further economic sanctions, and ordered that the number of Iranian governmental personnel in America be drastically reduced.[87]

However, as November and December dragged on and the two-track strategy failed to produce any significant breakthroughs, the Carter administration began to feel pressure to take more drastic measures. They knew public support for the diplomatic approach would

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[85]On the role of the PLO see Saunders, "Diplomacy and Pressure," pp. 78-79 and Moses, *Freeing The Hostages*, pp. 45-47.

[86]On these contacts see Saunders, "Diplomacy and Pressure," pp. 80-93 and Moses, *Freeing The Hostages*, pp. 47-59.

[87]Saunders, "Diplomacy and Pressure," pp. 93-102 and Moses, *Freeing The Hostages*, pp. 33-38. On these measures see also *American Foreign Policy: Basic Documents 1977-1980*, pp. 738-739, 743-748, 751-752, 754-763 and 768-772; and *Department of State Bulletin* 79, 2033 (December 1979), p. 50; 80, 2034 (January 1980), pp. 37-41; and 80, 2035 (February 1980), pp. 41-54.

dwindle if the crisis became a protracted one and feared that the electorate's patience was running out. If the domestic pressure became severe enough, it could lead Carter to abandon the diplomatic strategy to protect his domestic interests by ordering a military strike as President Ford had done to his domestic benefit in the *Mayaguez* episode.

> I have a very real political awareness that at least on a transient basis, the more drastic action taken by the President, the more popular it is. When President Ford expended 40 American lives on the Mayaguez to save that many people who had already been released, it was looked upon as a heroic action, and his status as a bold and wise leader rose greatly. That is always a temptation.[88]

At a meeting on the crisis held on November 28, Hamilton Jordan "was surprised that the situation had not already turned sour, and he did not see how the country could go on for two or three months this way."[89] On December 1, Secretary of Defense Brown argued that:

> My own judgment is that we can go for a period of 10-15 days along the diplomatic route if it appears to be moving in a promising way. . . . 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.[90]

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[88]March 1980 interview with Jimmy Carter in the *Washington Post*, March 29, 1980, p. A13.
[89]Sick, *All Fall Down*, p. 236.
[90]Quoted in Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p. 484.

However, the two-track diplomatic strategy modeled on the actions taken by the United States during the Ward and *Pueblo* affairs continued to be implemented well after these perceived deadlines as a result of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in late December 1979. The Soviet invasion has often been seen as a key factor in pushing the Carter administration towards a more militaristic and confrontational foreign policy. While this may be true with regard to U.S. policy towards the Soviet Union, the exact opposite occurred with regard to U.S. policy towards Iran. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan helped turn the administration away from military and confrontational solutions to the Hostage Crisis and persuaded the administration to continue with a diplomatic approach.

The Soviet invasion gave new life to the Ward and *Pueblo* based two-track diplomatic strategy and helped the Carter administration avoid the temptation of implementing a *Mayaguez* inspired military strike to boost the President's domestic popularity by simultaneously increasing the international threat inherent in the crisis and decreasing the domestic threat inherent in the crisis. On the international side of the equation, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan dramatically raised the stakes. The increased Soviet threat to the entire Persian Gulf region signaled by the invasion meant that it was now more important than ever to avoid any actions that would push Iran towards the Soviets or further de-stabilize the region by encouraging the collapse of the Iranian government. According to Brzezinski, "the strategic context changed dramatically" as a result of the invasion. Now U.S. policy towards the Hostage Crisis "had to be guided, to a much larger extent than heretofore, by its likely

consequences for the regional containment of Soviet ambitions." Before the invasion, Brzezinski explains, "the trend was toward more and more serious consideration of military action." However, "the Soviet aggression against Afghanistan arrested this trend" and persuaded the administration to continue its two-track strategy of diplomatic pressure and negotiations.[91]

The invasion of Afghanistan also made the continuation of the Hostage Crisis less of a threat to Jimmy Carter's domestic interests, at least in the short term. The Soviet moves against Afghanistan drew attention away from the stalemate over the hostages and this new crisis induced another "rally round the flag effect," which further boosted Carter's popularity. As a result of the invasion of Afghanistan and the resulting harder-line policy towards the Soviet Union adopted by the President, he moved from twenty points ahead of Kennedy in a *Time* magazine poll before the invasion to thirty-four points ahead of his Democratic challenger after the invasion. Against likely Republican nominee Ronald Reagan, his lead increased from fourteen to thirty-two points over the same time period.[92] Before the Hostage Crisis and the Soviet invasion, the President's approval rating was languishing in the low thirties, but by January and February it had shot up to the mid-fifties.[93] In addition, Carter's resurgent popularity translated into a string of early primary victories between January and mid-March.[94]

[91]Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p. 485. See also, Vance, *Hard Choices*, p. 398; Sick, *All Fall Down*, p. 247-249 and 282; Warren Christopher "Introduction" and Gary Sick "Military Options and Constraints" in Christopher et al., *American Hostages in Iran*, pp. 4 and 151; Moses, *Freeing the Hostages*, pp. 85-88; and Salinger, *America Held Hostage*, p. 106.
[92]*Time*, February 11, 1980, pp. 22-23.
[93]*The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1979*, pp. 256 and 279 and *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1980*, pp. 3 and 50.
[94]Carter, *Keeping Faith*, pp. 482 and 489; and Jordan, *Crisis*, pp. 120-121, 183, and 199.

Thus, as 1980 began Carter's chances for re-election were not being threatened by the Hostage Crisis and therefore the temptation to "pull a Mayaguez" was correspondingly low. The administration continued to negotiate and use diplomatic pressure.[95]

The administration also believed that now that the Soviet invasion had dramatically demonstrated that America and Iran shared a common interest in containing the Soviets in the region, Iran might be more willing to negotiate. The administration hoped that Iran would be eager to put the crisis behind them and restore normal trade relations with the United States, including arms shipments, so they could concentrate on the Soviet threat.[96]

From mid-January to early April, while the administration continued to implement the sanctions it had already imposed and threatened further sanctions, the focus of the administration with regard to the hostages centered on the diplomatic efforts of Carter's Chief of Staff Hamilton Jordan. On January 11, 1980, Jordan was contacted by members of Panama's government, whom he had dealt with during the Panama Canal Treaty negotiations and through his efforts to secure a place of refuge for the deposed Shah, who offered to put him in touch with two men who could negotiate on the behalf of the Iranian government. These two men, Christian Bourget, a French lawyer, and Hector Villalon, an Argentinean businessman who lived in Paris, had close ties to the governing Revolutionary Council in Iran, especially with

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[95]Moses, *Freeing The Hostages*, pp. 110-113.
[96]See the statements by President Carter and Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher in the *Department of State Bulletin* 80, 2035 (February 1980), pp. 8 and A; and 80, 2036 (March 1980), p. 31. See also Vance, *Hard Choices*, pp. 400-401; Saunders, "Diplomacy and Pressure", pp. 113-114; Moses, *Freeing The Hostages*, pp. 102, 110 and 120-122; and Salinger, *America Held Hostage*, pp. 140-141.

newly elected President Bani-Sadr and Foreign Minister Ghotbzadeh, and were willing to serve as intermediaries between Iran and the United States. Jordan, who had little experience in foreign affairs, was thrust into the position of being the administration's chief negotiator because the Iranians and their intermediaries wanted to deal with someone who was close to the President but was not tainted in Iranian eyes by associations with the State Department, an organization that they saw as dominated by those hostile to the revolution.

In a series of meetings with the two intermediaries, Jordan, with the assistance of Assistant Secretary of State For Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, Harold Saunders, put together what they called a scenario for the release of the hostages. The scenario was basically a schedule for a sequence of step by step maneuvers by Iran and the United States that would end in the release of the hostages. The crux of the scenario was a formation of a UN commission to investigate the grievances Iran had against the Shah and the United States, which would pave the way for Iran to pardon and release the hostages. It was hoped that the formation of a UN commission of inquiry would allow the supporters of the scenario in the Revolutionary Council to claim that the hostages had served their purpose, as America had been suitably chastised, while providing minimal political embarrassment to the United States and the Carter administration. Ultimately, Ghotbzadeh and Bani-Sadr were unable to secure support for the scenario from Khomeini or from those holding the hostages. As a result, two attempts to implemen the scenario

quickly collapsed. By April 3, it was clear that Jordan's diplomatic efforts had failed.[97]

While negotiating the scenario, Jordan feared that any concessions made by the United States would be exploited by Carter's political opponents. However, he consoled himself with the thought that negotiations remained the best chance for securing the release of the hostages and that "ultimately we would be judged by whether or not we got the hostages out safely and without compromising our nation's honor." Nevertheless, if the crisis dragged on, Jordan worried that Carter "would have very little political flexibility if Kennedy didn't drop out. *Damn Ted Kennedy*, I thought. *Damn, damn, damn Ted Kennedy!* (emphasis in original)"[98] Unfortunately for Jordan and his boss, by early April, the scenario had collpsed, the hostages were still in Tehran and Kennedy was still in the race.

ATTEMPT NUMBER THREE: THE RESCUE MISSION

Following the failure of Jordan's scenarios to achieve the release of the hostages, the administration still faced the same set of options it had since the start of the crisis. It could: 1) continue to negotiate and maintain or increase the level of diplomatic pressure, 2) attempt a rescue mission, or 3) launch a punitive military strike.[99] However, in contrast

[97]For the most complete account of the scenario negotiations and their collapse see Jordan, *Crisis* and Salinger, *America Held Hostage*. See also Saunders, "Diplomacy and Pressure," pp. 114-136; Saunders's testimony in *Iran's Seizure Of The United States Embassy*, pp. 54-58; Carter, *Keeping Faith*, pp. 484-488 and 497-499; Vance, *Hard Choices*, pp. 402-403 and 405-406; Sick, *All Fall Down*, pp. 252-259 and 263-269; Moses, *Freeing The Hostages*, pp. 124-162 and 169-182.
[98]Jordan, *Crisis*, p. 139.
[99]Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p. 490; Sick, *All Fall Down*, p. 288.

to the relatively benign situation the administration faced on the domestic front during the first months of the crisis, by the end of March and the start of April, the continuation of the Hostage Crisis had become a serious threat to Jimmy Carter's chances for re-election. As a result of this increasing domestic threat, Carter abandoned the negotiation strategy suggested by the Ward and *Pueblo* analogies because of the dubious domestic consequences associated with those policies and ordered a rescue attempt, which the historical record suggested would protect his domestic interests by boosting his popularity.

In explaining why the administration abandoned its efforts to find a negotiated solution to the crisis, most of the members of Carter's foreign policy team argue that there were no negotiation options left. President Carter argued that the scenarios were "our last chance" and that after its collapse "we could no longer depend on diplomacy," so if the hostages were "to come out at all, we are going to have to go in and get them."[100] Hamilton Jordan saw the scenarios as the "final attempt to peacefully resolve the crisis" and with its failure, Gary Sick argues that "all hope of a negotiated release had vanished."[101] Secretary of Defense Brown agreed with Press Secretary Jody Powell's conclusion that the administration had to order a rescue attempt, because "we really don't have much choice."[102]

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[100]Carter, *Keeping Faith*, pp. 489 and 505-506; and Rosalynn Carter, *First Lady From Plains*, p. 324. See also his statements in the *Department of State Bulletin* 80, 2038 (May 1980), p. 2 and 80, 2039 (June 1980), p. 9 and 38; *American Foreign Policy: Basic Documents, 1977-1980*, pp. 765-766; and Beckwith, *Delta Force*, p. 6.

[101]In Carter, *Keeping Faith*, p. 512 and Sick, *All Fall Down*, p. 287.

[102]Powell, *The Other Side Of The Story*, p. 288. On Secretary Brown, see also *Department of State Bulletin* 80, 2039 (June 1980), p. 40. For a similar estimation by Stansfield Turner, see *Terrorism and Democracy*, pp. 102 and 107; and for Brzezinski see, *Power and Principle*, p. 492. See also Salinger, *America Held Hostage*, pp. 234-235; Kaufman, *The Presidency of James Earl Carter*, p. 173; and Moses, *Freeing The Hostages*, pp. 185-186.

However, to argue that by early April there were no negotiation options available is not true. Indeed, in the three key foreign policy meetings where the decision was made to abandon negotiation and implement a rescue mission (March 22, April 11, and April 15), either Secretary of State Vance or his Deputy Warren Christopher outlined a number of diplomatic avenues that were still open and even pointed to indications that the prospects on the negotiation front were slowly improving.[103] It was undoubtedly true that the most recent attempt at negotiation had failed, but all the negotiation attempts made thus far had failed. Why not try to open a new channel as the administration had done each time one of the earlier attempts failed? What made this the "last chance" for a negotiated settlement?

When the members of the administration argued that the Jordan negotiated scenarios were the last chance to get the hostages out through a negotiated settlement they did not mean it literally. Instead, what they meant was that the scenarios were the last chance to get the hostages out soon. They recognized that they could continue to negotiate and wait for the domestic situation in Iran to sort itself out (the policy recommended by the Ward and *Pueblo* analogies), but they believed such a policy would take too long to work. When Hamilton Jordan argued that the failed scenarios were the "final attempt" to find a diplomatic solution to the crisis he meant that if the United States continued to pursue a negotiated settlement, "there is absolutely no chance the hostages will be released for two and a half to three months, and even a greater chance that it will drag on five or six months."[104] The emphasis on getting the

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[103]Vance, *Hard Choices*, pp. 408-410; Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p. 492-494.
[104]Carter, *Keeping Faith*, p. 512.

hostages out soon can also be seen in Carter's rejection of Vance's suggestions for further diplomatic measures by asking whether these suggestions meant that Vance "was willing to wait until the end of the year while the hostages continued to be imprisoned."[105]

The administration had already waited close to five months, why not wait longer? Indeed, looking at the results of the Ward and *Pueblo* cases suggested that a policy of patient negotiation was likely to take close to a year to work. As two men who were involved in the Ward affair put it, "looking at the Iranian case from the perspective of the Mukden affair, I would personally opt for the continuation of the Carter administration's policy of dealing with the matter through patience and quiet diplomacy--with an emphasis on quiet." "The militants of Iran want nothing better than to provoke conflict [to produce] an atmosphere in which to seize power. . . . International pressure secured our release after twelve months and this should be given a comparable chance in Iran."[106] The reason the administration was unwilling to wait for the negotiation strategy to bear fruit was that unlike the Ward and *Pueblo* cases where the prolonged detention of American citizens was overshadowed by other events and did little damage to the President's domestic standing, the Hostage Crisis continued to be the top news story in the country and by March and April, Carter's failure to end it had begun to seriously injure his domestic prospects.[107] While the negotiate

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[105]Zbigniew Brzezinski, "The Failed Mission: The Inside Account of the Attempts to Free The Hostages in Iran" *New York Times Magazine* April 18, 1982, p. 30. See also, Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, pp. 487 and 489 and Sick, "Military Options and Constraints," p. 153.

[106]The first quote is from Mr. Chubb, who was the Consul General in Peiping at the time of the affair and the second is from William Stokes, who was Ward's vice-consul and fellow hostage. Quoted in Gwertzman, "The Hostage Crisis: Three Decades Ago," p. 106.

[107]See Turner, *Terrorism and Democracy*, p. 37; Christopher, "Introduction," pp. 26 and 31; Sick, *All Fall Down*, pp. 221-223; and Dumbrell, *The Carter Presidency*, pp. 169-171.

and wait strategy may have secured the release of the hostages by the end of the year, by that time it would be too late to salvage Carter's chances for re-election. That is why the administration felt "it could no longer depend on diplomacy," diplomacy would not protect the administration's domestic interests.[108]

While Carter's standing domestically had been improving during the first few months of the crisis, by March, things had begun to turn sour on the domestic front. The President's approval rating, which according to the Gallup polls had been in the low to mid-fifties throughout January and February plummeted to 39% by the middle of April.[109] In a *Time* magazine poll, the President's approval rating dropped twelve percentage points (from 52% to 40%) in March.[110] With regard to Carter's handling of the Hostage Crisis, which in December and January had garnered 75% and 61% approval ratings, by the end of March only 40% of the Gallup respondents approved of his policies.[111] A *Time* magazine poll taken in March found that over half the people they surveyed considered Carter's policy towards Iran to be "too soft." In February, 68% of their respondents had approved of his handling of the Hostage Crisis and only 28% disapproved, however, by

[108]For other accounts of Carter's decision to attempt a rescue mission that stress the administration's domestic calculation see, Steve Smith, "Policy preferences and bureaucratic position: the case of the American hostage rescue mission" *International Affairs* 61,1 (Winter 1984/5): 9-25; and Scott Sigmund Gartner, "Predicting The Timing of Carter's Decision To Initiate A Hostage Rescue Attempt: Modeling A Dynamic Information Environment" *International Interactions* 18, 4 (1993): 365-386. For accounts that place domestic consideration alongside other explanatory factors see Moses, *Freeing the Hostages*, pp. 185-190; Betty Glad, "Personality, Political and Group Process Variables in Foreign Policy Decision Making: Jimmy Carter's Handling of The Iranian Hostage Crisis" *International Political Science Review* 10, 1 (January 1989): 35-61; McDermott, "Prospect Theory in International Relations" and *Risk Taking In International Politics*, pp. 93-159.
[109]*The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1980*, pp. 3, 50, 60, 64 and 96.
[110]*Time*, March 31, 1980, p. 13.
[111]*The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1979*, p. 287 and *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1980*, pp. 11 and 83.

March the approval numbers were down to 43% and the disapproval numbers up to 49%.[112]

In contrast to the string of primary victories Carter had been able to ring up in January and February, in the last week of March he fell to Senator Kennedy in both the New York and Connecticut contests. Perhaps the most ominous developments regarding Carter's electoral prospects were the polls indicating that Carter was falling behind the likely Republican challenger for the Presidency, Ronald Reagan. In a Gallup poll against Reagan, what had been a twenty-five point lead in late February had dwindled to six in mid-April, and in a *Time* survey, a thirty-two point lead in January had fallen to six in mid-March and by the end of the month Reagan had overtaken Carter.[113] In addition, as Carter's poll numbers fell, the amount of criticism leveled at his administration regarding its handling of the Hostage Crisis rose. To give an example, on March 17, *Time* magazine featured an article attacking Carter's "rose-garden strategy" of avoiding any electoral appearances until the hostages were released. It criticized what it called an "isolated President" who was "out of touch with the nation and perhaps the world." Concerning the hostages in particular, it contented that "their continued detention makes Carter's vacillation look more damaging as each week passes."[114]

The administration was aware and quite concerned with Carter's floundering domestic prospects. Jody Powell complained that the failure of the scenarios was quickly followed by "the collapse of the last vestiges

[112]*Time*, March 31, 1980, p. 29 and April 7, 1980, p. 15.
[113]*The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1980*, pp. 61 and 97; *Time*, April 7, 1980, p. 22 and April 14, 1980, p. 28.
[114]*Time*, March 17, 1980, pp. 14-15.

of restraint by the press in coming down on Carter with both feet."[115]
CIA Director Stansfield Turner argues that Carter could not continue
with the policy of patient negotiation because "he could not wait out
Khomeini because the public, urged on by the drumbeat of the media,
was impatient with what it perceived as our national impotence."[116]
Brzezinski noticed that public pressure for more decisive action had
been building since late February and later he sent the President a report
indicating that according to national polling data, the public considered
the present policy towards Iran to be a failure. Carter's only response to
this was to agree that "the polls are accurate."[117]

Ultimately, this increasingly threatening domestic situation led the
Carter administration to abandon the policy recommended by the Ward
and *Pueblo* analogies because of the negative domestic consequences
associated with those policies. In place of the strategy of patient
negotiation, the administration succumbed to what Carter called the
"temptation" of the *Mayaguez* analogy and its lesson that a drastic
military move will boost the President's domestic standing.[118] However,
the growing domestic threat did not affect all of Carter's advisers
equally. Those advisers, who by bureaucratic position were more
attuned to the international consequences of different foreign policies
continued to support the applicability of the policy of patient
negotiations suggested by the Ward and *Pueblo* analogies, despite the

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[115]Powell, *The Other Side Of The Story*, pp. 209-222.
[116]Turner, *Terrorism and Democracy*, p. 226. See also p. 106. For a similar assessment by the First Lady, see Rosalynn Carter, *First Lady From Plains*, pp. 320-321.
[117]Brzezinski, "The Failed Mission," p. 29; Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, pp. 486 and 489-490; and Sick, *All Fall Down*, p. 269.
[118]March 1980 interview with Jimmy Carter, *Washington Post*, March 29, 1980, p. A13. See footnote 88 above.

dubious domestic consequences associated with those policies. In contrast, those advisers, who by bureaucratic position were more attuned to the domestic consequences of different policies, were the only group to change their policy·stance as a result of the increasingly threatening domestic context. As Carter's chances for re-election grew increasingly dim, it was this domestically focused group of advisers that shifted their positions. They called for the abandonment of the domestically injurious policy of negotiating and waiting for the situation in Iran to work itself out, and persuaded Carter to adopt a more confrontational policy. The fact that the changing domestic context did not affect Carter's internationally focused advisers, but did lead his domestic advisers to abandon one historical analogy for another and shift their policy preference as a result, offers additional evidence for the model of analogical choice offered here and the distinction it makes between domestic and international interests and lessons.

To explore these differences within the administration it is useful to employ a simplification proposed by Steve Smith, who argues that the Carter administration can be divided into four groups; the hawks, the doves, the presidential supporters, and the president.[119] First, consider the doves, consisting primarily of Cyrus Vance and his immediate subordinates at the State Department. Throughout the crisis Vance believed that the policies employed during the Ward and *Pueblo* affairs offered the best chance of securing the safe release of the hostages and protecting the national interest of the country. The failure of the scenario and Carter's flagging popularity did not change his mind:

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[119]Steve Smith, "Policy preferences and bureaucratic position," pp. 13-21.

My judgment based on what we had observed in March, was that the hostages would be freed only when Khomeini was certain all the institutions of an Islamic republic were in place. . . . Our only realistic course was to keep up the pressure on Iran while we waited for Khomeini to determine that the revolution had accomplished its purpose, and that the hostages were of no further value. As painful as it would be, our national interests and the need to protect the lives of our fellow Americans dictated that we continue to exercise restraint.[120]

As Vance saw it, the ongoing negotiations were not damaging the national security interests of the United States and that "the burden of proof was on the military to show that force was likely to be more successful than protracted negotiations, which had won freedom for the captured crew of the *Pueblo* in 1968."[121]

According to Carter, Vance's primary loyalty was to the State Department and not to the President. "He looked upon himself as a descendant of Thomas Jefferson, as a secretary of state more than he did as an aide or assistant to the President."[122] Similarly, Rosalynn Carter, who was doing the bulk of the administration's campaigning, believed that "Cy Vance doesn't have a political bone in his body" and wondered if Vance ever took into account that they were in the middle of a campaign.[123] From the perspective of Vance and the State Department, the domestic costs that Carter would have to endure if he continued to

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[120]Vance, *Hard Choices*, p. 408.
[121]*Newsweek*, May 12, 1980, pp. 36 and the *Washington Post*, April 25, 1982, p. A14.
[122]Thompson, *The Carter Presidency*, p. 8.
[123]Rosalynn Carter, *First Lady From Plains*, p. 322.

exercise restraint ("As painful as it would be") were irrelevant and to take them into account would only interfere with the pursuit of a sound policy. As Harold Saunders put it, after the collapse of the scenarios, "a feeling pervaded the administration that the patience of the American people was running out and that firm and decisive steps had to be taken. I did not feel that pressure, but I was not out on the primary hustings."[124] Or as Vance succinctly put it, "the last thing we need is a *Mayaguez.*"[125]

The hawks in the administration, best represented by the National Security Adviser, were also relatively unconcerned about the domestic implications of the Hostage Crisis. However, in contrast to the position of the doves in the State Department, throughout the crisis Brzezinski consistently favored a military response. Brzezinski, unlike Vance, did not interpret the Ward and *Pueblo* affairs as successes. Whereas Vance believed that the strategy of patient negotiation had secured the release of the hostages while protecting American interests, Brzezinski saw national humiliation. For a great power to be forced into protracted negotiations with a lesser power over the holding of hostages was unacceptable to Brzezinski. This difference between the Secretary of State and the National Security Adviser surfaced in the opening days of the crisis. When Vance first brings up the *Pueblo* analogy and argues that, "the President and this nation will ultimately be judged by our restraint in the face of provocation, and on the safe return of the

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[124]Saunders, "Diplomacy and Pressure," p. 140.
[125]*Newsweek*, May 12, 1980, pp. 27 and 38.

hostages," it is Brzezinski who is the first to object; complaining, "but that went on for a year!"[126]

As Brzezinski saw it, even if negotiations could get the hostages out safely, they would be too costly in terms of international prestige. For him, a decisive show of force, similar to the *Mayaguez* or Entebbe affairs, regardless of the risk it would present to the lives of the hostages and the military, would best preserve the international reputation of the United States. Looking at the historical record, Brzezinski, perhaps alone among Carter's advisers, maintained that too much emphasis on the safety of the hostages could damage the national interest. "Though I shared Cy's concern for the hostages and I admired his personal commitment to them, I felt that in the end our national honor was at stake." Brzezinski refused to meet with the families of the hostages fearing that the emotions created by such meetings might interfere with his calculations regarding the nation's honor. In an April memo to the President, Brzezinski wrote that Carter had, "to think beyond the fate of the fifty Americans and consider the deleterious effects of a protracted stalemate, growing public frustration, and international humiliation of the U.S."[127]

Brzezinski was less impressed with the lessons of the Ward and *Pueblo* analogies that prolonged negotiations could free the hostages and more impressed by the danger to the national interest he believed would

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[126]Jordan, *Crisis*, p. 45.

[127]The first quote is from Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p. 480 and the second is from the memo, "Getting the Hostages Free," which was given to the President on April 10, quoted in, *Power and Principle*, p. 492. On Brzezinski's refusal to meet with the families of the hostages see *Power and Principle*, p. 481 and Jordan, *Crisis*, p. 54. In addition, see *Power and Principle*, p. 484; *Crisis*, pp. 44-45 and 53; Harold Saunders, "Beginning Of The End" in Christopher et al., *American Hostages In Iran*, p. 282; and Moses, *Freeing The Hostages*, pp. 18-19, 87 and 101.

result from a "protracted stalemate." As a result, throughout the crisis Brzezinski consistently favored taking more forceful measures. The National Security Adviser was the main advocate in the administration for a punitive military strike and the driving force behind the planning for a rescue attempt.[128]

Why Brzezinski read the historical record differently than Vance is an important question, but not one that is explored in any depth here. However, in order to develop a complete analogical theory of decision making, the question of why decision makers learn the lessons they do must be answered.[129] In terms of a preliminary answer, the explanation for why policy makers learn the lessons they do can most likely be found in their general world views or more specifically in the case of foreign policy makers, their overall beliefs on the nature of international and domestic politics (their operational codes to use Alexander George's terminology).[130] The differences between Vance's relatively dovish world view and Brzezinski's hawkish one predisposed them to interpret the results of the earlier hostage incidents differently.

Does the importance of a policy maker's world view or operational code mean that the historical analogies they use to interpret a situation are unimportant? Could the behavior of different actors be predicted and explained simply by knowing their relative hawkishness, without exploring the historical analogies they use to interpret any situation? The answer is no; world views are too general to provide much guidance in specific situations. While knowing that Brzezinski

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[128]Turner, *Terrorism and Democracy*, pp. 31, 81, 67 and 88.
[129]See Chapter One, footnote 47.
[130]George, "The Causal Nexus."

tends to be hawkish would allow you to predict he is likely to favor a military option, that is all it would tell you. What specific military option would he prefer? Would he favor a punitive strike or a rescue mission? Why might he think one option or the other would do a better job of protecting the interests of the United States? Assume he favors a rescue mission, what type of rescue mission is he likely to favor? What would he see as the necessary preconditions for a successful rescue attempt? For answers to these specific questions you would have to know a lot more than that he tends to be hawkish. Historical analogies help policy makers answer such questions, therefore to understand their behavior you need to know the historical analogies they use to interpret the situation.

In the early days of the crisis, Brzezinski favored a military strike over a rescue attempt. Given the difficulties of mounting a successful rescue operation (Tehran was not Entebbe) Brzezinski favored the less risky punitive strike. However, the increasingly threatening international situation in the Gulf after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan led him to re-evaluate that preference. Because a bold military strike could force Iran into the arms of the Soviets, perhaps the less provocative rescue mission was the better choice.[131] But how could a rescue mission be made to work? As will be discussed below, Brzezinski's answer to this question, and the answer of the military planning group he headed, was to use the successful Israeli raid on Entebbe as a model. If Tehran was not Entebbe at first, Brzezinski and the other military planners saw it as their job to make it as much like

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[131]Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, pp. 485, 489-490 and 492.

Entebbe as possible. They worked to create an analogy where none initially existed.

Given that Brzezinski's dominant concern throughout the crisis was protecting the international reputation of the United States, the increasing amount of trouble Carter found himself in domestically as the months dragged on had little impact on Brzezinski's thinking. The damage the continued stalemate was doing to the international prestige of the United States was the key issue, not the damage it was doing to Carter's electoral prospects.[132] However, Brzezinski did try to use the rising level of domestic discontent to his advantage. Throughout the crisis Brzezinski had been frustrated by his inability to persuade the President to adopt a more militant stance.[133] Now he saw an opportunity to gain allies in his struggle for more decisive action. Given the increasingly high domestic costs that the negotiating strategy was inflicting on Carter, Brzezinski turned to the presidential supporters to echo his call for a military response.

The presidential supporters are the members of the administration who see their prime allegiance as due to the President, and not to an organization like the State Department or even to the foreign policy interests of the nation as a whole. When considering policy, their primary concern is with how different options will affect the domestic standing of the President.[134] The main presidential supporters in the Carter administration were Chief of Staff Hamilton Jordan, Press Secretary Jody Powell, both of whom had been close friends and

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[132]Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p. 493 and Sick, *All Fall Down*, p. 283.

[133]Turner, *Terrorism and Democracy*, p. 99.

[134]Steve Smith, "Policy preferences and bureaucratic position," pp. 17-18.

political advisers to Carter long before he reached the White House, and Vice-President Walter Mondale.[135] Both Jordan and Powell's memoirs make clear that each was primarily concerned with the impact the Hostage Crisis was having on Carter's domestic prospects. Not surprisingly, as two of Carter's top campaign strategists, both discuss each stage of the crisis in terms of how it affected the popularity and electoral chances of the President.[136] As for the Vice-President, according to Brzezinski, "He was a vital political barometer for the President, and Carter respected his opinion of the domestic implications of foreign policy decisions." "Carter, rarely, if ever, thought of foreign policy in terms of domestic politics, while Mondale rarely, if ever, thought of it otherwise."[137] The severe domestic losses Carter was beginning to suffer as a result of the Hostage Crisis eventually made the President receptive to the advice of his domestic advisers.

While the increasingly threatening domestic situation had little, if any, impact on the policy preferences of Carter's internationally focused advisers, it did have an impact on his domestically focused advisers. This group of presidential supporters, who evaluate policy success in terms of its domestic political impact, changed its policy stance regarding the crisis in March and April as the President's popularity plummeted. Watching the President's poll numbers nose-dive, they abandoned the previous support they had given to the strategy of patient negotiation and became advocates for a military response.[138]

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[135]See Carter, *Keeping Faith*, pp. 41-44.
[136]Jordan, *Crisis* and Powell, *The Other Side Of The Story*.
[137]Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, pp. 34-35.
[138]Gartner, "Predicting The Timing of Carter's Decision To Initiate A Hostage Rescue Attempt," pp. 365-386.

Brzezinski, aware of the growing din of domestic criticism and that Jordan, Powell, and Mondale "were feeling increasingly frustrated and concerned about rising public pressure for more direct action," took advantage of the opportunity. While Brzezinski had been keeping a tight lid on all information related to military plans, he now decided to brief each of the three presidential supporters on the rescue plan and on April 10, recommend to the President "that he convene a formal National Security Council meeting that would include his domestic advisers."[139]

Brzezinski's encouragement was probably unnecessary because the President, who was also becoming increasingly frustrated with the results of the strategy of negotiation, would naturally have turned to his domestic advisers in any case.[140] Carter, who perhaps had the strongest interest in seeing himself win re-election, agreed with the presidential supporters and decided to reverse course. At a National Security Council meeting held on April 11, most likely purposively scheduled to take place while Secretary Vance was out of town, the President, "spoke at some length, saying that he had reviewed the matter fully with Rosalynn, with Ham [Jordan], with Fritz [Mondale], with Jody [Powell], adding also that he had discussed it extensively with me [Brzezinski], and that his conclusion was to take strong action."[141]

In heeding the public's demand for more decisive action, the administration still had to choose what form that action would take. The choice was between a rescue attempt or some form of punitive military strike, such as mining Iran's harbors or launching air raids against

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[139]Brzezinski, "The Failed Mission." pp. 30-31 and 61 and *Power and Principle*, pp. 490-492. See also Moses, *Freeing The Hostages*, pp. 186-187.
[140]Carter, *Keeping Faith*, pp. 499-507.
[141]Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p. 493.

various targets. The problem with a punitive strike was the same as it had been at the beginning of the crisis. Even if the military strike did not push the Iranians closer to the Soviets, the administration, without an analogy instructing them otherwise, did not see how a punitive strike would end the crisis. A punitive military strike was more likley to get the hostages killed than released. While a military strike could, for a short time at least, satisfy public pressure for decisive action, it would not eliminate it. The failure to gain the release of the hostages would mean that the administration would still be vulnerable to accusations that it was incapable of dealing with the crisis and later it would be faced with renewed public pressure to step up the attacks. As President Carter put it, "If I act now and mine the harbors . . . and the mines stay there for a while and they still don't release the hostages, then what?"[142]

This left the administration with the rescue mission, or as Brzezinski put it, the "risky but increasingly promising scenario of a rescue mission."[143] Under a military planning group headed by Brzezinski, plans for a rescue mission began on the second day after the seizure of the embassy and continued throughout the crisis.[144] However, as discussed above, given the location of the embassy, the military was pessimistic that a rescue mission could succeed. The military's initial pessimism centered on the fact that the location of the embassy in downtown Tehran made it difficult to imagine how Delta Force could get to the embassy without raising alarms, how they could avoid being

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[142]Rosalynn Carter, *First Lady From Plains*, p. 321. See also, Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p. 490; Sick, *All Fall Down*, pp. 290 and 292; and Sick, "Military Options and Constraints," p. 153.
[143]Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p. 490 and "The Failed Mission." p. 30.
[144]Stansfield Turner, Harold Brown and David Jones were the other members of the group, Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, pp. 478 and 487.

trapped by Iranian mobs once the assault started, and how they could get the hostages out of Iran quickly. While an assault on the embassy may have been difficult, it was not necessarily impossible. As Brzezinski argues, the military planners had spent the first five months of the hostage ordeal working on these problems and by late March, were "becoming more confident that possible kinks were being worked out."[145] The way the military planners went about working out the kinks was to try to turn Tehran into Entebbe. Rather than give up on the rescue attempt, they tried to create an analogy that initially did not exist. They tried to make the Entebbe analogy applicable to the current problem by finding ways to duplicate the factors that had caused those raids to be successful.[146]

The first problem to be overcome was how to get the rescue team to the embassy without alerting the captors of the imminent assault. They could not just land outside the building as the Israelis had done at Entebbe. Instead, to achieve the necessary level of surprise, the military developed a relatively elaborate two day plan designed to get Delta Force to the walls of the embassy without anyone noticing. On the first night of the plan, three MC-130 transport planes carrying the assault team along with its support staff and three EC-130's carrying jet fuel would take off from Masirah Island off the coast of Oman. At approximately the same time, eight RH-53D helicopters would take off

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[145]Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p. 490 and "The Failed Mission," p. 28. See also Jordan, *Crisis*, p. 52.

[146]Most of the information that follows on the military planning for the rescue mission is from "The Holloway Report;" Beckwith, *Delta Force*; Kyle, *The Guts to Try*; Ryan, *The Iranian Rescue Mission*; and Turner, *Terrorism and Democracy*, pp. 110-145. Houghton, "The Role of Analogical Reasoning in Novel Foreign Policy Situations," pp. 20 and 34-36 also stresses the planners efforts to make Tehran into Entebbe.

from the *Nimitz,* an aircraft carrier currently in the Gulf of Oman off the Iranian coast, to meet the C-130's at a location approximately 300 miles southeast of Tehran code-named Desert I. The remoteness of this location, combined with its relatively smooth and level terrain called it to the attention of the CIA as a possible landing site for the C-130's. The CIA also ran a test flight to Desert I to confirm that the ground was hard enough to allow planes to land and take off. The confirmation of Desert I as a possible landing site was a breakthrough for the military planners. According to Stansfield Turner, it meant that they could "overcome what I saw as the fatal flaw in the rescue plan--the need to capture a conventional airfield."[147]

At Desert I, the helicopters would refuel and take aboard the approximately 120 member rescue team and their equipment. A minimum of six helicopters would be needed to carry the assault team and its gear. The airplanes would then leave Iran and the helicopters would fly the rescue team to another remote location approximately 50 miles outside Tehran where both the rescue team and the helicopters would hideout for the next day because there was not enough time to complete the entire operation in one night. On the second night, Delta Force would board six trucks that had been procured for the assault by U.S. intelligence agents in Tehran. These trucks would drive them into Tehran where the bulk of the force would be taken to the embassy and a smaller force would be diverted to the Foreign Ministry where three hostages were also being held. It was believed that this plan could achieve the necessary amount of surprise by getting Delta Force to the

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[147]Turner, *Terrorism and Democracy*, pp. 88-89. See also Carter, *Keeping Faith*, pp. 501 and 504.

walls of the embassy without raising any alarms. By this time the crisis had dragged on for five months so security around the embassy had become lax and the compound was no longer engulfed by the large mobs that had surrounded the embassy in the opening weeks of the crisis.

Still, the difficulties involved were substantial. As President Carter put it, the U.S. forces "had to go all the way across 500 miles of Iran without being detected and stay overnight without being detected, to refuel without being detected, [and] to take in the rescue team without being detected."[148] Preventing a premature discovery of the mission was the dominant concern of the military planners and the combination of the changes on the ground in Tehran and the elaborate plan that had been developed convinced the administration that Delta Force had a good chance of taking the captors by surprise, as the Israelis had done at Entebbe and the Germans at Mogadishu.[149]

One hurdle had been cleared, but once Delta Force reached the embassy could they be protected from Iranian reinforcements? "The element of surprise may get you up to the wall and over, but when the first shot is fired, you can expect the mobs to mass quickly, and Delta could be hopelessly trapped in a sea of rabid humanity."[150] Since the compound was no longer the point of pilgrimage it was at the start of the crisis this problem had abated, but had not gone away. The location of the compound in a densely populated urban area meant that crowds and Iranian military forces could quickly get to the embassy once the assault

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[148]*Public Papers of The Presidents, 1980-81* May 9, 1980, Vol. 1, p. 882.

[149]For this emphasis on secrecy and surprise see "The Holloway Report," pp, vi, 11, 13, 17, 58 and 60-61: Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, pp. 489-491; Brzezinski, "The Failed Mission," pp. 29-31; Beckwith, *Delta Force*, p. 201; Kyle, *The Guts To Try*, pp. 25 and 46; and the comments by Warren Christopher in *American Foreign Policy: Basic Documents 1977-1980*, pp. 766-767.

[150]Quote of Colonel Jerry King in Kyle, *The Guts to Try*, p. 25.

began. To prevent the assault team from being trapped at the embassy, two of the Air Force's AC-130 Spectre gunships would fly in to provide air cover. Their task would be to prevent any Iranian forces from reaching the embassy and to disperse any crowds that might gather.

The final problem in overcoming the differences between the Entebbe raid and the current problem was in finding a way of getting the hostages and Delta Force out of Iran. Because downtown Tehran was not an airfield there was no place for planes to land and take-off and while helicopters could land in the vicinity, they did not have the range to transport the hostages out of the country. The solution the planners developed was to a have a contingent of Army Rangers secure a thinly guarded airstrip at Manzariyeh thirty-five minutes flying time from Tehran. After Delta Force had taken control of the hostages, the helicopters that had been hiding out overnight would land in a soccer stadium near the embassy to pick up the hostages and the assault force. The helicopters would then fly to Manzariyeh where all U.S. personnel would board transport planes to be flown out of Iran (the helicopters would be abandoned).

This plan, which had taken close to five months to put together, had done much, it was hoped, to bridge the gaps between the current situation and the factors that had allowed the Entebbe and Mogadishu raids to succeed. The military and the administration were now fairly confident that U.S. forces could reach the embassy without being

detected, could be isolated from any Iranian reinforcements, and could get the hostages out of Iran quickly.[151]

The confidence many in the administration had in the plan was very likely furthered by a motivational desire to believe that Iran could be America's Entebbe. If the Entebbe analogy was applicable, if a rescue attempt did have a good chance of success, then Carter's problems would be solved. The United States would have flexed its military muscles and Carter would be credited with decisive leadership. Though its precise impact is hard to measure, the strong motivational pressure the administration must have felt to want believe that an American Entebbe was possible, to want believe that they could solve their international and domestic problems without recklessly risking the lives of the hostages and the rescue team, probably increased the perceived level of causal similarities between the current situation and the Israeli's successful rescue.

In addition to trying to make the rescue attempt as much like Entebbe as possible, the military planners were also conscious of avoiding the mistakes of the Son Tay raid and as a result much effort was put into pinpointing the location of each of the hostages. "We all remembered that a well-executed U.S. raid on a prison camp at Son Tay in North Vietnam in 1970 had failed because the prisoners were not there. . . . we needed to get someone . . . to verify exactly where every person was being held."[152]

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[151]On the growing confidence in the plan see Carter, *Keeping Faith*, p. 501; Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p. 490; Powell, *The Other Side Of The Story*, p. 225; Beckwith, *Delta Force*, pp. 6-7; and Kyle, *The Guts to Try*, p. 184.

[152]Turner, *Terrorism and Democracy*, p. 71. Although it did not have any affect on the administration's decision to launch the rescue attempt, one other analogy did effect the implementation of the raid. Convinced that Kennedy's interference with the military's plans during the Bay of Pigs

The administration's growing sense of confidence in the feasibility of the rescue mission, combined with swelling public disaffection with the strategy of patient negotiations, persuaded Carter to change his policy; a rescue mission was the administration's third attempt to free the hostages. In the first weeks of April, the President broke relations with Iran and implemented a new series of economic sanctions.[153] As Hamilton Jordan put it, "I knew our hard-line approach wouldn't bring the hostages home any sooner, but I hoped that maybe it would buy us a little more time and patience from the public."[154] However, unable to buy time indefinitely and unwilling to see his presidency destroyed by the Hostage Crisis, Jimmy Carter gave his permission to a rescue mission to be launched on April 24.

The rescue mission resulted in disaster. Problems with the helicopters resulted in only 5 workable helicopters reaching Desert I, one fewer than was necessary. As a result, the mission was aborted hundreds of miles before it had reached Tehran. During the evacuation from Desert I, a helicopter, blinded by a swirl of dust kicked up during takeoff, crashed into a C-130 refueling planes causing both to explode and killing eight U.S. servicemen and seriously burning four others.[155]

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operation had been a mistake, Carter decided that he would avoid that pitfall by not micro-managing the operational phase of the rescue attempt. See Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p. 495; Brzezinski, "The Failed Mission," p. 64; and Sick, *All Fall Down*, pp. 300-301. Interestingly, after the failure of the rescue mission, Carter asked to see a copy of Kennedy's speech following the Bay of Pigs disaster as a possible guide for his own speech, Jordan, *Crisis*, p. 274.

[153]*Department of State Bulletin* 80, 2038 (May 1980), pp. 1-2 and *American Foreign Policy: Basic Documents 1977-1980*, pp. 758-763.

[154]Jordan, *Crisis*, pp. 248-249.

[155]On the implementation and failure of the mission see "The Holloway Report," pp. 9-10 and 44-46; Kyle, *The Guts To Try*, pp. 195-310; Beckwith, *Delta Force*, pp. 267-280; Ryan, *The Iranian Rescue Mission*, pp. 63-94; and Gabriel, *Military Incompetence*, pp. 85-116. For accounts of the mission from the vantage point of the White House see Carter, *Keeping Faith*, pp. 514-518; Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, pp. 496-500; and Turner, *Terrorism and Democracy*, pp. 115-131.

Ironically, post-mortems conducted on the mission pointed to the administration's emphasis on keeping the planning of the mission secret and keeping the forces involved as small as possible to help avoid detection as principle reasons for the mission's failure.[156] Because the assault had to be terminated when only five functioning helicopters reached Desert I, the administration's decision to employ only eight helicopters in such a hazardous mission was singled out for criticism. However, Brzezinski, demonstrating what model he saw himself as following when planning the rescue mission answered this criticism by arguing that "if the Iranians had discovered the mission as a result of the size of the air armada penetrating their airspace, we all would doubtless have been charged with typically excessive American redundancy, with unwillingness to go in hard and lean--the way, for example, the Israelis did at Entebbe."[157]

The Entebbe analogy continued to dominate discussion of the rescue mission even after its failure. At a press conference the day after the failure of the rescue attempt, Secretary of Defense Brown was asked to "compare this operation with the successful operations carried out by the Germans and the Israelis. How come they can do it and we can't?" Brown's answer was that "Tehran is not Entebbe." He then detailed some of the differences and how the military had hoped, but failed to overcome them.[158] During Congressional hearings on the Hostage Crisis

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[156]For the most complete post-mortems on the rescue attempt see "The Holloway Report" and Ryan, *The Iranian Rescue Mission.*

[157]Brzezinski, *Power and Principle,* p. 495 and "The Failed Mission," p. 64.

[158]*Department of State Bulletin* 80, 2039 (June 1980), p. 41.

one member of Congress even suggested moving U.S. embassies to locations "that would allow an Entebbe action."[159]

Despite the military planners efforts, and at the cost of eight lives, the administration's third attempt to free the hostages failed. Tehran did not become America's Entebbe.

ATTEMPT NUMBER FOUR: BACK TO NEGOTIATIONS

With the failure of the rescue mission, the administration returned to the Ward and *Pueblo* based strategy of patient negotiation, virtually by default. First, a rescue mission was no longer an option. While the administration did initiate planning for another rescue attempt, they quickly concluded that a second rescue mission was an impossibility. The first attempt had induced the captors to be more vigilant with their security measures and most importantly, when news of the rescue attempt reached Tehran, the captors quickly dispersed the hostages to various unknown locations.[160] Without knowing where the hostages were, there was no way to rescue them.

Second, a punitive military strike remained an unattractive option. It still ran the risk of pushing the Iranians closer to the Soviets and the administration still could not see how such actions would result in the release of the hostages. However, could a punitive military strike help the administration on the domestic front? If, as the *Mayaguez* analogy

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[159]*Iran's Seizure Of The United States Embassy*, p. 118. Not surprisingly, placing U.S. embassies throughout the world at remote airfields is an idea that has never caught on.

[160]Carter, *Keeping Faith*, p. 519; Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, pp. 499-500; Turner, *Terrorism and Democracy*, pp. 126-7 and 146-149; Sick, *All Fall Down*, pp. 303-306 and 358; *Department of State Bulletin* 80, 2039 (June 1980), pp. 47-49; and 80, 2040 (July 1980), p. 12; and Moses, *Freeing The Hostages*, pp. 216-217.

suggested, drastic military action could boost the President's popularity, why not order a punitive strike to solve the administration's domestic problems? The answer to this question is two-fold: the first is that to a large extent, thanks to the rescue mission, the administration's domestic problems were no longer as serious as they had been. Second, the administration had good reason to believe that a punitive strike would not boost Carter's popularity. Indeed, they feared that any such move would probably backfire by lending credence to accusations that Carter was playing politics with the lives of the hostages.

The primary force behind the administration's decision to launch the rescue attempt had been the public's growing dissatisfaction with Carter's handling of the crisis. Measured by the standard of how a policy influenced Carter's domestic standing, the mission was relatively successful. In early April, Brzezinski had argued that a rescue mission had to be implemented because the crisis had gone on too long and that "we needed to lance the boil."[161] On the domestic front at least, it had worked. According to one of the President's pollsters, "Dissatisfaction with The President over the hostages had been festering and the rescue mission had the effect of lancing the boil."[162] As the *Mayaguez* analogy suggested, a decisive use of force, even one that ended in failure boosted the President's popularity, at least temporarily.

In a poll taken after the failed rescue mission, 71% of those asked approved of the President's action, and the percentage of respondents who approved of his handling of the crisis jumped six points, the first

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[161]Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p. 494.
[162]This is a quote from Patrick Caddell in Rosalynn Carter, *First Lady From Plains*, p. 328

and only time that that number rose during the duration of the crisis.[163]
As Brzezinski saw it, the rescue attempt "did have one immediate
benefit: it relieved public pressure for a large-scale American military
action against Iran, and thus permitted the resumption of our diplomatic
efforts."[164]

Even though this jump in popularity was only temporary and that
discontent with Carter as a result of his handling of the crisis would
grow in the coming months, the administration was no longer convinced
that the domestic lessons of *Mayaguez* analogy were applicable. The
situation they were facing on the domestic front after the rescue attempt
was significantly different, in causally important ways, than the situation
they had faced in April or the situation that President Ford had faced in
1975. From the start of the crisis some opponents of Carter had accused
him of playing politics with the hostages. First, the critics charged that
the President was using the crisis as an excuse to hide in the Rose Garden
so he could avoid having to confront and debate his opponents in the
Democratic primaries. These charges grew in volume following an
announcement made by the President, a week after he had lost the New
York and Connecticut primaries and on the morning of the Wisconsin
primary, that there had been a "positive development" regarding the
hostages.[165] The announcement was part of the Jordan negotiated
scenario, and when the scenario collapsed and the President won by a
large margin in Wisconsin, accusations that he was manipulating the
crisis for domestic political gain erupted in the media. As the campaign

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[163]*The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1980*, pp. 102
[164]Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p. 500 and "The Failed Mission," p. 79. See also Jordan, *Crisis*, p. 281; Sick, "Military Options and Constraints," p. 163; and Moses, *Freeing The Hostages*, pp. 206.
[165]April 1, 1980, *Public Papers of the Presidents, 1980-1981*, vol. 1, pp. 576-577

against Reagan began to heat up in the summer of 1980, stories began to proliferate in the press accusing Carter of plotting an "October surprise" to invade Iran or that he had made a deal to provide vast quantities of arms to Iran in exchange for the release of the hostages before the election. Given this level of suspicion, rather than boosting Carter's domestic prospects, any attempt to launch a military strike against Iran would probably have backfired by lending credence to the charges that he was playing politics with the lives of the hostages.[166]

With a second rescue attempt impossible and a punitive military strike unattractive, by default the administration was back to the strategy of negotiating and waiting for the Iranian government to decide that the hostages had served their purpose domestically. As Warren Christopher explained, there was little the United States could do unilaterally, the release of the hostages was dependent on the "Iranian clock."[167] New Secretary of State Edmund Muskie, appointed after Vance resigned because of his opposition to the rescue attempt, argued that the administration's strategy was "to use patience as an important instrument." "We would wait until the Iranians had their government in place."[168] Like the outgoing Secretary of State, Muskie too was

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[166]On the charges made against the Carter administration that it was plotting an October surprise, see Powell, *The Other Side Of The Story*, pp. 214-222, 253-256 and 268-274; Jordan, *Crisis*, p. 248; Sick, "Military Options and Constraints," p. 164; and *Public Papers of The Presidents, 1980-81*, Vol. 3, pp. 2013-2014, 2168-2169 and 2226. These accusations should be kept distinct from the charges Gary Sick later made accusing the Reagan campaign of having its own October surprise by providing arms to Iran so the hostages would not be released prior to the election. See his, *October Surprise: America's Hostages In Iran and the Election of Ronald Reagan* (New York: Times Books, 1991).

[167]Moses, *Freeing The Hostages*, pp. 254.

[168]Thompson, *The Carter Presidency*, p. 183. For similar statements on U.S. policy at this time see, *Public Papers of The Presidents, 1980-81*, Vol. 2, pp. 1311, 1641, 1731, 1827-1828, 1907-1908, 2320, 2382-2383, 2508-2509 and Vol. 3, pp. 2256 and 2266; *American Foreign Policy: Basic Documents*, p. 774; *Department of State Bulletin* 80, 2039 (June 1980), p. 38; 80, 2040 (July 1980), pp. 21 and D-E; and 80, 2043 (October 1980), pp. 14-15; *Iran's Seizure of The United States Embassy*, pp. 63-73 and 137; and Moses, *Freeing The Hostages*, pp. 208-222, 254-255, 273, 279-280 and 301-302.

impressed by the lessons of the Ward and *Pueblo* analogies, which taught that though it may take some time, a policy of patient negotiations would eventually get the hostages home safely. In explaining why he believed the administration's policy was sound, Muskie referred to historical cases where such a policy had worked, specifically mentioning "the hostages that were seized by North Korea in connection with the *Pueblo*. . . . Those hostages were held eleven months before they were released and they were finally released."[169]

Most of the diplomatic links between Iran and the United States had been severed as a result of the failed rescue mission and it was not until early September that negotiations began to get back on track. On September 9, the West German ambassador in Iran informed the United States that a high-ranking Iranian official had been authorized by Khomeini to negotiate a solution to the hostage problem. As this was "the first expression of interest in negotiation initiated entirely by the Iranians," the administration was quick to respond and within a week, Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher was in Germany meeting with the Iranian emissary.[170] However, these talks had little time to develop as they were suddenly interrupted by the outbreak of war between Iraq and Iran. The administration hoped that the war would make Iran more eager to end the Hostage Crisis so they could concentrate on the Iraqi threat. However, in the short term the start of the war meant that the Iranian government had little time or energy to

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[169]*Department of State Bulletin* 80, 2043 (October 1980), p. 16.

[170]The Iranian envoy was Sadegh Tabatabai, who had held a number of positions in the revolutionary government and was related to the Ayatollah by marriage. The quote is from Harold Saunders, "Beginning Of The End," p. 289. See also Salinger, *America Held Hostage*, pp. 250 and 263-275; and Moses, *Freeing The Hostages*, pp. 253-271.

devote to the hostages and the negotiations with the United States were placed on the back burner.[171]

While the administration hoped that the negotiations under Christopher could resolve the crisis before the election in November, the advent of the Iran-Iraq war meant that despite Hamilton Jordan's wishes, the Iranians would not "meet our campaign schedule."[172] The schedule of the campaign was particularly unfortunate for President Carter as election day fell on the one year anniversary of the seizure of the embassy. As Americans prepared to go to the polls they were given constant reminders by the media that the hostage's ordeal had lasted a year and that so far the administration had been incapable securing their release.[173] That failure turned out to be too much for the Carter Presidency to withstand; on the anniversary of the hostages first year in captivity, Ronald Reagan easily defeated Jimmy Carter.[174]

Carter's defeat did not mean the end of his administration's efforts to free the hostages. Negotiations, under the direction of Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher, continued and the administration remained determined to get the hostages out before Carter's term ended in January. Negotiations aimed at resolving the crisis, which had been

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[171]On the administrations estimates of what the Iran and Iraq war could do to the negotiations and the effect they did have see *Public Papers of The Presidents, 1980-81*, Vol. 2, pp. 1881; *Department of State Bulletin* 80, 2044 (November 1980), pp. 43-46; *Iran's Seizure of The United States Embassy*, p. 71; Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p. 504, Hamilton Jordan, *Crisis*, p. 347; Sick, "Military Options And Constraints," p. 164; and Moses, *Freeing The Hostages*, pp. 269, 279, and 273.

[172]Jordan, *Crisis*, p. 360.

[173]Carter, *Keeping Faith*, pp. 567-568 and Thompson, *The Carter Presidency*, p. 184.

[174]The Hostage Crisis was not the only factor that led to Carter's defeat, for example, the poor state of the U.S. economy, including the rapid rise in interest rates brought about by Germany's decision to halt its support of the dollar, also did substantial damage to Carter's electoral hopes. Still, all of the members of the Carter administration saw the Hostage Crisis as one of, if not the most important cause of his defeat. See, Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 567-568; Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, pp. 506-509; Turner, *Terrorism and Democracy*, p. 151; Jordan, *Crisis*, pp. 365-376; Sick, *All Fall Down*, pp. viii and 318; Saunders, "The Crisis Begins," in Christopher et al., *American Hostages In Iran*, p. 38; and for Muskie's comments see *Iran's Seizure of The United States Embassy*, p. 132.

off track since the advent of the Iran-Iraq war, began again in early
November with Iran's selection of Algeria to mediate the crisis. With
Algerian diplomats playing the role of middlemen, in the closing days of
the Carter administration, a deal was eventually worked out between
America and Iran. Although the final agreement dealt with a number of
complicated financial issues, at its root it entailed an agreement to free
the hostages in exchange for the return of the Iranian assets that the
Carter administration had frozen and a pledge by the United States not to
interfere in Iran's internal affairs.[175] After 444 days in captivity, the
American hostages were finally released on January 20, 1981. As an
added insult to the outgoing Carter admininstration, the actual release of
the hostages was timed to begin a few minutes after Ronald Reagan took
the oath of office.

The crucial development that led to the resolution of the crisis was
the ability of Khomeini's Islamic Republican Party (IRP) to consolidate
its control over the Iranian government. Once Khomeini's forces, with
the help of the Hostage Crisis, had thoroughly defeated the more secular
factions and emerged as the dominant party in post-revolutionary Iran,
they were unwilling to continue to pay the economic costs that America's
sanctions inflicted. The overtures to the United States for negotiating an
end to the crisis only began after the IRP had institutionalized its power
by gaining control of the Parliament and the office of the Prime

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[175]The text of the agreement reached can be found in a number of sources, see *American Foreign
Policy: Current Documents, 1981* (Washington: Department of State, 1984), pp. 737-761;
Department of State Bulletin 81, 2046 (February 1981), pp. 1-15; *Public Papers of The Presidents,
1980-1981*, vol. 3, pp. 3026-3042; and Christopher et al., *American Hostages In Iran*, pp. 405-421.
For quick accounts of the negotiations and agreements reached at Algiers see, *Iran's Seizure of The
United States Embassy*, pp. 19-24, 73-81, 139-144, and 147-160; Sick, *All Fall Down*, pp. 319-338;
and Moses, *Freeing The Hostages*, pp. 298-326. For the most complete account of these negotiations
see the various contributors to Christopher et al., *American Hostages In Iran*, pp. 201-324.

Minister.[176] Thus, the lessons that Vance and others had seen in the Ward and *Pueblo* cases were confirmed by the Carter administration's fourth and final attempt to free the hostages. The fifty-two Americans were released only after they had served their political purpose in Iran.

COMPETING EXPLANATIONS AND COUNTERFACTUALS

The most common critique offered against an analogical approach to foreign policy is that analogies are merely rhetorical devices used by decision makers solely to justify, not formulate, their policies. In this case, such critics argue that the Carter administration's interests in protecting the international reputation of the United States, as well as securing their own domestic political prospects, led them to the policies they selected and that all talk of the "lessons of history" was simply oratorical window-dressing designed to increase domestic support for already chosen policies. The argument of this chapter is that this focus on the administration's interests, while partially correct, is incomplete.

Throughout the crisis, Carter and his advisers were certainly looking to protect the international interests of the country and the domestic interests of the administration. In the early months of the crisis, while Carter's standing in public opinion polls were on the rise as a result of the twin crises of the hostages and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the administration pursued a strategy of combining

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[176]*Iran's Seizure of The United States Embassy*, pp. 5-6 and 12-13; Sick, "Military Options and Constraints," p. 163; Kifner, "How A Sit-In Turned Into A Siege," p. 73; and Terence Smith, "Putting The Hostages Lives First," p. 98. It also seems that the Iranians were unwilling to have to start negotiating from scratch with the possibly more hard-line Reagan administration, see Christopher, Sick, and Ribicoff in Christopher, et al., *American Hostages In Iran*, pp. 6, 170-171 and 376; Terence Smith, "Putting The Hostages Lives First," p. 100; and Moses, *Freeing The Hostages*, p. 302.

diplomatic pressure with negotiations that avoided any embarrassing concessions that could injure the international reputation of the United States by making it look weak. Similarly, the administration's decision to launch a military rescue attempt in April of 1980 was certainly encouraged by Carter's flagging domestic standing and the threat that the prolongation of the crisis presented to his re-election prospects. Finally, the administration's decision to return to the strategy of negotiations and limited diplomatic pressure after the failed rescue attempt was also designed to protect the administration's domestic interests, by avoiding charges they were playing politics with the lives of the hostages, and to protect the nation's international standing, by avoiding possibly humiliating concessions. Thus, the international and domestic interests of the Carter administration certainly played a role in determining the administration's policies.

However, by themselves, interest-based explanations are incomplete and can not explain the policy choices of the Carter administration. Instead, the administration's actions can only be understood by also looking at the analogies the administration used to define and interpret the crisis. This is so for three related reasons. First, interests, by themselves, do not lead directly to a preference for one policy over another. Merely to argue that a policy was chosen because a decision maker saw it as in her interests does not answer the crucial question of why she sees that option as in her best interests? In addition to having interests to further, policy makers must also possess beliefs and expectations regarding the likely impact of different actions on their interests. Historical analogies provide this information; they fill

in the crucial link between specific policy options and expectations regarding how those options are likely to affect one's interests.

Only by defining the Hostage Crisis in terms of the Ward and *Pueblo* analogies, which offered a causal link between the strategy of diplomatic pressure combined with patient negotiation and a likely resolution of the crisis in a way that did not cause unacceptable embarrassment to the United States or President Carter, did the administration see that particular option as in its interest. Similarly, as the crisis dragged on, the lessons of the Entebbe, Mogadishu, and *Mayaguez* analogies were crucial in leading the administration to believe that a military rescue attempt would be in their interests. Only because these analogies provided the causal link between specific policy options and likely outcomes was the Carter administration able to reach a conclusion regarding what policy would best protect its interests.

Second, evidence for the importance of these analogies in the decision making process can also be seen in the extent to which these analogies influenced the implementation of policy. While one would expect some broad consistency between policy and invoked analogies even if analogies were merely rhetorical devices designed to justify an already decided upon foreign policy, the extent to which the invoked analogies in this case played a central role in the specific implementation of the Carter administration's policy suggests that these analogies played a deeper role. The role of the Entebbe analogy is the best example of this. The Carter administration did not decide to launch a rescue attempt and then simply invoke the Entebbe analogy to justify that choice; instead, they looked to the Entebbe experience (and to a lesser extent the

Mogadishu experience) to answer very specific questions regarding whether a rescue attempt was possible and if so, how it should be implemented. How could the United States get the Delta Force rescue team to the Embassy without alarming the captors and thus giving them time to prepare a defense, disperse or possibly kill the hostages? How could the rescue team and the hostages avoid being trapped in the Embassy by Iranian reinforcements once the assault began? How could the Unites States get the hostages and the rescue team out of Iran quickly? Instead of being solely a rhetorical device designed to gain support for an already decided upon option, the Entebbe analogy put these questions at the center of the administration's concerns and played a specific role in the implementation of the rescue plan as the administration endeavored to make the current situation as much like the Entebbe raid as possible, no small task given the considerable differences between the two locations where the hostages were held.

Finally, the documentary record that is available also supports the conclusion that the policy makers took these analogies seriously. The significant differences one would expect between what policy maker's were saying publicly and privately, had they been using analogies solely for public consumption, is not supported by available evidence. Indeed, if anything, discussions of different analogies, their meanings, and their impact on policy preferences, play a more prominent role in the private discussions of the administration than in their public utterances. Precisely the opposite of what the critics would expect.[177]

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[177]Further, David Houghton argues that policy maker's persisted in invoking certain analogies even though they realized that these analogies made their policy position harder to sell. Also, precisely the opposite of what the critics would expect. On this and the above point see, "The Role of Analogical Reasoning in Novel Foreign Policy Situations," pp. 27-29.

To better demonstrate the importance of historical analogies in this case, it is useful to consider a counterfactual scenario; what if, for example, there had been no Entebbe or Mogadishu raids? What if those events had not occurred, would the United States still have launched a rescue attempt? If policy makers do not use the lessons of history to analyze current crises and determine what policy they should implement, if historical analogies are simply propaganda devices selected to sell a particular policy that has already been decided upon, the absence of these analogies would make little difference. Under this view, policy would be expected to remain largely the same, only the selling of the policy would be different.

However, contrary to this position, it is quite likely that had these analogies not been available, U.S. policy would have been different. While there are a number of reasons why policy would have been different under these circumstances[178], this section will focus on three that are directly related to role that analogies play in the decision making process. First, had these events not taken place, the members of the administration would not have had to ask themselves the nagging question of, "If the Israelis and the Germans can do it, why can't we?" Without this unflattering comparison, U.S. policy makers would have been under less motivational pressure to believe that an "American

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[178]For example, had there been no Entebbe and Mogadishu raids, the domestic pressure on the administration to rescue the hostages would have been somewhat less as the public would not have been continually asking the question of "If the Israelis and the Germans can do it, why can't Carter? Also, had these raids not occured, it is very unlikley that "Delta Force" would have been assembled, because the dramatic sucess of these two raids and the U.S. desire to equip itself with a similar capability was the impetus behind the creation of this force. However, both of these constraints are ignored in this section because their actual impact would probably have been minor and because these differences would do nothing to distinguish between the analogical approach offered here and the critics who see analogies merely as rhetorical devices to create popular support.

Entebbe" was possible. Second, without these analogies in their historical repertoire, American policy makers would have been more likely to conclude that a rescue attempt was not a feasible option. Historical success rates for hostage rescues have been low and recent U.S. attempts had ended badly, so without the dramatic success of the Entebbe and Mogadishu raids, the attractiveness of this option, even as things began to turn sour domestically, would have been much lower. Third, even if the administration had still decided to explore a rescue option, it is unlikely that any plan they came up with would have been similar to the one they actually attempted to implement given how heavily that plan relied on the Entebbe raid as a model. Together, these three factors lead to the conclusion that had there been no Entebbe and Mogadishu analogies, the administration would likely not have reached the conclusion that a rescue attempt was the option most likely to further its interests. Instead, the absence of these successful rescue attempts would probably have pushed the administration towards the punitive strike option once the pressure to "do something" increased. While there was no actual historical instance where such a strategy had worked, at least there were fewer examples of failure and there was little doubt that the U.S. military had the capability to implement a punitive strike.

One common explanation of the Carter administration's policy during the Hostage Crisis, especially the decision to launch a rescue attempt, focuses on the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the impact that had on the administration's foreign policy. The thrust of this argument is that Soviet invasion was the key event in leading Carter and his administration towards a more militarized and confrontational

foreign policy. Thus, the decision to give up on negotiations and use force to launch a rescue attempt is explained as part of an overall shift within the administration's foreign policy towards more bellicose measures.[179] However, while not denying that the Carter administration did adopt overall a more belligerent foreign policy stance following the Soviet invasion, regarding the Hostage Crisis, the exact opposite occurred. Instead of pushing Carter towards a military solution to the crisis, the attack on Afghanistan encouraged the administration to give the negotiations more time to work.

To understand why this is so, it is necessary to look at the analogies the administration used to interpret the crisis, to understand why the administration saw some analogies as more relevant than others, to investigate why those estimates changed over time, and to examine how the analogies that were accepted as relevant influenced policy choices. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan decreased the degree of domestic threat the administration was facing during the hostage crisis, while at the same time it increased the international dangers. Carter's standing in the polls remained high as he now benefited from a second "rally-around the flag" boost in his approval ratings, and increased Soviet military presence in the region meant that it was now more important than ever to avoid further alienating the Iranians and risking the possibility that they would turn to the Soviets for help. By keeping the administration focused on the international ramifications of the crisis, the invasion bolstered the perceived applicability of the

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[179]For a look at the impact of the Afghanistan invasion on the thinking of the Carter administration see Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, "Afghanistan, Carter and Foreign Policy Change: The Limits of Cognitive Models" in Dan Caldwell and Tim McKeown, eds. *Diplomacy, Force and Leadership: Essays in Honor of Alexander L. George* (Boulder: Westview Press 1993): 95-127.

domestically risky but internationally more promising *Pueblo* and Ward-based strategy of negotiation combined with limited diplomatic pressure and militated against the domestically more rewarding *Mayaguez*-based strategy of launching a rescue attempt. Contrary to the "Afghanistan" explanation, had the invasion not occurred, it is likely that the administration, facing a more permissive international environment and a less-hospitable domestic one, would have pursued a military response to the crisis earlier than it did.

Even if the Hostage Crisis had occurred much earlier in Carter's term, before Afghanistan, before the strong rightward shift in U.S. politics, and years away from the presidential election, it is likely that the pattern of response discussed in this chapter would have been largely the same. Doubts over the possibility of an American Entebbe, lack of historical support for the position that punitive military strikes could secure the release of the hostages, and a more permissive international and domestic environment would still have pushed the administration to judge the Ward and *Pueblo* analogies as most applicable and implement the negotiation strategy. Even without an election on the immediate horizon, as the crisis dragged on it still would have threatened Carter's effectiveness domestically and therefore have increased the perceived applicability of the *Mayaguez* analogy and its prescription for a more forceful response. A response that would likely still have been based upon the Israeli's success at Entebbe. Only by taking away the key analogies or radically changing the situation so that the perceived applicability of the analogies shifted, would administration policy have followed a different pattern.

CONCLUSION

The story of the Carter administration's handling of the Hostage Crisis is the story of the rise and fall of historical analogies. In the opening hours of the crisis, the administration looked to the experience of the earlier February assault on the embassy as a guide for action. However, once they learned that the existing government in Tehran was either unwilling or unable to restore the embassy to U.S. control, that analogy was abandoned because the cause and effect relations that had led to the positive outcome in February were no longer present. In the next stage of the crisis, Carter's policy was based on the counsel of his advisers who believed that the Ward and *Pueblo*-based strategy of patient negotiations offered the best way to secure the release of the hostages without making concessions that would humiliate the United States and thus injure its international reputation. However, by March and April, as the domestic costs of continuing down the negotiation path became severe and as the military planners became convinced that they now had a good chance of duplicating the success the Israelis had achieved at Entebbe, Carter heeded the advice of his domestically oriented advisers who encouraged him to stop negotiating and to implement a more militaristic policy like Ford had done during the *Mayaguez* incident, which could shore up his flagging domestic prospects. However, with the failure of the rescue attempt, the relative decline in the amount of domestic pressure to take military action, and the increasing accusations that Carter was manipulating the Hostage Crisis for political gain, Carter

again turned to the Ward and *Pueblo*-based strategies of patient negotiations as the best way to advance his and the nation's interests; a strategy that did eventually result in the release of the hostages.

Thus, Carter's handling of the Hostage Crisis is an excellent example of how policy makers can be captives to the analogical reasoning process without being captives to any particular analogy. Throughout the crisis the administration relied on historical analogies to determine what its policy should be, but what that analogy was, could and did change over time. Furthermore, the reasons why the influence of different analogies rose and fell over time confirm the model of analogical choice offered here. Policy makers did select their historical lessons from a relatively small set of salient analogies, they did select internationally or domestically focused lessons depending upon which type of interest they were looking to further, and they did select lessons based on the similarity between what is known about the current situation and the factors that were seen as causally important in driving the outcomes of the previous events.

CHAPTER SEVEN

EVADING AN ANALOGY:

THE LEGACY OF THE IRANIAN HOSTAGE CRISIS AND RONALD REAGAN'S POLICY TOWARDS THE HOSTAGES IN LEBANON

"Let me further make it plain to the assassins in Beirut and their accomplices, . . . America will never make concessions to terrorists--to do so would only invite more terrorism--nor will we ask nor pressure any other government to do so. Once we head down that path there would be no end to it, no end to the suffering of innocent people, no end to the bloody ransom all civilized nations must pay"

<div align="right">-Ronald Reagan, June 18, 1985</div>

"A few months ago I told the American people I did not trade arms for hostages. My heart and my best intentions still tell me that is true, but the facts and the evidence tell me it is not. . . . What began as a strategic opening to Iran deteriorated, in its implementation, into trading arms for hostages. . . . It was a mistake. . . . I let my personal concern for the hostages spill over into the geopolitical strategy of reaching out to Iran"

<div align="right">-Ronald Reagan, March 4, 1987[1]</div>

For Ronald Reagan, the end of the Iranian Hostage Crisis during the closing minutes of the Carter administration and the welcoming

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[1] *Public Papers of The Presidents of The United States: Ronald Reagan* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1982-1989) 1985, vol. 1, p. 779 and 1987 vol. 1, pp. 208-211.

home of the American hostages in January of 1981 was one of the happiest moments of his administration.[2] Unfortunately for Reagan, the issue of American captives held abroad also provided some of the darkest moments of his tenure in the White House. Throughout 1984 and 1985, seven Americans were taken hostage in Beirut, leaving Reagan to face the possibility of a protracted hostage crisis of his own.[3] The Reagan administration's attempt to avoid a crisis similar to the one that had haunted the final year of Jimmy Carter's presidency led directly to one half of the administration's worst scandal--the Iran component of Iran-Contra.[4]

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[2]Interview of April 25, 1983, *Public Papers*, 1983, p. 679.

[3]The seven were William Buckely, Benjamin Weir, Peter Kilburn, Lawrence Jenco, Terry Anderson, David Jacobsen, and Thomas Sutherland.

[4]Because the Iran-Contra affair generated a number of investigations, the amount of material available on it greatly exceeds the norm for such a recent event. The most comprehensive source is the *Report of the Congressional Committees Investigating The Iran-Contra Affair* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987) (hereafter referred to as *Joint Hearings*), which in addition to the report itself includes 12 volumes of public testimony, 2 volumes of source documents, 27 volumes of depositions, and a chronology of events. Also invaluable is The President's Special Review Board,*The Tower Commission Report* (hereafter *Tower*) (New York: Bantam and Times Books, 1987). For other investigations see the *Preliminary Inquiry Into The Sale of Arms To Iran and Possible Diversion of Funds To The Nicaraguan Resistance*, Report of the Select Committee on Intelligence, U.S. Senate (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987); *United States Policy Toward Iran*, Hearings Before The Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987); and Lawrence Walsh, *Final Report of the Independent Counsel for Iran/Contra Matters* (Washington: August 4, 1993). For a useful summary of much of this material see The Congressional Quarterly's *The Iran -Contra Puzzle* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, 1987). A number of participants in the affair have also written memoirs, see, George Bush with Victor Gold, *Looking Forward* (New York: Doubleday, 1987), pp. 239-245; Michael A Leeden, *Perilous Statecraft: An Insider's Account of The Iran-Contra Affair* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988); Robert C. McFarlane with Zofia Snardz, *Special Trust* (New York: Cadell and Davies, 1994); Edwin Meese III, *With Reagan: The Inside Story* (Washington: Regnery Gateway, 1992), pp. 242-271; Oliver L. North with William Novak, *Under Fire: An American Story* (New York: Harper Paperback, 1991); Ronald Reagan, *Ronald Reagan: An American Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), pp. 471-543; Donald Regan, *For The Record: From Wall Street to Washington* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988); George Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993), pp. 783-924; Richard Secord with Jay Wurts, *Honored and Betrayed: Irangate, Covert Affairs, and The Secret War in Laos* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1992); Larry Speakes with Robert Pack, *Speaking Out: The Reagan Presidency From Inside The White House* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988); and Caspar Weinberger, *Fighting For Peace: Seven Critical Years in The Pentagon* (New York: Warner Books, 1991), pp. 353-385. For a review of the Reagan administration memoirs see Robert J. McMahon, "Making Sense of American Foreign Policy During The Reagan Years," *Diplomatic History* 19,2 (Spring 1995): 367-384. The best secondary account of the Iran-Contra Affair is Theodore Draper, *A Very Thin Line: The Iran Contra Affairs* (New

To try to ensure that his administration did not endure a repeat of the Iranian Hostage Crisis, President Reagan approved the highly controversial policy captured by the phrase "trading arms for hostages". In order to entice the Iranian government to use its influence with the Shiite groups in Lebanon who were holding the hostages to release them, the United States offered Iran a variety of inducements. While arms sales were the most prominent of these inducements, the Reagan administration was also willing to trade intelligence on the Iran-Iraq war, money, medical supplies, Arab prisoners held in Israel, convicted terrorists held in Kuwait, promises of a closer relationship with Iran, promises to help unseat Saddam Hussein in Iraq, and promises to help fend off any Soviet challenges in the region, if Iran would use its influence to secure the release of the hostages. As Oliver North put it, "I would have told them they could have free tickets to Disney World or a trip on the Space Shuttle if it would have gotten Americans home."[5]

All these inducements ran against the administration's often repeated public pronouncements against making concessions to terrorists or their supporters. The puzzle examined in this chapter is, what caused Reagan to pursue a policy that "was in direct blatant violation" to his own policy on terrorism that he had "approved, reapproved, stated and restated?"[6] From the moment the arms for hostages trades became public in November 1986, the answer to this question was often phrased in terms of two different analogies. The first analogy, favored by many

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York: Touchstone, 1991). For an account of the affair that focuses on Israel's participation, see Samuel Segev (Haim Watzman translator), *The Iranian Triangle: The Untold Story of Israel's Role in The Iran-Contra Affair* (New York: The Free Press, 1988).

[5]*Joint Hearings*, 100-7 part I, North testimony, p. 290. See also p. 8.

[6]Memo from Robert Oakley to Nicholas Platt, June 2, 1986 quoted in the *Independent Counsel Report*, Vol. 1, p. 342.

members of the administration in their public statements, was to the opening of China during the Nixon administration. Reagan and many of his aides maintained that the inducements to Iran were designed not to secure the release of the hostages (though that would be a welcomed side effect), but to re-establish friendly relations with a strategically important country. Opposed to this, is the argument that the historical parallel that Reagan and his aides had in mind was not the opening of China, but the Iran Hostage Crisis under President Carter, and that the administration offered these inducements to Iran to avoid a replay of the 444 day ordeal that helped bring down the Carter presidency.[7]

The argument advanced in this chapter is that the Carter analogy was the driving force behind the Iran initiative and that the China analogy was merely a rationale designed to cloak an arms for hostages exchange in strategic garb. However, the role played by the Hostage Crisis analogy in this case is quite different than the role played by historical analogies in the previous chapters. There, analogies were used as a source of lessons that helped decision makers figure out what particular policies would best advance their international and/or domestic interests by giving them information regarding the likely consequences of different policies. In this case, however, the Carter analogy was not used as an important source of lessons that showed Reagan how he could best pursue the release of the hostages while protecting the national interests of the United States as well as his own domestic interests. Instead, the Iranian Hostage Crisis analogy affected

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[7]When the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations first began to look into the Iranian arms sales they structured the opening of their hearings around these two analogies by planning for their first two witnesses to be Henry Kissinger to talk about the opening of China and Cyrus Vance to talk about the Iranian Hostage Crisis. See their report on *U.S. Policy Towards Iran*, p. 2.

Reagan's definition of his identity as President and thus defined what he saw his interests as being. After viewing the Hostage Crisis, Reagan became convinced that it was his duty as President to secure the release of hostages at all costs, even if his policies damaged the U.S.'s international and the President's domestic standing. The driving force behind Reagan's hostage policy was to ensure that no one, including the President himself, could think that Ronald Reagan was having the same troubles Jimmy Carter had had. To avoid such comparisons, which threatened Reagan's definition of his Presidency, the administration adopted a policy of giving Iran virtually whatever it asked for, regardless of the damage Reagan knew such a policy could have internationally and domestically.

Historical lessons regarding what type of policy would best protect the administration's international and domestic interests were available. Indeed, in addition to any lessons that could have been derived from Carter's handling of the Hostage Crisis, the Reagan team could draw on the same historical repertoire that the Carter administration had. However, Reagan largely ignored these lessons when he decided to approve arms sales to Iran in order to obtain the release of the hostages. The reason these lessons were mostly ignored is that none offered Reagan a way of avoiding a prolonged crisis similar to the one that had afflicted Jimmy Carter. Lack of intelligence regarding the whereabouts of the hostages ruled out the possibility of a military rescue and the strategy of patient negotiation combined with diplomatic pressure that had eventually succeeded in the Angus Ward, *Pueblo* and Iranian cases virtually guaranteed a lengthy stalemate.

With the Hostage Crisis having been a central issue in his successful 1980 campaign and having defined much of his presidency in opposition to what he viewed as the failures of the Carter administration, Reagan was unwilling to permit such a drawn out standoff, which would invite unwanted comparisons between himself and his predecessor. This decision had nothing to do with protecting the national interests of the United States or the domestic interests of the President. Reagan's attempt to avoid becoming the analogical equivalent of Jimmy Carter by trading arms for hostages was not done because he believed that a quick resolution of the hostage matter would best promote the national interests or his domestic interests. Instead, Reagan pursued an arms for hostages policy because he refused to accept that he could now be as helpless or ineffective as he had earlier derided Jimmy Carter for being. For Reagan, not being like Jimmy Carter during the Hostage Crisis was an end in itself.

Indeed, what is most striking about Reagan's policy towards the hostages in Lebanon is that he and his advisers anticipated that trading arms for hostages would damage America's international reputation and the President's domestic standing. Even if it succeeded in getting all the hostages out, many of Reagan's advisers still argued that a policy of giving in to the terrorists and their sponsors would be an international and domestic disaster. Reagan did not dispute such arguments, he simply maintained that he was willing to suffer such costs if it meant getting the hostages out. Unlike the cases explored in the previous chapters, for Reagan, the Carter analogy did not serve as a cognitive road map that highlighted certain cause and effect relations that showed the President

how best to advance his international and domestic goals. Instead, having defined himself and his role as President in opposition to what he saw as Carter's weakness, the Hostage Crisis analogy gave Reagan a different goal--to get the hostages out quickly so no one could think he was as "ineffective" a President as Jimmy Carter.

A JUSTIFYING ANALOGY: "OPENING" IRAN

When Ronald Reagan first attempted to explain his policy toward Iran to the public, he equated his secret arms deals to Kissinger's secret diplomacy that resulted in the opening of China to the West. He declared that the charges that he had "shipped weapons to Iran as ransom payment for the release of American hostages in Lebanon" were "utterly false." Instead, he maintained that the arms shipments had been secretly sent to Iran "as a signal that the United States was prepared to replace the animosity between us with a new relationship." "There is ample precedent in our history for this kind of secret diplomacy," Reagan argued, "In 1971, then-President Richard Nixon sent his national security adviser on a secret mission to China. In that case, as today, there was a basic requirement for discretion and for a sensitivity to the situation in the nation we were attempting to engage."[8] Reagan also referred to the China analogy when he gave his first briefing to Congressional leaders on the growing Iran-Contra scandal.[9]

Reagan's former National Security Adviser, Robert McFarlane, also reached for the China analogy to explain the Iranian initiative to the

[8]November 13, 1986, *Public Papers*, 1986, vol. 2, pp. 1546-1548.
[9]Notes of John Richardson, November 25, 1986, *Joint Hearings*, 100-9, p. 1442

public. In an editorial for the *Washington Post*, McFarlane asked his readers to imagine whether they would take a risk by negotiating with a strategically important country even though they knew the country had recently undergone a bloody revolution and the government was currently "involved in supporting elements in third countries that are engaged in killing Americans." Assuming all his readers had Iran on their minds, McFarlane ended his article by saying that the United States had already decided to go ahead with such an initiative and that "the country was China, and today most people credit the secret diplomacy of Dr. Kissinger with giving us one of the most dramatic diplomatic triumphs ever achieved in our history." While McFarlane maintained that the "China experience" may not be a "perfect analogue," he argued that "the basic issue was the same."[10]

The thrust of the China analogy is that the arms sales to Iran did not represent giving in to terrorists by trading arms for hostages, but instead had been the opening move in a geostrategic plan to make Iran once again a valued ally of the United States. However, the documentary record and the behavior of the United States throughout the episode make clear that "opening" Iran was not the administration's primary

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[10]November 13, 1986, p. A-21. For additional discussions of the China analogy see *Joint Hearings*, 100-9, Shultz testimony, pp. 117-118; 100-7 part I, North testimony, p. 286; appendix A, vol. 1, Source Documents, pp. 1279; *Tower*, p. 314; and Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of A Lifetime* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991) p. 596. According to many of his colleagues, McFarlane, who had joined Henry Kissinger's staff one year after the announcement of the opening of China, was preoccupied with equaling his former bosses exploits, a charge McFarlane rejects. See, North, *Under Fire*, p. 221; Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p. 815; Secord, *Honored and Betrayed*, p. 260; Speakes, *Speaking Out*, p. 260; Weinberger, *Fighting For Peace*, p. 360; and McFarlane, *Special Trust*, pp. 17, 91-93 and 150. See also Jane Mayer and Doyle McManus, *Landslide: The UnMaking Of The President, 1984-1988* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1988) pp. 123-124 and Bob Schieffer and Gary Paul Gates, *The Acting President* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1989) pp. 230-231 and 271-272.

objective, getting the hostages out was.[11] The China analogy was used for public consumption to rationalize an unpopular arms for hostages policy once it had been exposed. This is not to argue that the Reagan administration would not have welcomed improved relations with Iran. Indeed, many of the members of the administrations did hope that long term strategic gains could result from their discussions with the Iranians. However, this long term goal was always a distant second. Reagan was primarily interested in pursuing these arms sales to Iran because he hoped they would result in the release of the hostages and whenever the goal of getting the hostages out came in conflict with the long term goal of "opening" Iran, the administration decided in favor of the hostages.[12] As Oliver North, a National Security Council (NSC) staffer and the administration's chief operative throughout most of the operation put it, "with Ronald Reagan it always came back to the hostages. . . [it is a] terrible mistake to say that Ronald Reagan wanted the strategic

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[11]This distinction between the documentary record and the administration's actions derives from Alexander George's distinction between the process tracing and the congruence methods. See the discussion of this in chapter one.

[12]Some participants and students of Irangate dispute this conclusion; for example, Richard Secord is virtually alone in arguing that the long term strategic goal was the dominant concern throughout the initiative, *Honored and Betrayed*, pp. 1, 218, 237-238 and 244-5; and Noel Koch argues that although arms for hostages dominated at first, the strategic goals became more important later in the initiative, *Joint Hearings*, 100-6, pp. 88, 93 and 104 and appendix B, vol. 8, pp. 82. A bit more common is the view that both goals were important and that neither one predominated, see, the Senate Intelligence Committee's *Preliminary Inquiry Into The Sale of Arms to Iran*, pp. 2-4; Meese, *With Reagan*, pp. 243, 247, 249-250 and 252-257; Regan; *For The Record*, p. 31 and Regan's testimony to the *Joint Hearings*, 100-10, pp. 11-12 (However, Regan does later accept that the initiative "degenerated" into arms for hostages 110-10, p. 88). For arguments that agree that the hostage goal was paramount or that somehow the initiative mysteriously "degenerated" into arms for hostages, see, *Joint Hearings*, Report, pp. 12, and 277-279; Minority Report, pp. 445-446, 519-520 and 523-524; North testimony, 100-7 part I, p. 293, 100-7 part 2, pp. 65 and 149-151; 100-2, McFarlane testimony, pp. 222-225 and 263; 100-9, Shultz testimony, pp. 39-40; 100-11, George testimony, pp. 231-231 and 235; the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's *United States Policy Toward Iran*, p. 489; *Tower*, pp. xviii, 64 and 80; For Reagan, see his comments on March 4, 1987, March 19, 1987, and August 12, 1987 in *Public Papers*, 1987, vol. 1, pp. 208-211, 260-261 and vol. 2, p. 942. See also Congressional Quarterly, *The Iran-Contra Puzzle*, p. 8; Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p. 784-785, 794, 799, 811, 814 and 816; Leeden, *Perilous Statecraft*, pp. 24-27, 134 and 264; McFarlane, *Special Trust*, pp. 6, 10 and 89-90; North, *Under Fire*, pp. 51-53; and Cannon, *President Reagan*, pp. 613-614.

relationship because Ronald Reagan wanted the hostages." North's former boss at the NSC agreed and maintained that "it is just undeniable that Reagan's obsession with freeing the hostages overrode anything else."[13]

The argument in support of the China analogy offered by the administration is that the exchange of arms *and* hostages were not exchanges of arms *for* hostages, but the means by which both sides could demonstrate to the other their "bona fides." That is, the arm shipments from the United States were intended to prove that the people the Iranians were dealing with did have influence with the U.S. government and that the Reagan administration was willing to consider a closer relationship with Iran, and that similarly, the Iranian efforts to secure the release of the hostages were intended to demonstrate their influence and good faith. The United States shipped arms to Iran, according to President Reagan, "to convince Tehran that our negotiators were acting with my authority [and] to send a signal that the United States was prepared to replace the animosity between us with a new relationship." In return, the President continued, "the most significant step which Iran could take, we indicated, would be to use its influence in Lebanon to secure the release of all the hostages held there."[14]

Proponents of this argument also maintain that another purpose of the arms shipments was to bolster moderate elements within Iran who wanted to improve relations with the United States. They argued that

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[13]For North's quote see his interview with Meese on November 23, 1986, *Joint Hearings*, 100-7 vol. 3, p. 47 and for McFarlane's quote see Cannon, *President Reagan*, p. 611.

[14]November 13, 1986, *Public Papers*, 1986, vol. 2, p. 1546. In the same series see also pp. 1567-1568, 1607-1608, and 1987, vol. 1, p. 92. For other examples of this argument see, *Joint Hearings*, 100-8, Poindexter testimony, p. 143, 100-9, Meese testimony, pp. 197, 204, and 318-319; and Senate Foreign Relations Committee's *United States Policy Toward Iran*, McFarlane testimony, p. 38.

these moderates could be strengthened in their domestic struggle for power by demonstrating to competing factions that they could help defend the country by delivering needed U.S. weapons. According to administration officials, "the Iranians with whom the U.S. was in touch were young and claimed a need to demonstrate through arms transfers . . . that they were dealing with the USG [U.S. Government]" and that "weapons would give this faction some leverage in the internal struggle by suggesting that there were advantages in contacts with the West."[15]

Regarding the documentary record, the evidence is overwhelming that the members of the Reagan administration saw the arms sales as a way to get the hostages out and not as a means to "open" Iran to the West. While discussions of the China analogy and the development of a strategic relationship with Iran dominate the early public statements of the administration, the opposite is true in the private record of the administration throughout the initiative. There, as will be demonstrated throughout this chapter, concerns about the hostages dominate. When administration officials discussed the arms sales, they almost always talked about "our hostage plan," but rarely if ever about "our plan to improve relations with Iran."[16] Indeed, the private record is littered with equations spelling out how much the hostages will cost in terms of

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[15]The first quote comes from Abraham Sofaer's November 18, 1986 memo of conversation with John Poindexter, *Joint Hearings* 100-6, p. 934, see also p. 938. The second quote comes from a November 20, 1986, "Draft statement for William Casey's Presentation to the Senate and House Intelligence Commitees, November 21, 1986," *Joint Hearings*, 100-7, part 3, p. 173. See also Casey's testimony of November 21, 1986, to the Intelligence Committees, 100-7 part 3, pp. 203 and 211; and Meese, *With Reagan*, pp. 261-264. This argument is also highlighted in the second and third Presidential findings on Iran that will be discussed below, see *Joint Hearings*, 100-7, part 3, pp. 307-310.
[16]Individual examples are too numerous to cite, but for similar conclusions see *Tower*, p. 64 and *Joint Hearings*, 100-9, Shultz testimony, p. 608.

different types of arms (usually HAWK or TOW missiles) like Oliver North's calculation that:

120 HAWKS=

       1) 5 AMCITS [American Citizens]

       2) Promise that no more [are taken]

Or his later calculation that: [the H here stands for the hour at which the plan is to be put in motion]

       "600 Tows= 1 release

       H + 6 hrs later= 2000 Tows= 3 release

       H + 23 hrs= 600 Tows= 1 release[17]

The only place in the private record where concerns regarding the long term strategic relationship and the China analogy play a prominent role is when the Americans are talking not to each other, but to the Iranians. There the U.S. negotiators often discuss the U.S.'s desire for an overall improvement in relations and the re-establishment of a strategic partnership.[18] However, in these meetings the American negotiators clearly had an ulterior motive in stressing the strategic relationship: it helped keep the price of the hostages as low as possible and expedite their release. The administration recognized that the Iranians were afraid that once they helped secure the release of the hostages, the United States would no longer have any interest in continuing the dialogue and selling arms. Therefore, as a simple

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[17]Both are taken from North's handwritten notes, the first is dated November 20, 1985 and the second is dated December 1, 1985, *Joint Hearings*, 100-7, part 3, pp. 344 and 378.

[18]For examples see the firsthand accounts of the May 1986 meeting in Tehran or the tapes of the October 1986 meetings in Germany, *Joint Hearings*, appendix A, vol. 1, pp. 1252-1309 and 1571-1745. For a mention of the China analogy see p. 1279.

negotiating tactic, the U.S. intermediaries decided to play up the interest of the United States in a strategic relationship with Iran.[19]

Moreover, the private record also reveals that the administration believed that stressing the long term strategic goals of the initiative as embodied in the China analogy would be an effective way to mute public criticism once their arms for hostages deals became public. According to William Casey, the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, the central argument against the arms for hostages exchanges was that they would inflict upon the President "the onus of having traded with the captors." To lessen the force of this argument, "the President felt that any ongoing contact would be justified and any charges that might be made later could be met and justified as an effort to influence future events in Iran. I [Casey] did point out that there was an historical precedent for this and that was always the rationale the Israelis had given us for their providing arms to Iran."[20] Also, once the arms sales did become public, the administration made a concerted effort to stress the long term strategic goal and downplay the President's true interest in the hostages.[21]

In addition to the documentary trail not supporting the claim that "opening" Iran was the main goal of the arms sales, many of the actions taken by the administration were inconsistent with such a goal. The argument that the shipments of weapons were designed to demonstrate

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[19]See, *Joint Hearings,* Hakim testimony, 100-5, p. 290; George Cave Memo on the Tehran meeting, appendix A, vol. 1, p. 1264; North PROF to Poindexter September 9, 1986, appendix C, p. 192 (PROF is an acronym for the private e-mail network used by the NSC staff); and Craig Fuller's notes of Nir's briefing of Bush, July 29, 1986, *Tower,* p. 387.

[20]Casey memo to DDCI, November 10, 1985, *Joint Hearings,* 100-11, p. 890. See also North's Draft Press Guidances should the initiative become public, 100-11, pp. 473-476.

[21]See McFarlane PROF to Poindexter, November 15, 1986, *Joint Hearings,* 100-2, p. 636 and Donald Regan's Notes on a November 10, 1986 meeting, 100-10, p. 387.

the influence and good faith of the U.S. negotiators and to strengthen moderate elements in Tehran does not stand up to scrutiny. For instance, when stories of the arms sales first surfaced, the Reagan administration justified its hesitancy to comment by arguing that any disclosure, besides risking the lives of the remaining hostages, could also put the Iranians the United States was dealing with at risk.[22] How can this argument be squared with the contention that one of the purposes of the initiative was to strengthen moderate elements in Iran by demonstrating that they could get assistance from the United States? Even if one accepts the dubious assumption that a demonstrated ability and willingness to deal with the United States would be a domestic benefit in revolutionary Iran, there is a definite contradiction between that argument and the argument that the arms sales could not be made public because it would put at risk the moderate factions in Iran by demonstrating that they had dealt with the United States.[23]

What about the "bona fides" argument that arms and hostages were exchanged simply to show that both sides had influence and were negotiating in good faith? This explanation also has its problems. Why did the mutual establishment of "bona fides" take so long? By September of 1985 Iran had received two shipments of arms and one hostage had been released. Why did this first exchange not adequately demonstrate that both sides had the ability and willingness to negotiate?

[22]*Joint Hearings*, North testimony, 100-7, part 1, p. 147; Cave memo on "Rundown of Visitor's Comments on 19/20 Sept 1986", 100-7, part 3, p. 791; Eric Newsom's memo on November 28, 1986 meeting with Poindexter, 100-8, pp. 683-685; and Meese, *With Reagan*, pp. 210-211.
[23]See the Senate Foreign Relation Committee's *United States Policy Toward Iran*, pp. 44-46.

The "bona fides" argument can not explain why there was a total of eight deliveries of arms and three separate releases of hostages.[24]

In addition, the way the Reagan administration conducted the negotiations was certainly not designed to establish the good faith of the United States or to bolster anyone in Iran. For instance, when Oliver North was asked about some of the promises he had offered the Iranians during the negotiations, he admitted that he lied to the Iranians every time he met with them.[25] North also recommended mixing the genuine intelligence on the Iraqi military he was giving the Iranians as part of a hostage deal with false intelligence.[26] Moreover, by structuring the arms for hostages deals in such a way that the private intermediaries involved could make a profit and that there would be money left over to donate to the Contras in Nicaragua, the prices the Iranians paid for the arms were greatly inflated and the weapons they were sent were often the oldest and least desirable models the U.S. negotiators could find.[27] Lying to the Iranians, providing them with bogus intelligence, charging exorbitant prices, and sending old equipment was unlikely to convince anyone that the United States was truly interested in a long term relationship or to shore up anyone in Iran.

Another problem with accepting the administration's claims that their main objective was to "open" Iran is that selling arms was simply

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[24]*Tower*, p. 64 and *Joint Hearings*, Leeden deposition, appendix B, vol. 15, pp. 1004.

[25]*Joint Hearings*, 100-7, part 1, pp. 7-8, 233, 332-33 and part 2, pp. 7-8.

[26]See North to Poindexter February 18, 1986, *Joint Hearings*, 100-7 part 3, p. 1082; the now infamous "diversion" memo of April 4, 1986, pp. 3-4; North to Poindexter October 2, 1986, p. 1242; and North to Poindexter September 26, 1986, in *Tower*, p. 417.

[27]On the pricing and equipment question see *Joint Hearings*, Report, pp. 214, 259 and 278; 100-1, p. 291-292, 311-313; 100-7, part 2, pp. 91, McFarlane testimony, 100-2, p. 277 and Poindexter deposition, appendix B, vol. 20, pp. 1177-1178. See also, Draper, *A Very Thin Line*, pp. 274-275 and 373-379; and Cannon, *President Reagan*, pp. 659-659.

not an effective way to pursue a long term positive relationship with Iran. By the time the arms for hostages discussions began, the Iran-Iraq war had been dragging on for over five years. The toll the war was inflicting on Iran, combined with the fact that the Iranian military under the Shah had been largely built around U.S. equipment, meant that Iran was desperate to resupply their forces with U.S. weapons. Therefore, as the administration recognized, in the short term, Iran would be willing to say or do anything to get the arms they needed, including lying about their long term intentions with regard to a relationship with the United States. Thus, if the United States was willing to send arms to Iran, there would be no way to judge the intentions of the Iranians.[28] As Secretary of State Shultz saw it, if Iran was truly interested in establishing a strategic relationship with the United States, the Reagan administration would not need to court Iran with weapons.[29]

Many at State "saw an objective difference between the Nixon-Kissinger opening to China, which had been sought by China during a time of wholesale policy changes in that nation's relations with the Soviet Union" and "chasing after radical regimes" by offering arms and making "obsequious overtures to Iran."[30] As the State Department viewed it, arms sales should only come after the Iranian government had become more moderate in American eyes. Sending arms to Iran at this time would only shore up the radical Khomeini regime that the United States

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[28] *Joint Hearings*, Leeden deposition, appendix B, vol. 15, pp. 1019, 1200, 1237 and 1429.

[29] Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p. 841 and November 1986 Draft Statement Prepared by the State Department, *Joint Hearings*, 100-9, p. 581.

[30] Cannon, *President Reagan*, p. 604. His source is an interview with Peter Rodman.

was ostensibly trying to weaken.[31] Thus, exchanges of arms and hostages were not a way of repeating Nixon's diplomatic coup, but instead were "contrary to our interest both in containing Khomeinism and in ending the excesses of this regime."[32]

In support of the China analogy, the administration offered additional justifications for why the arms sales should be seen as a strategic initiative rather than a trade of arms for hostages. However, these justifications led to further contradictions. For example, at times the administration argued that the hostages became involved in the Iran initiative because they were obstacles to better relations. They argued that America could not befriend Iran while it was still supporting those holding American captives, but that once that hurdle was cleared, both sides would be free to establish friendlier relations.[33] At the same time, Reagan also argued that he was not trading arms for hostages because he was dealing with Iran, which held no captives, and not with the Lebanese groups who actually held the Americans. Reagan compared himself to a parent whose child has been kidnapped and who is unwilling to reward the captors by paying a ransom, "but if I find out that there's somebody who has access to the kidnapper and can get my child back without doing anything for the kidnapper, I'd sure do that."[34]

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[31]This argument was later confirmed by some of the Iranian intermediaries, see *Joint Hearings*, Leeden deposition, appendix B, vol. 15, pp. 1022-1024, 1207-1208, and 1432; and Leeden, *Perilous Statecraft*, pp. 139-143.

[32]Shultz to McFarlane, June 29, 1985 in *Joint Hearings*, 100-9, p. 500.

[33]This argument was used primarily with the Iranians to encourage them to clear the hostage hurdle and thus prepare the way for substantial amounts of U.S. aid. See the accounts of various meetings with the Iranians, *Joint Hearings*, appendix A, vol. 1, pp. 1257-1258, 1274-1275, 1277, 1349, 1474-1476, 1480-14811, 1609, and 1612.

[34]Reagan, *An American Life*, p. 512. For similar arguments see Meese, *With Reagan*, pp. 258-259; Reagan's comments on April 28, 1987, *Public Papers*, 1987, vol. 1, p. 428; and *Joint Hearings*, Poindexter testimony, 100-8, pp. 186 and 237.

These arguments create a series of difficulties, not the least of which is the contradiction between the two. If Iran did have control over the Hizballah groups holding the hostages, then dealing with Iran was rewarding the terrorists; and if Iran did not have a significant degree of control over the captors, then why should the United States make a better strategic relationship with Iran conditional on a situation that the Iranians had little control over?[35]

Perhaps the best argument against all of these claims that the arms sales were part of a geostrategic plan to "open" Iran is that the Reagan administration knew the claims to be false, yet continued with the initiative. Contrary to the arguments that the hostages would be released so that moderate elements in Iran could demonstrate their "bona fides" and that the United States would ship arms to help moderate elements in Iran to change the government of Iran, the Reagan officials involved in the initiative knew that: First, moderate factions within Iran did not have the ability to get the hostages out and because the primary U.S. interest was in getting the hostages and not improving relations with Iran, the Reagan administration knowingly dealt "with the most radical elements" in Iran because, "they can deliver . . . that's for sure."[36] Second, the administration knew that the arms were not being paid for and used by a moderate faction but by the Iranian government. Indeed, Oliver North and others were fond of referring to the profits from the arms sales that were being sent to the Contras as "Khomeini's money" and they believed

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[35]This point was made forcefully by Senator Nunn during the Congressional hearings, *Joint Hearings*, 100-8, p. 186.

[36]Craig Fuller's notes on Nir briefing of Bush, July, 29, 1986, *Tower*, p. 388. See also, *Joint Hearings*, Shultz testimony, 100-9, p, 523; *Tower*, p. 64; Secord, *Honored and Betrayed*, p. 224; Taheri, *Nest of Spies*, p. 177.

that the diversion was a "rather innovative sting on the Ayatollah."[37] Third, and finally, the United States also knew that Khomeini was well aware of the arms sales and that rather than undermining him, the sales were strengthening his government.[38]

Contrary to the argument that the hostages were an absolute obstacle to better relations, the administration knew that the State Department was pursuing other contacts to improve relations with Iran that were not blocked by the hostage issue.[39] And finally, contrary to the argument that the administration was not rewarding terrorism because Iran was getting the arms and the hostage takers themselves were not benefiting, the U.S. negotiators knew that Iran was paying off Hizballah to obtain the hostages and that there was little difference between rewarding the terrorist group itself or its supporters.[40]

The point of this section is not to argue that the United States had no interests in re-establishing friendly relations with Iran, but to argue that those interests were not the driving force behind the arms sales and that the Reagan administration was willing to sacrifice its strategic interests while pursuing the Iran initiative. The United States would not have sold arms to the Khomeini regime if its primary goal was

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[37]*Joint Hearings*, North testimony, 100-7, part I, pp. 109-110 and 118-119; Earl deposition, appendix B, vol. 9, pp. 603 and 887; McFarlane's testimony of December 8, 1986 to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, 100-2, p. 687; Casey's testimony of November 21, 1986 to the House Intelligence Committee, 100-6, pp. 736-737; and Leeden, *Perilous Statecraft*, p. 133.

[38]*Tower*, pp. 45-46 and 357; *Joint Hearings*, Poindexter testimony, 100-8, p. 366; Allen deposition, appendix B, vol. 1, p. 1061; Leeden deposition, appendix B, vol. 15, pp. 1006-1007, 1022-1024, 1207-1208, and 1432; and Mayer and McManus, *Landslide*, p. 265. See also Reagan's discussion of this, *An American Life*, pp. 506 and 542.

[39]*Joint Hearings*, Shultz testimony, 100-9, pp. 11-12.

[40]See the material on the May Tehran meeting in *Joint Hearings*, appendix A, vol. 1, pp. 1262-1263, 1266, 1286-1291, and 1297; Shultz testimony, 100-9, p. 606; and North, *Under Fire*, p. 333.

improving the strategic position of the United States.[41] Instead, the moving force behind the arms sales, the goal that subordinated all others, was to get the hostages out. The following section explores why that goal was so important to Ronald Reagan that he was willing to risk international and domestic losses to achieve it.

A DEFINING ANALOGY: THE LEGACY OF THE HOSTAGE CRISIS

"Jimmy Carter's inability to secure the release of the American diplomats held hostage by Iran for 444 days had become a metaphor for a paralyzed presidency and the decline of American power throughout the world."

-James A. Baker III[42]

As the days the American hostages in Lebanon spent in captivity began to pile up, President Reagan was occasionally asked by reporters if he felt the current situation was at all similar to Jimmy Carter's 444 days of frustration. When asked such questions, Reagan strongly denied

[41]While some administration members argue that Reagan would have pursued an opening to Iran even if there had been no hostages, none argue that such an initiative would have included arms. See *Joint Hearings*, Regan testimony, 100-10, p. 50 and Meese testimony, 100-9, p. 414. Secretary of Defense Weinberger was against any overtures to Iran, with or without arms (100-10, p. 165) and Secretary Shultz, when asked if the United States would have sent arms to Iran had there been no hostages, refused to answer directly, but his opposition to arms sales as a way of improving relations with Iran was clear throughout, (Shultz testimony, 100-9, pp. 7, 108-109 and Poindexter testimony, 100-8, p. 356). When asked the same question, John Poindexter, the National Security adviser throughout much of the initiative answered "maybe" (Poindexter testimony, 100-8, pp. 235-236) and while Reagan himself has maintained that he would have pursued improved relations with Iran regardless of the hostages, he is vague on whether arms would still have been involved, see Mayer and McManus, *Landslide*, p. 300.

[42]James A. Baker III with Thomas M. DeFrank, *The Politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War and Peace, 1989-1992* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1995), pp. 261-122. Baker served as Reagan's Chief of Staff and later as his Secretary of the Treasury, but played no role in the Iran initiative.

the validity of the comparison and explained why he believed the current
hostage problem was different and harder to resolve than the one faced
by Carter.[43] However, despite these denials, Reagan did see and feel the
comparison. As Reagan later recounted:

> No problem was more frustrating for me when I was
> president than trying to get the American hostages home. It
> was a problem I shared with Jimmy Carter, a problem that
> confronted me when I entered the White House and was
> with me when I left . . . I learned, as had President Carter,
> how helpless the head of the most powerful nation on earth
> can feel when it comes to the seemingly simple task of
> trying to find and bring home an American citizen held
> against his will in a distant land.[44]

Donald Regan, who as the President's Chief of Staff was, with the
exception of the First Lady, perhaps the person closest to the President
during the Iran initiative, recognized that the similarities between the
current hostage situation in Lebanon and the Iranian Hostage Crisis were
keenly felt by and painful to the President:

> He [Reagan] was the guy that knew the Iranians had rubbed
> Jimmy Carter's nose in it and waited until after his
> presidency ended to release those hostages and let them fly
> back. And Ronald Reagan made the first announcement on
> these hostages and got a big hand about it. Now all of a
> sudden he's got the same situation, and he's responsible for

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[43]See the press conferences of February 7 and June 18, 1985 in *Public Papers*, 1985, vol. 1, pp. 143
and 782-783.
[44]Reagan, *An American Life*, pp. 490-491.

it and he's thinking to himself, 'What's history going to say about me?' . . . All of a sudden he's envisioning himself as a captive alone in a dank, damp prison, and where's the president of the United States? What the hell is he doing to get me out of this fucking place? Nothing. . . . Ronald Reagan eats his heart out over this. It worries him. It's with him.[45]

The 1979-1981 Iranian Hostage Crisis, although occurring during the Carter years, was in many ways the defining event of the Reagan Presidency. More than any other event, the Hostage Crisis symbolized the perception of American weakness and the "malaise" days that Reagan ran against in 1980. Reagan and those around him saw the Hostage Crisis as the key event of the 1980 election and feared that if there were no Hostage Crisis or if Carter had found a way of resolving it more quickly, Reagan would have lost his bid for the presidency.[46]

Not only did the Hostage Crisis dominate Reagan's election, it also dominated his inauguration and the opening days of his administration. Before giving his inaugural address, Reagan had been informed by the departing Carter that they were very close to a deal on the hostages. "If it happens," Reagan told Michael Deaver, "I want you to tell me. Slip me a note. Interrupt me. Because if it happens, I want you to bring Carter up to the platform, I think it is outrageous that they are treating this president this way."[47] The focus of Reagan's first official meeting

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[45]Cannon, *President Reagan*, p. 611.

[46]Meese, *With Reagan*, pp. 54-55; Michael Deaver with Mickey Hershkowitz, *Behind The Scenes* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1989) pp. 97-99; North, *Under Fire*, p. 56; and Secord, *Honored and Betrayed*, pp. 147-148

[47]Deaver claims that the "they" in the final sentence refers not just to the Iranians, but also to the U.S. voting public, Deaver, *Behind the Scenes*, p. 100.

of his National Security Council was on international terrorism, particularly terrorism supported by Iran and Libya. And finally, the January 27, 1981, White House ceremony welcoming the returning hostages home from Iran was seen by the President as one of the brightest moments of his presidency.[48] In late 1983, Reagan justified the U.S. invasion of Grenada, at least in part, on the need to rescue American medical students, arguing that "The nightmare of our hostages in Iran must never be repeated."[49]

Four years after the Hostage Crisis, when the Reagan team was embarking on its second term, the Iranian Hostage Crisis remained an important symbolizing event that helped define the Reagan presidency. On election eve in 1984, Reagan declared that his administration had marked the development of a "new patriotism" that began on "that unforgettable moment when after 444 days of captivity, our hostages came home from Iran to breathe American freedom again."[50] When asked to explain Reagan's stunning popularity with young voters, who gave Reagan an approval rating of 82%, White House pollsters simply responded that these voters knew only two Presidents, and that "Carter meant failure, Reagan means success."[51]

The importance of the Iranian Hostage Crisis in defining the Reagan Presidency meant that a prolonged stalemate over the American hostages seized in Lebanon in 1984 and 1985 was a palpable threat to Reagan's identification of himself as a strong and effective President.

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[48]Malcolm Byrne, ed., *Secret Military Assistance To Iran and The Nicaraguan Opposition: A Chronology of Events and Individuals* (The National Security Archive, 1987), p. 5 and Interview of April 25, 1983, *Public Papers*, 1983, p. 679.

[49]October 27, 1983, *Public Papers*, 1983, vol. 2, pp. 1517-1522.

[50]November 5, 1984, *Public Papers*, 1984, vol. 2, p. 1797.

[51]*Time*, July 7, 1986, p. 14.

Reagan saw it as his duty as President to get those hostages returned quickly, almost regardless of the possible costs. Whereas Carter and those around him defined their goals as getting the hostages home safely in a way that did not jeopardize the country's national interests or Carter's domestic interests, Reagan defined his goals as getting the hostages out, even if it meant sacrificing U.S. interests abroad and Reagan's interests at home.

> I spent many hours trying to sleep while images of those lonely Americans rolled past in my mind . . . As President, as far as I was concerned, I had a duty to get those Americans home . . . Almost every morning at my national security briefing, I began by asking the same question: "any progress on getting the hostages out of Lebanon?"[52]

The President's concern with the hostages, his belief that it was his duty as President to get them released, and his resulting determination to secure their release at virtually any price, quickly became known to his top aides. Chief of Staff Donald Regan confirmed that the "President brings up the hostages at about 90% of his briefings" and that every morning the President asks if there is "anything new on the hostages?"[53] According to Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, "the plight of those hostages was a continuing and deep concern of everyone in our administration," and that whenever the possibility of their release was discussed, "the President always said, 'Oh, that is what I most want to do.'"[54] Robert McFarlane, Reagan's National Security Adviser during

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[52]Reagan, *An American Life*, p. 492.
[53]*Tower*, p. 36. See also, *Joint Hearings*, Regan testimony, 100-10, p. 50.
[54]Weinberger, *Fighting For Peace*, p. 356.

the early days of the initiative recognized that Reagan had "always been profoundly concerned for the welfare of those hostages" and he agreed that the President had indicated to him that he "wanted to do everything we could . . . in order to gain their release."[55] This pressure from the President to act on the hostages was also noted by Reagan's Secretary of State, George Shultz.[56]

This demand to do something about the hostages filtered down to the lower levels of the Reagan administration, most notably to NSC staffer Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North, who became the administration official most involved in the details of the arms for hostages exchanges. North shared with some of his colleagues the pressure he felt from the President to act on the hostage issue, telling them that it "was driving the President nuts . . . and he's on me all the time and he's driving me nuts . . . he wants them back by Christmas" and that Reagan was "willing to go to Leavenworth" if that is what it took to get them out.[57] While North clearly exaggerated the closeness of his relationship with the President and later testified that the President never "turned to me and said, 'Ollie I want them home by Christmas,'" he did maintain that it was very clear that the President wanted "all of them home as fast as possible" and that the President "was obsessed by the hostages, and repeatedly made it clear to all of us who worked on this issue that we should do everything

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[55]*Joint Hearings*, McFarlane testimony, 100-2, pp. 194-195. The second quote comes from a question from Representative Jim Courter to which McFarlane gives his assent. Reagan's other National Security Adviser during this period, John Poindexter, admitted that the President was concerned with the hostages, but not "overly" concerned, Poindexter testimony, 100-8, p. 24.

[56]Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p. 795.

[57]The quotes come from *Joint Hearings*, Koch deposition, appendix B, vol. 15, p. 63 and deposition of DIA Major, appendix B, vol. 9, pp. 191-193. See also DIA Major deposition, appendix B, vol. 9, pp. 132 and 193-195; Earl deposition, appendix B, vol. 9, p. 791; and Koch testimony, 100-6, pp. 69-70 and 106.

possible to get them home."[58] While there remain good reasons to doubt the veracity of the details in North's statements, all the administration officials who worked closely with the President confirm that the general sentiments expressed in them are accurate.

The President's concern for the hostages kept the arms sales going despite recurrent failures. Shultz, who consistently opposed the initiative, believed on four different occasions that the initiative was finished, "but this snake never did die."[59] What kept the initiative going, according to Weinberger, were reports given to the President "that there was a real chance of getting the hostages, that next week there were going to be two and the next week after that there were going to be four."[60] Richard Secord, a retired military officer who was involved in some of the planning for a rescue attempt during the Carter administration and was later used by North to help ship arms to Iran maintained that what kept the Iran initiative going "was a tremendous concern in the White House, from the President on down, about the faith [fate?] of the American hostages being held in Lebanon, and I think this concern sprang from criticisms made some years previously about a different administration, which I was also involved in deeply. So I can remember that."[61]

While Reagan remained determined to avoid a repeat of the Hostage Crisis, the Carter analogy provided few lessons regarding how that could be done. One lesson that the Reagan people did learn from

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[58]*Joint Hearings*, North testimony, 100-7, part 1, p. 289 and North, *Under Fire*, p. 63.
[59]Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p. 784.
[60]*Joint Hearings*, Weinberger testimony, 100-10, p. 176. See also p. 184.
[61]Secord also argues that the persistence of Israel helped keep the initiative alive. *Joint Hearings*, Secord testimony, 100-1, p. 254. See also the comments by Senator Cohen, 100-9, p. 108.

the Carter experience and eventually applied was the need for the President to avoid creating an atmosphere of crisis over the hostages. The members of the Carter administration came to regret Carter's rose garden strategy and promise not to leave the White House until the hostages were home, which only served to increase the image of the country's and the President's weakness.[62] As a result of this lesson, despite Reagan's intense concern for the hostages, publicly, the White House did what it could to downplay the importance of the issue.[63] However, this lesson did little to bring the hostages home. Overall, the experience of the Hostage Crisis confirmed the lessons of the Angus Ward and *Pueblo* analogies that patient diplomacy combined with diplomatic pressure was the best strategy. As Secretary Shultz saw it, this meant that the best policy towards the hostages in Lebanon was to keep quiet while applying pressure to increase the costs of holding the hostages and decrease the benefits of doing so.[64] However, implementing such a policy virtually assured a protracted stalemate similar to the one that the Reagan administration had defined itself in opposition to. This Reagan refused to accept.

What about the possibility of a rescue attempt? If successful, this would get the hostages out quickly and solve Reagan's problem. Unfortunately for Reagan, as the historical record showed, the likelihood of a successful rescue was extremely low. For starters, not all the hostages were being held in one place as in the Entebbe and Mogadishu cases. Further, the location of the hostages in Beirut ensured

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[62]On these lessons see the articles in Christopher, et al. *American Hostages In Iran*, pp. 31-33 and 48.
[63]*Joint Hearings*, Poindexter testimony, 100-8, pp. 216-217.
[64]Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p. 857.

that any rescue attempt would have to be more like the failed attempt at Desert I than the successful Israeli and German raids. Most importantly, with the specter of the failure at Son Tay in mind, no rescue attempt could be launched because the United States did not know where the hostages were. Though the Reagan administration considered a military rescue, these handicaps prevented one from being implemented.[65]

With no possibility of a successful rescue, rather than suffer through a protracted hostage crisis, which would represent everything that the Reagan administration had defined itself against, Reagan decided to try to bring the hostages home as quickly as possible by giving the Iranians what they wanted, and what they wanted more than anything else was weapons. The administration came to a policy of trading arms for hostages by default. They saw no other way of getting the hostages out quickly. As Secord explained, "if we were unconventional in some of our methods, it was only because conventional wisdom had been exhausted."[66] Indeed some members of the administration resented those who opposed the arms for hostages policy but could not offer the President a better alternative.[67] Although both the Secretaries of Defense and State deny that they offered the President no other alternatives, Weinberger refused to say what those options were, even in closed testimony, and Shultz admitted that the options he favored would

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[65]North, *Under Fire*, p. 343; Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p. 805; Reagan, *An American Life*, p. 491; Regan, *For the Record*, p. 24; *Tower*, p. 352; *Joint Hearings*, McFarlane testimony, 100-2, p. 254; Poindexter testimony, 100-8, p. 270; and Shultz testimony, 100-9, p. 163; Draper, *A Very Thin Line*, pp. 374-375; Cannon, *President Reagan*, p. 656; Taheri, *Nest of Spies*, pp. 207-208; Turner, *Terrorism and Democracy*, pp. 171-172; and Congressional Quarterly, *The Iran-Contra Puzzle*, pp. A12, A23-24, A37 and A41.

[66]*Joint Hearings*, Secord testimony, 100-1, pp. 40 and 353. See also Mayer and McManus, *Landslide*, p. 180.

[67]*Joint Hearings*, Poindexter testimony, 100-8, p. 326-327 and McFarlane testimony, 100-2, p. 254.

probably entail the type of frustrating and prolonged crisis that the President hoped to avoid.[68] The Secretary of State had little regard for the unconventional wisdom offered by NSC staff:

> I look at the brilliant innovations that were produced, a terrific idea, lets trade Dawa prisoners for the hostages-- fantastic. Lord deliver us from such bright ideas as that. . . .It is very frustrating . . . and we wish we could find the answers to how to get them out, but I don't think the answer is to give the hostage-takers what they want . . that is not an answer, that is not a bright idea . . . . that was a catastrophe.[69]

As will be discussed in greater depth below, Shultz and Weinberger opposed the Iran initiative because even if it succeeded in getting all the hostages out, the policy would still be an international and domestic disaster. Engaging in arms for hostages exchanges would violate clear U.S. policies against arming Iran and against giving in to terrorists at the very time that the United States was lecturing and pressuring allies to adopt and enforce such policies. As Shultz and Weinberger saw it, to give Iran what it wanted would put a price upon the head of all Americans overseas, anger allies that the United States had spent the last few years reprimanding for similar policies, frighten allies in the Gulf who feared an Iranian victory, make the United States look like an unsteady ally whose word could not be trusted, and overall

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[68]*Joint Hearings*, Weinberger testimony, 100-10, pp. 183-184 and 230-231, Koch deposition, appendix B, vol. 15, p. 156; Report, pp. 676-677, and Shultz testimony, 100-9, pp. 65, 84-85 and 127-128.
[69]*Joint Hearings*, Shultz testimony, 100-9, pp. 127-128.

it would make the United States look weak internationally and the President weak at home.

The President accepted many of these arguments, but went ahead with the initiative anyway. Because Reagan's image of his Presidency was so tied to his opposition to Jimmy Carter's failure to get the hostages out of Iran quickly, getting the hostages out of Lebanon quickly was more important to him than protecting the national interests of the United States or his own domestic interests. Reagan knew the initiative would hurt the United States internationally and his popularity at home, but was willing to accept those costs because the Iranian experience had convinced him that working for the release of American captives abroad, virtually regardless of costs, was the duty of the President; at least the duty of this President. The Carter analogy did not show Reagan how he could realize his goal of getting the hostages out quickly, but it did lead him to subordinate all other interests to that goal.

TRADING ARMS FOR HOSTAGES

The return of the hostages from Iran did not lead to the resumption of normal or even cordial relations between the United States and Iran. Although the Algiers Accord specified that certain sanctions would be lifted once the hostages were released, not all were; most notably the embargo on arms sales remained. Also, the national emergency with regard to Iran that President Carter had declared as a result of the Hostage Crisis remained in place and was annually re-confirmed by the Reagan administration. Concern over the continuation

of the Iran-Iraq war, anxiety regarding Iran's improving position in the war, and fear over the possible spread of Iranian influence in the Persian Gulf led the State Department, in the spring of 1983, to launch "Operation Staunch;" a program designed to discourage other nations from arming Iran. In addition, in early 1984, the Reagan administration imposed a further set of sanctions against Iran by placing them on the list of nations supportive of international terrorism.[70]

At the same time that these measures were implemented, analysts within the Reagan administration began a series of studies evaluating U.S. policy toward Iran. The first of these, an NSC memo prepared in January 1984, reaffirmed that the Khomeini regime represented a threat to U.S. interests in the Persian Gulf and recommended that the United States step up the pressure it was putting on Iran by carrying out covert operations against the regime designed to encourage the establishment of a pro-Western government. Later in 1984, both an interagency study on Iran and a Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE) produced by the CIA confirmed existing U.S. policy toward Iran by arguing that the United States had little, if any, ability to influence events in Tehran. These views were incorporated into a draft National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) in late 1984, which argued that the America's best strategy was to continue the arms embargo while waiting for favorable domestic changes in Iran.[71]

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[70]On the annual extension of the state of emergency see, *Public Papers*, 1981, pp. 1039-1040, 1982 vol. 2, p. 1438; 1983, vol. 2, p. 1543; 1984, vol. 2, p. 1806; 1985, vol. 2, p. 1329 and 1986, vol. 2, p. 1537. On Operation Staunch and Iran as a sponsor of international terrorism see *Joint Hearings*, Report, pp. 159-160.

[71]*Tower*, p. 104-105.

Those who were hoping for a significant change in U.S. policy were disappointed that these studies, "produced no ideas which any of us involved considered to be of great value in terms of significantly affecting our posture in the region."[72] One result of this disappointment was the preparation in May 1985, of a memo by Graham Fuller, a CIA officer responsible for the Near East and South Asia entitled, "Toward A Policy On Iran." Contrary to the earlier studies, Fuller concluded that the continuation of the arms embargo undermined U.S. interests in the region by pushing Iran to a closer relationship with the Soviets and advocated that the United States allow its allies to freely sell weapons to Iran.[73] In June 1985, Fuller's ideas were embodied in a new draft NSDD, which recommended that the Reagan administration, "encourage Western allies and friends to help Iran meet its import requirements . . . [including] selected military equipment."[74]

Although the draft NSDD was endorsed by both the CIA Director and the National Security Adviser, the policy paper, particularly its suggestion that the United States weaken its embargo against Iran, was not favorably received by the rest of the administration. Secretary of Defense Weinberger scrawled on his copy of the draft that, "this is almost too absurd to comment on." In his formal response to McFarlane, Weinberger argued that:

> Under no circumstances, however, should we now ease our restrictions on arms sales to Iran. Attempting to cut off arms while remaining neutral on sales to either belligerent

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[72]Howard Teicher, NSC Staff, *Tower*, p. 105.
[73]Fuller to Casey, May 17, 1985, *Joint Hearings*, appendix A, vol. 1, pp. 968-972.
[74]"U.S. Policy Toward Iran," *Joint Hearings*, appendix A, vol. 1, pp. 983-988.

is one of the few ways we have to protect our longer-range interests in both Iran and Iraq. A policy reversal would be seen as inexplicably inconsistent by those nations whom we have urged to refrain from such sales, and would likely lead to increased arms sales by them and a possible alteration of the strategic balance in favor of Iran while Khomeini is still the controlling influence.[75]

Secretary Shultz was equally hostile to the suggestion of lifting the arms embargo, calling it "contrary to our interest both in containing Khomeinism and in ending the excesses of this regime."[76]

Despite the administration's later arguments that this draft NSDD confirms its contention that the Iran initiative was strategic in origin, the evidence suggests otherwise.[77] This document did not lead to the initiation of U.S. approved arms sales to Iran, instead, the opposition of both the Secretaries of State and Defense caused it to be shelved. It never reached the Oval Office and it was quickly forgotten.[78] In November 1986, when the arms sales became public, the administration decided to "dust off the unsigned NSDD of 18 months ago" that had "just went away" at the time it was produced, as part of its overall strategy to put a positive spin on the initiative by emphasizing strategic goals, rather than the hostages.[79] By itself, the strategic rationale was not enough to

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[75]For Weinberger's handwritten comments see pp. 510-511 and for his formal comments see Weinberger to McFarlane, July 16, 1985, pp. 520-522 in *Joint Hearings*, 100-10.

[76]Shultz to McFarlane, June 29, 1985, *Joint Hearings*, 100-9, p. 500.

[77]For this argument see, Meese, *With Reagan*, pp. 249-250.

[78]*Tower*, pp. 22 and 120-121 and Draper, *A Very Thin Line*, pp. 121-122 and 148-151.

[79]These quotes are taken from the notes of Robert Earl, a member of the NSC staff under North, *Joint Hearings*, appendix B, vol. 9, p. 1025. See also p. 991. An additional problem with the argument that the arms for hostages initiative was designed to bring the Iranian regime closer to the West by providing it with arms is the administration's simultaneous claims that the amount of arms sent was insignificant

lead the Reagan administration to change its policies concerning arms sales to Iran. Indeed, with the shelving of the NSDD, the administration concluded that selling arms to Iran would be contrary to U.S. interests in the region. It was only when the issue of arms sales became coupled with the issue of the hostages and was presented as a way to secure their release did the administration decide to sell weapons to Iran.

However, before any final decision on selling arms to Iran had to be made, a dramatic hijacking in the Middle East once again made the issue of Americans being held hostage abroad the number one news story in the country. On June 14, 1985, TWA flight 847 was hijacked on its way to Rome from Athens. After hopping around between the Beirut and Algiers airports and releasing most of the passengers, the terrorists eventually settled into the Beirut airport while holding onto 40 American passengers and three crew members. In return for the release of the remaining hostages, the hijackers' demanded the release of 766 Lebanese prisoners being held in Israel. To demonstrate their seriousness, the terrorists took one of the passengers, U.S. Navy diver Robert Stethem, beat him, shot him in the head, and then threw his dead body out of the plane.

Israel claimed that they were in the process of releasing the demanded prisoners anyway and put the responsibility on the United States by announcing that it would make the exchange if the Reagan administration asked them to. Eventually, however, both Israel and the United States proved reluctant to make a direct trade under pressure. However, the Israeli claim that it was only the hijacking itself that was

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compared to what Iran was buying elsewhere, see Poindexter testimony, 100-8, p. 324, Bush, *Looking Forward*, p. 251 and Secord, *Honored and Betrayed*, p. 258.

slowing the release of the demanded prisoners and the U.S.'s public position even before the hijacking that the detaining of these prisoners in Israel was counter to international law, expedited the eventual resolution of the crisis. Although both the United States and Israel deny that an explicit deal was made, Syrian President Hafez al-Assad eventually helped broker a deal that led to the release of the hostages on June 30, and by early September, Israel had released all the demanded prisoners.[80]

Throughout the crisis, the administration made a conscious effort to avoid the "Carter Syndrome" by attempting to downplay the crisis and to de-emphasize the amount of time the President spent on it.[81] As Shultz put it, he did not want to see Reagan, "repeat Jimmy Carter's mistake of virtually making himself a prisoner in the White House."[82] The *New York Times*, under a subheading of "Comparisons That Hurt," quoted administration officials as arguing that, "the lesson learned from the Iran crisis has been to keep the Beirut affair from engulfing and obsessing Mr. Reagan, as Iran seemed to do to Mr. Carter."[83] However, if Reagan hoped to deflect attention away from the hijacking, his attempt failed. The dramatic hijacking, which seemed to be tailor-made for television, complete with hostage press conferences and a tense live interview with the pilot of the plane as he leaned out of the cockpit window with a gun pointed at his head, dominated the news. The extent

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[80]Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, pp. 653-668; Reagan, *An American Life*, pp. 493-498; and Turner, *Terrorism and Democracy*, pp. 188-195.

[81]Speakes, *Speaking Out*, p. 172.

[82]Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p. 663.

[83]Bernard Weinraub, "Reagan's Struggle to Avoid Becoming A Hostage," June 30, 1985, p. E1. See also, *Tower*, p. 191, Mayer and McManus, *Landslide*, pp. 93-94, Cannon, *President Reagan*, pp. 606-609, and *U.S. News and World Report*, July 1, 1985, pp. 19-20.

of the coverage made it difficult for Reagan not to become publicly involved and once it became clear that the release of the hostages was likely, the administration was happy to have the President associated with the crisis.[84]

Following the successful resolution of the crisis, the College Republicans sold buttons that simply said, "427 Days," representing the difference between the 444 day Hostage Crisis and the 17 days it had taken the Reagan administration to resolve the TWA hijacking.[85] However, such a comparison would not look nearly as favorable to Reagan if it were made not to the flight 847 captives, but to the seven other American hostages that were being held in Lebanon, two of whom had already been held for over a year. While the administration was initially hopeful that those seven could be released along with the TWA captives, it did not force the issue.

However, the TWA hijacking did have two important consequences for the Reagan administration's policy towards these hostages. First, while the role played by Iran in the release of the flight 847 hostages is somewhat unclear, many members of the administration credit the intervention of Iranian Speaker of the Majlis, Hashemi Rafsanjani, with the release of four of the TWA hostages who had been separated from the main group. This intervention helped prepare the way for Reagan's later decision to sell arms to Iran in return for the hostages by suggesting that Iran might indeed be willing and able to help the administration deal with the seven remaining hostages.[86]

[84]Mayer and McManus, *Landslide*, p. 107.

[85]*Time*, July 15, 1985, p. 19.

[86]Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, pp. 665-666; McFarlane, *Special Trust*, p. 310, Regan, *For the Record*, p. 17; Meese, *With Reagan*, pp. 251-252; Turner, *Terrorism and Democracy*, p. 193; Cannon,

Second, the media coverage of the TWA hijacking greatly raised the profile of the seven Americans held in Lebanon. Before the hijacking, their plight had generated little media attention, but during and for a time after the crisis, these seven captives became a major story. At the same time that the Reagan administration could be applauded for resolving the TWA crisis and thus avoiding "a nightmarish rerun of the seizure of the hostages in Iran," the media was also running stories on the "other hostages" or the "seven left behind."[87] Perhaps the most important result of this increased coverage was that it forced the President to meet with the families of the hostages, a painful ordeal from which his aides had been trying to spare him. According to all accounts, these emotional meetings took a great toll upon Reagan and helped plant the seeds of the Iran initiative by fortifying his determination to secure the release of the hostages.[88]

While some have argued that Reagan's preoccupation with the hostage issue began at this time,[89] it is important to note that the increased media coverage of the hostages and the meetings with the families only increased Reagan's resolve to get the hostages out quickly, it did not create it. That task had already been performed by the Iranian Hostage Crisis analogy. Even before the TWA hijacking, the Reagan

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President Reagan, p. 607; Taheri, *Nest of Spies*, pp. 168-169; and *Joint Hearings*, North testimony, 100-7, part 1, p. 213; "Chronology", November 17, 1986 (Maximum Version), 100-2, p. 643 and Casey testimony to Intelligence Committee, November 21, 1986, 100-7, part 3, p. 179.

[87]*US News and World Report*, July 1, 1985, p. 18; July 8, 1985, p. 26, July 15, 1985, p. 22; *Time*, July 15, 1985, p. 20; and *Newsweek*, July 8, 1985, p. 28. See also Meese, *With Reagan*, pp. 209-211 and 250-252; and Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p. 794.

[88]Regan, *For The Record*, pp. 24, 85 and 111; McFarlane, *Special Trust*, p. 22; Cannon, *President Reagan*, pp. 608-610; Mayer and McManus, *Landslide*, pp. 95-96, 103-108 and 115-116; Schieffer and Gates, *The Acting President*, pp. 226-227; and *Joint Hearings*, North testimony, 100-7, part 2, pp. 19-20 and 23-24; McFarlane testimony, 100-2, p. 195; and Earl deposition, appendix B, vol. 9, pp. 791-794.

[89]Mayer and McManus, *Landslide*, p. 103.

administration had been trying to secure the release of the hostages by trading for them. Although these early attempts did not involve trading arms for hostages, they did involve trading money and prisoners for hostages. In January of 1985, the White House asked agents within the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) if they had any contacts in Lebanon that could help either locate or secure the release of the hostages. The DEA responded that they did have a contact who, if given $200,000 claimed he could gain the release of the hostages by ransoming them for $1 million dollars each. Despite the lack of confidence the DEA administrator in charge of the initiative had in the Lebanese contacts, Oliver North pushed the operation and helped secure the money to fund it.[90] Although $200,000 was given to the Lebanese contact, the promised million dollar ransoms never developed. Undeterred, North kept the ransom initiative alive and it was not until October 1986 that the ransom plans were finally scrapped.[91] In a pattern that was repeated in the arms sales to Iran, what kept these ransom operations alive was:

> President Reagan himself. . . . He had made great issue of
>
> (and got great mileage from) the Iranian hostage crisis in

[90]Ironically, considering North's later notorious diversion of funds from the Iranian arms sales to support the Contra's, to pay for some of the operational costs of the DEA initiative, North utilized a "reverse diversion" by using some of the money that had been raised privately to support the Contras to fund the DEA hostage operation. However, the bulk of the funds used in the ransom were supplied to North by H. Ross Perot. On the reverse diversion see, *Joint Hearings*, North to McFarlane, June 7, 1985, "Status of Hostage Recovery Efforts," 100-2, pp. 542; McFarlane testimony, 100-2, pp. 44-45 and 281; North testimony, 100-7, part 1, p. 135; Secord testimony, 100-1, p. 45 and DIA Major deposition, appendix B, vol. 9, pp. 217-218.

[91]On the DEA ransom efforts see *Joint Hearings*, CIA memo on Meeting of the Hostage Locating Task Force, March 6, 1985, 100-11, pp. 776-778; North Notebook, March 12, 1985, appendix A, vol. 2, p. 921; CIA memo, April 30, 1985, 100-11, pp. 796-797; North to McFarlane, May 24, 1985, "AMCIT Hostages," 100-7, pt 3, p. 1038-1041; North to McFarlane, June 7, 1985, "Status of Hostage Recovery Efforts," 100-2, pp. 537-542; May 1985, "DEA Support for Recovery of American Hostages" 100-9, pp. 1213-1215; Reagan letter to Perot, 100-7, part 3, pp. 1158-1160; depositions of DEA Agents 1, 2, 3 and John Lawn, appendix B, vol. 8, pp. 311-978 and vol. 15, pp. 731-870; McFarlane testimony, 100-2, pp. 44-45, 259 and 280-281; and Shultz testimony, 100-9, pp. 235, 252 and 254. For a quick summary of the DEA plans see *Joint Hearings*, Report, pp. 361-366 and 529-530; and Draper, 374-375.

the campaign against Jimmy Carter and now felt vulnerable to his own criticisms. . . . He had mandated the CIA, State, and Defense departments (and just about everyone else in government) to find the hostages and spring them, no questions asked. . . . The failure of Reagan's reconstituted military, diplomatic and intelligence apparatus to make even the slightest dent in the hostage situation was worse than frustrating to the President—it was bewildering, embarrassing, and, in his mind, I believe, a tangible threat to his presidency.[92]

At the same time North was seeking approval for the DEA ransom plan, he also obtained approval for a second plan to secure the release of the hostages by facilitating the release of certain prisoners being held in Kuwait whose release the captors in Lebanon had been demanding.[93] While neither of these plans succeeded, both the attempt to ransom the hostages and the attempt to trade prisoners for hostages show that the Reagan administration's concern with the hostage question pre-dates the TWA hijacking and the public exposure that crisis generated for the seven hostages who remained in Lebanon. While later eclipsed by the more controversial policy of trading arms for hostages, these earlier initiatives should not be ignored. They also demonstrate that the decision to sell arms to Iran should not be seen as an attempt to improve relations with Iran, but simply as the next step in what was an ongoing

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[92]Secord, *Honored and Betrayed*, p. 270. See also *Joint Hearings*, Poindexter deposition, appendix B, vol. 20, pp. 1124–1126.

[93]*Tower*, p. 125. The prisoners involved here were the Da'wa prisoners that will also be encountered later in the chapter.

effort by the administration to try virtually anything to avoid a repeat of the protracted Iranian Hostage Crisis.

1985- APPROVING THE ISRAELI SHIPMENTS

On July 3, 1985, just days after the TWA hostages had been released, the President met with his top foreign policy advisers to discuss options regarding the hostages still in Lebanon. Reagan let his advisers know that he was frustrated by the lack of promising alternatives he was being offered.[94] That same day, Robert McFarlane, the President's National Security Adviser, met with David Kimche, the Director General of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, who presented McFarlane with a new alternative. According to McFarlane, Kimche told him that Israel had certain contacts within Iran who were interested in improving relations with the United States and could possibly help obtain the release of the hostages. Kimche wanted to know if the United States was interested in exploring these contacts. Although no specific proposals were discussed, Kimche did mention to McFarlane that the Iranians would probably ask for arms in return for helping with the hostages.[95]

McFarlane took the Israeli offer to the President. According to McFarlane, while Reagan did express an interest in improving relations with Iran, the possibility of securing the release of the hostages:

> had a much more marked effect on his adrenaline level than the geopolitical upside of what we were discussing. 'Gosh

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[94]*Joint Hearings*, Report, p. 166.
[95]*Preliminary Inquiry*, Senate Intelligence Committee, p. 5; *Joint Hearings*, McFarlane testimony, 100-2, pp. 43-44 and Report, p. 166; *Tower*, p. 128; and McFarlane, *Special Trust*, pp. 17-21.

that's great news,' he said, perking up at its mention. 'How would they do it and how soon?'[96]

By July 11, 1985, a firmer arms for hostages offer was put on the table. Through Israel, the United States was informed that in return for the release of the hostages, Iran wanted 100 TOW missiles.[97] McFarlane informed Secretary Shultz of the proposal along with his recommendation that the United States pursue the initiative. While Shultz cautiously favored exploring any contacts with Iran that Israel offered, he was opposed to any shipments of arms.[98]

At the time this offer was made, the President was in the hospital recovering from a cancer operation, so McFarlane did not have the opportunity to brief him until a week later. At this hospital briefing on the proposal, again Reagan focused on the hostage side of the initiative, which, according to the President, "made Bud's report exciting." The "one thing" that the United States wanted from the proposed sales, Reagan argued, was for the "moderate" Iranians "to use their influence with the Hizballah and try to get our hostages freed."[99] Donald Regan, the only other person present at the hospital meeting, attributed Reagan's enthusiastic reception of the Israeli proposal to the President's memory of Carter's weakness and humiliation during the Iranian Hostage Crisis.[100] As McFarlane saw it,

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[96]McFarlane, *Special Trust*, p. 23.

[97]The TOW, which stands for Tube launched, Optically tracked, Wire-guided missile is an anti-tank weapon. On this proposal, see *Joint Hearings*, McFarlane testimony, 100-2, p. 45; McFarlane, *Special Trust*, pp. 25-26; and Leeden, *Perilous Statecraft*, pp. 116-119.

[98]*Joint Hearings*, McFarlane to Shultz, July 13, 1985, 100-9, pp. 283-288; Shultz to McFarlane, July 14, 1985, 100-9, pp. 511-512; McFarlane testimony, 100-2, pp. 45-46.

[99]Reagan, *An American Life*, pp. 505-507. See also the excerpts from Reagan's diary in *Independent Counsel Report*, vol. 1, p. 466.

[100]Regan, *For the Record*, p. 23

It has been, I think, misleading, at least, and wrong, at worst, for me to overly gild the President's motives for his decision in this, to portray them as mostly directed toward political outcomes. The President acknowledged those and recognized that those were clearly important. However, by the tenor of his questioning, which was oriented toward the hostages and the timing of the hostages, from his recurrent virtually daily questioning just about the welfare and do we have any thing new and so forth, it is very clear that his concerns here were for the return of the hostages.[101]

While Reagan's concern with the hostages is quite clear, the exact nature of the arms proposal put before the President at this time, specifically the question of whether the United States or Israel was required to send the requested TOWs, is less clear. McFarlane maintains that while Reagan clearly wanted to pursue the initiative to get the hostages out, the President concluded that the United States could not send any weapons to do so. This decision, which McFarlane passed on to the Israelis, left the door open for Israeli shipments. In his congressional testimony and memoirs, McFarlane maintains that the distinction between U.S. and Israeli shipments did not come up at the meeting. However, in an earlier note to Poindexter, McFarlane declared that Reagan "was all for letting the Israelis do anything they wanted at the very first briefing in the hospital." Either way, while Reagan had not given his direct approval for any weapons shipments to Iran, the

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[101]*Tower*, pp. 129-130.

President, who was not willing to abandon the initiative, left the door open to the possibility of Israeli shipments.[102]

When the President returned from the hospital in late July, he discussed the initiative with a number of his advisers. Undeterred by the negative reaction of many of them, Reagan remained in favor of the arms for hostages exchange. McFarlane later related the story of a phone call he received from the President during the last week of July:

> He had been thinking about that 'Israeli thing,' he said, and the more he thought about it the more he liked it. 'Couldn't you use some imagination and try to find a way to make it work?' he asked.
>
> 'You remember, Mr. President, your Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense were opposed to this,' I reminded him.
>
> 'I know,' he said, 'but I look at it differently. I want to find a way to do this.[103]

If Reagan and McFarlane did not envision the possibility of Israeli shipments as early as the hospital meeting, a new "way to do this" quickly presented itself. On August 2, Kimche came to McFarlane and specifically asked about the U.S.'s position regarding the possibility of Israeli shipments. If Israel sent the TOWs, he asked, would the United States approve and more importantly, would the United States allow

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[102]On McFarlane's different accounts of this meeting see, McFarlane, *Special Trust*, pp. 27-28 and *Joint Hearings*, McFarlane testimony, 100-2, p. 46; McFarlane to Poindexter, November 22, 1986, 100-2, p. 676; and *Preliminary Inquiry*, U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee, pp. 5-6. Regan says he does not have any memory of arms being discussed at this meeting at all, *Joint Hearings*, 100-10, pp. 10-11 and *For the Record*, pp. 20-23.

[103]McFarlane, *Special Trust*, p. 31.

Israel to obtain replacements? McFarlane promised to get the President's opinion on this and to pass it on to Israel.[104]

Kimche's proposal led to the first formal, Cabinet level discussion of the Iran initiative, which was held on August 6. The Secretaries of State and Defense came down strongly against the proposed plan. First, Shultz dismissed the argument that the exchange was designed to improve the U.S.'s position in Iran and complained that the United States was "just falling into the arms-for-hostage business." Second, Shultz also dismissed McFarlane's contention that the deal would be "totally deniable" and maintained that eventually the deal would become public. Finally, for the same reasons he had objected to the draft NSDD that suggested selling arms to Iran, Shultz argued that even if the deal remained a complete secret, it would still damage the interests of the United States by buttressing the radical Khomeini regime.[105] Weinberger was equally adamant in his opposition arguing that:

> It would completely violate our agreed upon and accepted policy of not ransoming hostages, and that we should most certainly not give Iran arms directly or indirectly when we were pleading with our allies not to allow any arms shipments of any kind.
>
> . . . there was nothing to indicate any slight change in the virulently anti-Western, anti-American attitude of those in charge of Iran, . . . we would never be able to explain ourselves to our friends and allies.[106]

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[104]*Joint Hearings*, McFarlane testimony, 100-2, p. 48 and McFarlane, *Special Trust*, pp. 31-32.
[105]*Joint Hearings*, Shultz testimony, 100-9, p. 27 and Shultz's Chronology B, 100-9, p. 445.
[106]Weinberger, *Fighting For Peace*, pp. 368-369, *Joint Hearings*, 100-10, pp. 134-135.

In addition to these negative international consequences, according to one of Weinberger's associates at the Department of Defense, the Secretary's main worry was that appeasing terrorists and their supporters by trading arms for hostages "was going to be a political disaster for the President, a domestic political concern."[107]

Both Shultz and Weinberger's opposition centered on arguments that maintained that even if the proposed initiative did get all the hostages out, it would still have a strong negative impact on America's international interests and Reagan's domestic interests. The Tower Commission later faulted both Shultz and Weinberger for failing "to protect the President from the consequences of his personal commitment to freeing the hostages."[108] However, this condemnation is somewhat unfair. Both tried to protect the President by telling him what they thought the negative consequences of the initiative would be; Reagan simply chose to ignore them and risk those costs if it meant getting the hostages out. While arguably both could have done more to convince the President to stop the initiative, there is no doubt that Reagan knew they opposed the plan and why they opposed it. It is unlikely that further efforts could have protected the President from his personal commitment to the hostages when he did not want to be protected.

Faced with the opposition of significant parts of his cabinet, Reagan did not announce any final decision regarding the initiative at the August 6, meeting. While Shultz and Weinberger believed that the President had reluctantly agreed to abandon the initiative, McFarlane got

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[107]*Joint Hearings*, Koch deposition, appendix B, vol. 15, p. 163. This assesment was based primarily on a discussion he had with Weinberger in early December.
[108]*Tower*, p. 82.

the impression Reagan still favored the initiative.[109] The President quickly eliminated any doubts and soon after the meeting he contacted McFarlane to tell him that despite the opposition of Shultz and Weinberger, he had decided to approve the arms sales.[110] The exchange of arms for hostages had officially begun.

After receiving Reagan's approval, the Israelis, on August 20, sent a shipment of 96 TOWs to Iran, but no hostages were released. In early September, representatives from Israel and the United States met in Paris with Manucher Ghorbanifar, an Iranian living abroad who was the Israeli contact with the Iranian government, to discuss why no hostages had yet been freed. Rather than abandon the initiative, it was decided that Israel would send an additional 400 TOWs to Iran in exchange for the hostages. McFarlane and the President were informed and approved the second shipment.[111]

The additional shipment of TOWs was not the only disappointment the administration had to face. In addition, instead of getting all the hostages out as the administration had hoped, the United States would now have to settle for only one release, and McFarlane was put in the

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[109]Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p. 796; Weinberger, *Fighting For Peace*, p. 389; *Joint Hearings*, Weinberger testimony, pp. 134-135; and *Tower*, pp. 138-145.

[110]*Joint Hearings*, McFarlane testimony, 100-2, pp. 49-50; McFarlane, *Special Trust*, pp. 33-34; Reagan initially told the Tower Commission that he had approved the TOW sales, then told them that he had not, and later told them he did not remember one way or another. Those who have had access to documents, such as Reagan's private diaries, that have not been fully declassified all conclude that these documents support the contention that Reagan did indeed approve the TOW shipments. See *Tower*, pp. 28-29 and 138-145; John G. Tower, *Consequences: A Personal and Political Memoir* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1991), pp. 281-286; *Joint Hearings*, Report, pp. 6,7,10 and 167-168; *Independent Counsel Report*, vol. 1, pp. 12, 80 and 466; and Cannon, *President Reagan*, pp. 608-618. In his response to the *Independent Counsel Report*, Reagan does not dispute that he did approve of the initial Israeli sales, vol. 3, pp. 682 and 707-712.

[111]Leeden, *Perilous Statecraft*, pp. 131-134; *Joint Hearings*, Leeden deposition, appendix B, vol. 15, pp. 994-998; McFarlane testimony, 100-2, pp. 67-68; and Report, pp. 168-169. See also Cannon, *President Reagan*, p. 618. In his memoirs McFarlane maintains that he and Reagan did not find out about the additional TOWs until after they had been shipped, but that Reagan was not upset because he was glad that the initiative had succeeded in getting one hostage out, *Special Trust*, pp. 40.

uncomfortable position of being asked to choose which hostage the United States wanted. McFarlane opted for William Buckley, the CIA station chief in Lebanon, but was told that he was too ill to be moved. In fact, the reason it was not possible to release Buckley was that he had already died while in captivity, but the United States was unable to confirm this until later. Instead, after an additional shipment of 408 TOWs in mid-September, the Reverend Benjamin Weir was released.[112]

The upshot of the August and September 1985 shipments was that 504 TOWs had been sent to Iran and one hostage had been released. Instead of being angry that Iran had demanded an additional shipment of weapons and failed to live up to the commitment to release all the hostages, the President was happy with the deal: "We were dissappointed," Reagan later recalled, "but we had suceeded in bringing home one of the hostages, and I felt pretty good."[113] As a result, the deals continued.

In early October, Michael Leeden, a part time consultant for the NSC who at this point was the U.S.'s representative in the arms for hostages discussions, met with Ghorbanifar and the Israelis in Washington. At this meeting, Ghorbanifar transmitted a number of new arms for hostages proposals from the Iranian government. "Harpoons, Phoenixes, Sidewinders . . . you name it, they wanted it. And for each bundle of advanced weapons, they were offering one or more hostages."

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[112]On McFarlane's uncomfortable choice, see *Joint Hearings*, McFarlane testimony, 100-2, p. 50 and McFarlane, *Special Trust*, pp. 37-40.
[113]Reagan, *An American Life*, p. 507. See also McFarlane, *Special Trust*, p. 40.

Although Leeden claims he opposed any further arms for hostages trades at this point, he transmitted Ghorbanifar's proposals to McFarlane.[114]

At a second meeting later in October, Leeden was introduced to Hassan Karrubi, who Ghorbanifar claimed was a senior Iranian official. According to Leeden, Karrubi was solely interested in improving U.S.-Iranian relations and opposed any further arms sales because they only strengthened the radical factions in Iran.[115] However, the documentary record clearly suggests that Leeden's account of this meeting is misleading. In addition to talks about long term relations between the United States and Iran, Karrubi also presented a number of arms for hostages proposals. Much like the Americans, it seems as though the Iranians too were willing to talk about long term relations, but arms for hostages came first. North's notes from Leeden's briefing on this meeting show that besides talking about long term relations, the Iranian also demanded 150 HAWK missiles, 200 Sidewinder missiles and 30 to 50 Phoenix missiles. According to North's notes, the proposed plan was a 5 step exchange where in steps 1, 3 and 5 Iran would ship hostages and in steps 2 and 4 weapons would be shipped. McFarlane's reaction to this plan was to declare that not "one single item" would be sent without the release of "live Americans."[116] Karrubi's overtures regarding long term relations were never followed up, but the arms for hostages proposals were.

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[114]Leeden, *Perilous Statecraft*, pp. 137-138; *Joint Hearings*, Leeden deposition, appendix B, vol. 15, pp. 1011-1016; and McFarlane, *Special Trust*, pp. 41-42.

[115]Karrubi is identified as "the first Iranian" in the Congressional reports. For Leeden's accounts of this meeting, see Leeden, *Perilous Statecraft*, pp. 139-144 and *Joint Hearings*, Leeden deposition, appendix B, vol. 15, pp. 1022-1028, 1206-1210 and 1432.

[116]North Notes, October 30, 1985 in *Joint Hearings*, 100-11, pp. 861-862. North's notes are also corroborated by the Israeli sources, see Segev, *The Iranian Triangle*, pp. 183-184. See also *Joint Hearings*, Report, p. 170 and Draper, *A Very Thin Line*, pp. 177-180.

In mid-November, on the eve of the U.S.-Soviet Geneva summit, Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin met with McFarlane, who confirmed that Reagan still approved of and would replenish any weapon shipments that Israel sent to Iran for the hostages.[117] According to a North e-mail to Poindexter, a deal had been worked out where Israel, "will deliver 80 mod [modified] HAWKS" to Iran. Once the takeoff of the plane carrying the HAWKs was confirmed, an intermediary in Beirut would be directed "to collect the five rpt [repeat] five Amcits [American citizens] from Hizballah and deliver them to the U.S. Embassy." After the release of the hostages, Israel would then send 40 additional HAWKs to Iran. Safeguards had been built into the plan according to North, because no planes would land in Iran "until the AMCITS have been delivered to the embassy" and the United States would not replenish the Israelis "until we have all five AMCITS safely delivered." North concluded that,

> There is a distinct possibility that at the end of the week we will have five Americans home and the promise of no further hostage taking in exchange for selling the Israelis 120 Mod HAWKs. Despite the difficulty of making all this fit inside a 96-hour window, it isn't a bad deal.[118]

McFarlane briefed the President, who simply nodded and said, "Well, I hope it works."[119]

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[117]*Joint Hearings*, McFarlane, 100-2, pp. 51-52 and 97-98.

[118]PROF note from North to Poindexter, November 20, 1985, *Joint Hearings*, 100-2, pp. 587-588. The HAWK is a ground-launched anti-aircraft missile.

[119]McFarlane, *Special Trust*, p. 43. See also, *Joint Hearings*, McFarlane testimony, 100-2, pp. 51-52; Regan testimony, 100-10 and pp. 12-13; Shultz testimony, 100-9, pp. 28-29; *Independent Counsel Report*, vol. 3, p. 686; Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, pp. 832, 836 and 839; and Cannon, *President Reagan*, pp. 621-622.

The November shipment of HAWKs did not go smoothly. Israel had planned to transship the HAWKs through Portugal to disguise the origin of the weapons, but the Israelis had trouble obtaining the necessary clearances. Rabin called McFarlane in Geneva to tell him about the difficulties they were having and McFarlane instructed North to do what he could to solve the problem and get the missiles to Iran. McFarlane allowed and encouraged the participation of the U.S. government in the delivery of the HAWKs because he knew that Reagan "wanted it done."[120] Whereas the United States had played no operational role during the August and September TOW shipments, here the United States became deeply involved in the delivery of the HAWKs as both McFarlane and North intervened and North recruited CIA and State Department personnel in Portugal to help expedite the shipment. Before the Portuguese government would grant the clearances, they wanted a letter from the United States saying that it knew of and approved of this shipment of arms and that the purpose of the shipment was to secure the release of American hostages. The U.S. representatives, although they knew the shipments involved arms for hostages, refused to put the request in writing and ultimately, the idea of sending the missiles through Portugal was abandoned.[121]

While the United States was trying to get clearance from Portugal, a second problem developed. To deliver the HAWKs, the Israelis had temporarily leased certain aircraft, but the delay caused by the failure to

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[120]*Joint Hearings*, McFarlane testimony, 100-2, p. 151.

[121]On U.S. efforts to get clearances in Portugal, see *Joint Hearings*, Koch testimony, 100-6, p. 56; Clarridge testimony, 100-11, pp. 6-17; DCM Country 15 (Portugal) deposition, appendix B, vol. 8, pp. 271-272, 276-278, 280, 286-287 and 302; Deputy Chief deposition, appendix B, vol. 8, pp. 1076-1077 and 1084-1086; and the various CIA documents in 100-6, pp. 474-507; 100-11, pp. 445-447; and appendix A, vol. 1, pp. 1064-1065.

obtain Portugal's assent resulted in the leases expiring before the shipment could be made. Now there were no planes available to ship the HAWKs. To solve this problem, North turned to the CIA and obtained a plane from an airline that was a CIA proprietary, meaning that the airline operated as a normal commercial venture, but was available for the CIA whenever its services were required. The plane could only hold 18 HAWK missiles, but after a number of delays and struggles to get clearances elsewhere, it finally landed in Iran on November 25.

Then the real trouble started. The Iranians were under the impression that the modified HAWKs could hit high-flying aircraft such as the Soviet reconnaissance flights and the Iraqi bombers that were terrorizing much of Iran, and felt cheated when they discovered that the HAWKs were only effective against low-flying aircraft. To make matters worse, the HAWKs arrived in Tehran with their Israeli markings still on them, which the Iranians took as an added insult. The Iranians had paid in advance for 80 HAWKs that they believed would be effective against high flying aircraft, however, after a series of long delays, what they actually received was only 18 missiles they did not want, which were marked with the Star of David. The Iranians demanded that the missiles be taken back and their money returned. No hostages were released.[122]

When John McMahon, the Deputy Director of the CIA, was told that a CIA proprietary had been used in the shipment of the HAWKs to Iran, he demanded that a "Presidential Finding" be prepared for the President to sign authorizing the CIA's action. Before the CIA could

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[122] For an overall account of the November shipment, see Draper, *A Very Thin Line*, pp. 174-202.

participate in a covert operation, the law required that the president approve the operation by "finding" the operation to be important to the national security of the United States. Although the CIA had already delivered the HAWKs, to cover the CIA, McMahon wanted the President to sign a retroactive finding ratifying the CIA's action. This finding, which the President signed in early December, clearly shows that the administration conceived of the Iran initiative as an arms for hostages exchange and not as a way of improving relations with Iran. Under the heading for the "Scope" of the operation, it simply says, "Hostage Rescue--Middle East." When describing the operation, the finding specifically ratifies the CIA's actions in assisting "private parties in their attempt to obtain the release of Americans held hostage in the Middle East." "As part of these efforts," the finding continues, "certain foreign material and munitions may be provided to the Government of Iran which is taking steps to facilitate the release of the American hostages."[123] The finding makes no mention of improving relations with Iran or strengthening moderate factions in Iran, only that arms would be sent to the government of Iran in return for hostages.[124]

The debacle over the November HAWK shipment led Oliver North to worry that "instead of rescuing the hostages," failures like these were "creating a situation in which they were being placed at increasing risk because of potential reprisals."[125] However, this failure did not lead

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[123]Presidential Finding on the Middle East, November-December 1985, *Joint Hearings*, 100-2, p. 741.
[124]On the preparation of this finding see, *Joint Hearings*, Sporkin testimony, 100-6, pp. 127, 130, and 172-173; Dietel deposition, appendix B, vol. 9, pp. 259, 273, 295, 302-303 and 308; and Report, pp. 185-186. On Reagan signing it, see *Joint Hearings*, Poindexter testimony, 100-8, p. 17; Poindexter deposition, appendix B, vol. 20, pp. 1101-1104; George testimony, 100-11, pp. 207-208, and the documents offered on pp. 439 and 879; Allen deposition, appendix B, vol. 1, pp. 513 and 540; and Congressional Quarterly, *The Iran-Contra Puzzle*, p. 127.
[125]*Joint Hearings*, North testimony, 100-7, part 1, p. 53.

the administration to abandon its efforts to exchange arms for hostages. If anything, it induced even greater exertions on behalf of the hostages. In late November, the tripartite arms for hostages talks between Ghorbanifar, Israel and the United States continued unchanged, except that on the U.S. side, Michael Leeden was replaced by Richard Secord, a retired Air Force General who North had called in to help expedite the HAWK shipments.

The results of these meetings were summarized by North in two messages sent to John Poindexter, who President Reagan had chosen to replace the retiring McFarlane as National Security Adviser. In a December 4, note to Poindexter on the "Current Status of Operation Recovery," North argues that ultimately the issue of the long term relationship between the United States and Iran is more important than the hostage question, but when it comes down to a concrete proposal for action, all North offers is a new arms for hostages deal involving 3,300 TOWs and 50 HAWKs. As North outlined it, the sequence of the proposed deal would be:

H-hr: 1 707 w. 300 TOWs = 1 AMCIT

H+10hrs: 1 707 (same A/C) w/ 300 Tows = 1 AMCIT

H+16hrs: 1 747 w/ 50 HAWKs and 400 TOWs = 2 AMCITS

H+20hrs: 1 707 w/ 300 TOWs = 1 AMCIT

H+24hrs: 1 747 w/ 2000 TOWs = French Hostage

. . . I find the idea of bartering over the lives of these poor men repugnant. Nonetheless, I believe we are, at this point . . . too far along with the Iranians to risk turning back

now. If we do not make at least one more try at this point, we stand a good chance of condemning some or all to death.[126]

In a memo embodying the same proposal North writes on the following day, he stresses that while "our continuing efforts to achieve the release of the hostages through diplomatic and other means have proven fruitless" the TOW shipments of August and September did succeed in gaining the release of at least one hostage. While North recognizes that this deal "is contrary to our stated policy of not making concessions to terrorists or those who sponsor them," he concludes that the United States "must take one last try or we will risk condemning some or all of the hostages to death and undergoing a new wave of Islamic Jihad terrorism."[127]

The proposal put forward in North's memo became the subject of discussion at a December 7, 1985, White House meeting on the Iran initiative involving most of Reagan's foreign policy team. At this meeting, the clear consensus among Reagan's advisers was that the initiative must stop and that any further exchanges of arms for hostages would seriously undermine the international position of the United States and the domestic position of the administration. On the international front, argued the Secretary of State, exchanging arms for hostages would be a disaster. It would, encourage more terrorism ("if we start paying now, it will never stop"), undermine America's position with its allies in and out of the region, and not do a thing to improve the U.S.'s position in Iran. The initiative would be equally costly domestically:

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[126]North to Poindexter, December 4, 1985, *Joint Hearings*, 100-2, pp. 594-598.
[127]Special Project Re Iran, December 5, 1985, *Joint Hearings*, 100-2, pp. 603-606.

"Ultimately, the whole story will come out someday and we will pay the price," Shultz warned the President.[128]

Hitting many of the same points, the Secretary of Defense also opposed the initiative by going "through a whole catalogue of things which didn't require any gift of prophecy as to what would happen if this became public . . . that all kinds of very unfortunate effects would result" if Reagan went ahead with the sales. Weinberger also put a new argument on the table; the proposed arms sales he cautioned, "were probably illegal."[129]

Donald Regan, Reagan's Chief of Staff, also opposed the initiative and told the President that the initiative "didn't look like it was going anywhere. Why bother? Cut your losses and get out of it."[130] John McMahon, the Deputy Director of the CIA, who was sitting in for Director William Casey, also argued against the initiative, saying it "was an arms for hostages arrangement, no matter what you called it" and that he "was unaware of any moderates in Iran, that most of the moderates had been slaughtered by Khomeini, [and] that whatever arms we give to these so-called moderates they will end up supporting the present Khomeini regime."[131] Finally, McFarlane also expressed some doubts about the wisdom of continuing with the arms sales. According to McFarlane's account of the meeting, he simply gave a quick history of

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[128]Shultz's talking points, December 7, 1985, *Joint Hearings*, 100-9, p. 523. See also Shultz testimony, 100-9, pp. 31-32.

[129]*Tower*, pp. 184-185; *Joint Hearings*, Weinberger testimony, 100-10, pp. 138-141; and Weinberger, *Fighting For Peace*, pp. 372-373.

[130]*Joint Hearings*, Regan testimony, 100-10, pp. 14. It should be noted that Regan told the *Tower* board he supported the initiative at this meeting, (p. 188); however, later Shultz and Reagan confirmed that he had opposed the arms sales at this meeting, *Joint Hearings*, Regan testimony, 100-10, p. 46.

[131]*Joint Hearings*, Report, p. 198 and *Tower*, p. 188.

the initiative and agreed with what he saw as the consensus opinion, which was that there should be no more arms sales.[132]

The only one of Reagan's advisers who spoke even mildly in favor of the initiative was Poindexter. However, Poindexter admits that he really had "very little" to say and his primary contribution to the meeting was his announcement that he had spoken to Director Casey about the proposal and that Casey had given him his permission to tell everyone at the meeting that he supported continuing the arms sales.[133]

The only outspoken proponent of the arms sales was the President himself. Shultz concluded that Reagan was "rather annoyed at me and Secretary Weinberger" when the two voiced their objections. "He was very concerned about the hostages, as well as very much interested in the Iran initiative . . . you could feel his sense of frustration." While he hoped that his arguments "had made a real dent" in the President's position, ultimately Shultz concluded that Reagan "supports going ahead, emphasizing [the] importance of obtaining [the] release of the hostages."[134]

In response to Weinberger's objection that the arms sales could be illegal, the President, according to Shultz, countered that "the American people will never forgive me if I fail to get these hostages out over this legal question.[135] Even more demonstrative of the extent to which Ronald Reagan had tied his identity as President so closely with the

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[132]*Tower*, pp. 186-187 and *Joint Hearings*, McFarlane testimony, 100-2, pp. 55-56. Although Shultz claimed McFarlane was in favor of the initiative at the meeting (see 100-9, p. 446), in his memoirs Reagan later corroborated McFarlane's claim that he voiced some opposition to the initiative at this time, *An American Life*, p. 513.

[133]*Joint Hearings*, Poindexter testimony, 100-8, pp. 23-26 and 127-128; and Poindexter deposition appendix B, vol. 20, pp. 114-119. Vice President Bush did not attend this meeting.

[134]*Joint Hearings*, Shultz testimony, 100-9, pp. 31-32 and 446.

[135]*Joint Hearings*, Shultz testimony, 100-9, p. 32.

hostage issue is Reagan's response to the legal questions as recorded by Weinberger. According to Weinberger's notes of this meeting, Reagan said, "he could answer charges of illegality but he couldn't answer [the] charge that 'big strong President Reagan passed up a chance to free hostages.'"[136]

According to McFarlane, on more than one occasion, Reagan expressed his willingness "to take the heat" for any decision he made that could help secure the release of the hostages.[137] Reagan concluded the December 7 meeting with a statement to the effect that "I don't feel we can leave any stone unturned in trying to get the hostages back. We clearly have a situation here where there are larger strategic interests, but it is also an opportunity to get the hostages back, and I think we ought to at least take the next step."[138]

Reagan's advisers made it clear that the arms for hostages policy carried a large price tag in terms of the President's international and domestic interests. However, the President went ahead with the initiative anyway because having defined his presidency in opposition to what he saw as Jimmy Carter's failures during the Iranian Hostage Crisis, Reagan subordinated those other goals to the goal of freeing the hostages. Reagan later justified his rejection of the December 7, consensus among his advisers to stop the initiative by explaining that "I felt there were not many other options--possibly there were no others--open to us for getting the hostages home."[139] Trading arms for hostages might not

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[136]*Independent Counsel Report*, vol. 2, pp. 476-477.

[137]*Joint Hearings*, McFarlane testimony, 100-2, p. 59, *Tower*, p. 148, and McFarlane, *Special Trust*, p. 47.

[138]This is Poindexter's paraphrase of the President's remarks, *Joint Hearings*, Poindexter testimony, 100-8, p. 25. See also p. 127.

[139]Reagan, *An American Life*, p. 513.

have been *a good* way of getting the hostages out, but for Reagan, at least it was *a* way of getting them out.

The only concrete decision made by the President at the December 7, meeting was to send McFarlane to London, to meet with Ghorbanifar and then report back. Before meeting with Ghorbanifar, McFarlane confessed to Secord why he believed he had been sent by Reagan, "I've been under great pressure from the President to get the hostages out. There are a lot of reasons for this, not the least of which is the fact that he criticized Carter on that very point."[140] The meeting did not go well. McFarlane concluded that Ghorbanifar had no interest in any long term goals, but merely wanted to continue exchanging arms for hostages. While McFarlane attempted to talk about an overall improvement in U.S.-Iranian relations, "Ghorbanifar was trying to establish a price," as North saw it, at which they could trade, "a number of weapons for a number of Americans."[141]

McFarlane's overall estimate of Ghorbanifar, who the administration was relying on as its primary link to Iran, was that he was, "a self-serving mischief maker," a borderline moron," and "one of the most despicable characters I have ever met."[142] McFarlane's low assessment of Ghorbanifar was largely shared by the others who dealt with him. Secord defended Ghorbanifar by saying that he was not the most despicable person he had ever met, but he was "pond scum" and the

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[140]Secord, *Honored and Betrayed*, p. 230.

[141]*Joint Hearings*, North testimony, 100-7, part 1, p. 283; see also McFarlane testimony, 100-2, p. 57; Secord testimony, 100-1, pp. 90-93; McFarlane, *Special Trust*, pp. 47-50; and Secord, *Honored and Betrayed*, p. 231.

[142]*Joint Hearings*, McFarlane to North, March 11, 1986, 100-7, part 3, p. 741; McFarlane testimony, 100-2, p. 180 and Secord testimony, 100-1, p. 93.

"grossest most baldfaced liar I've ever run across.[143] To others, Ghorbanifar was "a duplicitous sneak" and "a sleaze bag of dubious repute."[144]

Moreover, the CIA had dealt with Ghorbanifar in the past and concluded that he was not a reliable intermediary. In 1984, Ghorbanifar had failed two CIA polygraph tests and the CIA had issued a "burn notice" on Ghorbanifar, which declared him to be an intelligence fabricator and warned other agencies not to deal with him. In early 1986, Michael Leeden, the one player on the American side who had a positive estimate of Ghorbanifar, arranged for the CIA to give him a new polygraph, which he promptly failed. According to the examiner, Ghorbanifar showed deception on 13 out of 15 questions, only answering questions about his name and nationality truthfully.[145] Despite these negative estimates, the United States continued to deal with Ghorbanifar because, "warts and all," according to the President, Ghorbanifar represented "our best hope for getting the hostages out."[146]

On December 10, McFarlane briefed the President on his meeting with Ghorbanifar and recommended that the initiative be shut down; citing Ghorbanifar's untrustworthiness and his exclusive focus on arms for hostages as the primary reasons for his recommendation.[147]

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[143]Secord, *Honored and Betrayed*, pp. 225, 232, and 261.

[144]*Joint Hearings*, North testimony, 100-7, part 1, pp. 229 and 220-221; and Armacost to Shultz, May 3, 1986, 100-9, p. 534. See also, Armacost to Shultz, November 25, 1986, 100-9, pp. 619-623.

[145]On Ghorbanifar, the CIA, Leeden and the failed polygraphs, see, *Joint Hearings*, George testimony, 100-11, pp. 190 and 210-211; and Cave deposition, appendix B, vol. 3, pp. 570-576; see also the various CIA documents in 100-11, pp. 881-887 and 893-911; appendix A, vol. 1, pp. 934-937 and 1152-1156; appendix B, vol. 1, pp. 975-1000, 1007, 1032-1041; Leeden deposition, appendix B, vol. 15, p. 988; and Leeden, *Perilous Statecraft*, pp. 111-115.

[146]Reagan, *An American Life*, p. 516. Leeden also claims that "whatever the ultimate decision about his motives, Ghorbanifar has achieved an impressive track record in the hostage-release field," *Perilous Statecraft*, p. 113. See also Cave deposition, *Joint Hearings*, appendix B, vol. 3, p. 816.

[147]*Tower*, pp. 197-202 and McFarlane, *Special Trust*, pp. 50-51.

However, McFarlane's objections were beside the point for Reagan, for he too was primarily interested in the hostage end of the initiative. As McFarlane gave his negative report, Reagan asked, "Why couldn't we continue to let Israel manage this program?" The President, according to McFarlane, "was expressing and searching for, I think understandably, ways to keep alive the hope for getting hostages back, and it is quite true that the President was profoundly concerned for the hostages." McFarlane left his job as National Security Adviser hoping that Reagan would accept his recommendation and kill the initiative, "yet part of me had known that, given his deep desire to do something about our hostages in Lebanon, he would never take that course."[148]

Donald Regan's account of the meeting is similar. The President, according to his Chief of Staff, wanted to keep the channel open:

> not only for geopolitical reasons, but also [because of] the fact that we weren't getting anywhere in getting more hostages out. And we were going to spend another Christmas with hostages there, and he is looking powerless and inept as President, because he's unable to do anything to get the hostages out.[149]

CIA Director Casey noted that the President was clearly worried that shutting down the arms sales could result in the murder of some or all the hostages and that despite the negative consequences that trading arms for hostages would certainly produce for the country and for

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[148]*Joint Hearings*, McFarlane testimony, 100-2, p. 59 and McFarlane, *Special Trust*, p. 7.
[149]*Tower*, pp. 201-202.

Reagan, that the President was "willing to run the risk and take the heat in the future if this will lead to springing the hostages."[150]

By the end of the December 10, meeting, Poindexter was convinced that the President wanted to continue the arms for hostages program and that it was his task as the new National Security Adviser to make it work.[151] One member of his staff who did not need convincing was Oliver North, who remained throughout the initiative a strong proponent of the arms sales. In a December 9 memo, North maintained that Ghorbanifar has already delivered one hostage and that to cut off arms sales now would likely result in the death of some of the hostages. According to North, the biggest problem with the initiative so far has been that the United States has allowed Israel to exercise operational control over the sales and that the United States should, "with an appropriate covert action Finding, commence deliveries ourselves."[152]

1986- DIRECT U.S. SHIPMENTS

On January 2, 1986, Amiram Nir, one of Israeli Prime Minister Peres's advisers on terrorism met with Poindexter to discuss a new proposal that he had worked out with Ghorbanifar. This proposal, while basically an arms for hostages exchange also included a new prisoners-for-hostages component. According to Poindexter's notes, Nir proposed that the United States allow Israel to ship 500 TOWs to Iran in return for the five remaining American hostages. At the same time that the

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[150]Casey to DDCI, December 10, 1985, *Joint Hearings*, 100-11, p. 890.

[151]*Joint Hearings*, Poindexter testimony, 100-8, p. 127-128.

[152]North to McFarlane and Poindexter, December 9, 1985, *Joint Hearings*, 100-2, pp. 599-602.

hostages were released, Israel would arrange for 20-30 Hizballah prisoners to be released by the Israeli backed Southern Lebanon Army and would ship an additional 3,500 TOWs.[153]

While this proposal was under consideration, work on a new covert action finding on Iran was being carried out. Poindexter maintained that he "was never happy with" the finding that the President had signed in early December and so after taking over for McFarlane, he ordered North to begin work on a new finding. What Poindexter objected to about the first finding, and what later propelled him to destroy the only copy of that finding that had the President's signature on it, was that if it were ever made public, it would be, "a significant political embarrassment to the President" because it would support allegations that "the whole Iranian project was just an arms-for hostage deal."[154] North too saw the December finding as seriously flawed because it "demonstrates that it is solely arms for hostages," which "is a politically damaging position for the President . . . [and] internationally damaging for this administration and this country."[155] As a result, in early January 1986, North began to work on a new finding that would stress the long term aspects of the initiative.

When North and Stanley Sporkin, the General Counsel for the CIA, began to work on the new finding, the first few drafts did not mention the hostages at all. The arms sales were justified solely in terms of their ability to help the United States achieve a more moderate

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[153]Poindexter's notes on this meeting are reproduced in *Joint Hearings*, 100-8, pp. 480-482. However, significant parts of the notes, including all the parts dealing with the release of the Shiite prisoners, are blacked out. On the release of the prisoners, see Report, p. 201.

[154]*Joint Hearings*, Poindexter testimony, 100-8, pp. 18-23. See also pp. 118, 133-135 and 149-150 as well as Poindexter deposition, appendix B, vol. 15, pp. 1109-1110.

[155]*Joint Hearings*, North testimony, 100-7, part 1, p. 233. See also p. 282.

government in Iran and gather more intelligence about Iran. However, Sporkin later objected to the total omission of the hostage question and asked North to "tell me again . . . why we're not putting hostages in this document?" North responded that with the hostages in, "it looks like a hostage for arms shipment, it didn't look right." "But that's the fact," retorted Sporkin, "this is a very important element of that Finding . . . I think it ought to be in there." When Casey agreed with Sporkin, attaining the release of the hostages in Lebanon became listed as the third goal in the finding.[156]

On January 6, Poindexter took the newly drafted finding to the President along with a cover memo that had been prepared by North. While, like the finding itself, this cover memo stressed the strategic side of the initiative, in it North also argued that:

> we have been unable to exercise any suasion over Hizballah
> during the course of nearly two years of kidnappings, this
> approach through the government of Iran may well be our
> only way to achieve the release of the American hostages
> held in Beirut (emphasis in original).

The memo outlined the proposal Nir had given to Poindexter[157] and recommend, not that the President sign the finding, but that he discuss it with Shultz, Weinberger, Casey and Attorney General Meese. Reagan agreed to schedule a discussion of the proposal for the next day, but the

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[156]*Joint Hearings*, Sporkin testimony, 100-6, pp. 136-143. Sporkin maintains that North's opposition to any mention of the hostages was not his own, but what he believed the State Department wanted done. For the initial drafts of January finding see, 100-6, pp. 438-451.

[157]Although the memo made no mention of the release of the Shiite prisoners by the Southern Lebanon Army, Reagan told the Tower Commission that he was aware of this facet of the plan, *Tower*, p. 224.

President made it clear where he stood by signing the finding that day, before the scheduled meeting.[158]

The January 7, meeting was quite similar to the December 7, meeting, except that at this time the President had picked up a few more allies. Weinberger and Shultz repeated the same arguments as to why the policy was not in the country's or the President's interests, but now they were the ones who found themselves isolated. In place of the doubts of McFarlane and McMahon were Casey and Meese's support for the program, and Regan now switched his position and sided with the President. Believing that the policy would result in an international and domestic disaster, Shultz found himself somewhat mystified at this meeting. "Secretary Weinberger and I were the only ones who were against it. . . . it almost seemed unreal . . . I couldn't believe that people would want to do this." If there had been any doubts before, after the January 7, meeting it was clear that the President's determination to do something about the hostages had won the day.[159]

Perhaps the most significant consequence of the January 7, meeting came as a result of Secretary Weinberger's legal objections to the plan. Under the requirements of the Arms Export Control Act and the Foreign Assistance Act, a foreign country could only transfer U.S. supplied weapons to a third country if Congress was notified and the proposed recipient nation was itself eligible to receive weapons from the

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[158]For a copy of the January 6, 1986 cover memo and finding, see *Joint Hearings*, 100-8, pp. 483-487. For Reagan's signing of it see Poindexter testimony, 100-8, p. 30.

[159]For Shultz's quote see, *Joint Hearings*, Shultz testimony, 100-9, pp. 33. The best source on the meeting as a whole, is *Tower*, pp. 219-228. In addition, for more on the positions of different individuals see *Joint Hearings*, Weinberger testimony, 100-10, pp. 142-143; Meese testimony, 100-9, p. 197 and Regan testimony, 100-10, pp. 4-7 and 14-16. No one has a distinct memory of the Vice President taking a clear stand at this meeting.

United States. The administration's desire to keep Congress out of this and the U.S. embargo on weapons sales to Iran due to its designation as a terrorist nation, rendered the currently planned Israeli transfers illegal. The administration's lawyers concluded that for the deal to be legal, it had to be restructured so that Israel be cut out and the United States itself supply the arms. If the Department of Defense sold weapons to the CIA, who then had them transferred to Iran under the direction of a Presidential finding, the sales would come under the more permissive Economy Act and National Security Act. These statutes, the administration lawyers concluded, allowed the administration to sell the arms to Iran without informing Congress, or at the least it allowed them to delay informing Congress.[160]

As a result of this legal analysis, the proposed TOWs for hostages deal was restructured to allow for direct U.S. sales. On January 17, 1986, a third finding was presented to Reagan. The cover memo accompanying this third finding, while still stressing that this "may well be our only way to achieve the release of the Americans held in Beirut" did spell out to the President how and why the plan had been changed:

> We have researched the legal problems of Israel's selling
> U.S. manufactured arms to Iran. Because of the
> requirement in U.S. law for recipients of U.S. arms to
> notify the U.S. government of transfers to third countries, I
> do not recommend that you agree with the specific details of
> the Israeli plan. However, there is another possibility. . . .

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[160]On the administration's legal reasoning see *Joint Hearings*, Weinberger testimony, 100-10; pp. 142-143, Meese testimony, 100-9, pp. 205-209; Poindexter testimony, 100-8, pp. 32-33 and 128-129; Poindexter deposition, appendix B, vol. 20, pp. 1145-1146 and 1373-1375; Report, pp. 203-209; see also the memos in 100-6, pp. 458-459 and 469-472. See also Meese, *With Reagan*, p. 266.

> The objectives of the Israeli plan could be met if the CIA, using an authorized agent as necessary, purchased arms from the Department of Defense under the Economy Act and then transferred them to Iran directly after receiving appropriate payment from Iran.

Though the sales envisioned here were more direct in the sense that Israel had been cut out, the mechanics of the sales were still quite complex. Under this plan, the Department of Defense would sell the arms to the CIA, who would sell them to Secord, who would sell them to Ghorbanifar, who would sell them to Iran. The new finding was virtually identical to the second finding. The only difference is that the phrase "third parties" was added to the finding in one place to authorize the planned use of Richard Secord as a middleman between the CIA and Ghorbanifar. Poindexter briefed Reagan on the changed plan and the President signed the new finding without bothering to convene an additional meeting with his advisers to discuss these significant changes in the structure of the deal.[161]

To put the finishing touches on the restructured sales, North went to London to meet with Ghorbanifar. As a result of this meeting, a new commodity was added to the list of the items that the Iranians wanted and the United States was willing to give for the hostages: intelligence. Now, in addition to selling arms and releasing Shiite prisoners, the United States also agreed to provide Iran with military intelligence on the Iran-Iraq front. According to North's notes and a "Notional Timeline" prepared by him, the deal worked out in London was that two

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[161]For the January 17 finding and cover memo see *Joint Hearings*, 100-8, pp. 495-498. While Israel would no longer be selling the arms, it still stayed involved in the negotiations and logistics.

separate deliveries of intelligence, 1000 TOWs and the release of 25 Hizballah prisoners in Lebanon would lead to the release of all the American hostages. Following their release, 25 more Hizballah prisoners would be released, a new intelligence sample would be provided, and 3000 more TOWs would be delivered to Iran.[162]

North then returned to Washington to work on getting the CIA to provide the intelligence and the Department of Defense to provide the TOWs. The CIA was reluctant to supply the intelligence arguing that it would work against U.S. interests in the region by "tilting in a direction which could cause the Iranians to have a successful offense against the Iraqis with cataclysmic results." Poindexter did not take issue with this analysis, but insisted that the CIA supply the intelligence as authorized by the Presidential finding anyway.[163] The Department of Defense, which also opposed the plan, was dragging its feet as well on the delivery of the TOWs. North worried that Weinberger "will continue to create roadblocks until he is told by you [Poindexter] that the President wants this to move NOW (emphasis in original)." To get the TOWs, Poindexter had to call Weinberger to remind him that the President wanted this done and Weinberger would have to make it happen.[164]

After the logistics had been worked out, on February 13, North wrote Poindexter that "Operation RESCUE is now underway."[165] Within days, the first installment of 500 TOWs had arrived in Iran and

[162]North Notebook, January 21, 1986 and North to Poindexter on Operation Recovery, January 24, 1986, *Joint Hearings*, appendix A, part 1, p. 1165 and 100-7, part 3, pp. 1074-1080.

[163]CIA Cable, McMahon to Casey, January 25, 1986, *Joint Hearings*, appendix A, vol. 1, pp. 1183-1184

[164]North to Poindexter, January 15, 1986, *Joint Hearings*, 100-8, pp. 488; Weinberger testimony, 100-10, pp. 144-145; Koch testimony, 100-6, pp. 71, 105 and 106; and Koch deposition, appendix B, vol. 15, pp. 16 and 56-57.

[165]*Joint Hearings*, appendix A, vol. 1, p. 1173.

North was on his way to Frankfurt to deliver some of the required intelligence and meet not only with Ghorbanifar, but also to meet for the first time the Iranian officials with whom Ghorbanifar had been dealing. As North optimistically put it, "this whole endeavor can succeed this week, if we <u>appear</u> (emphasis in original) to be forthcoming."[166] This clearly demonstrates that North was concerned with the hostages and not a long term relationship because the creation of such a relationship could not possibly be done in one week, and rather than build a solid foundation for such a relationship, North only wanted to appear to be forthcoming.

At this February meeting in Frankfurt, North met with the individuals who came to be known as the first channel; Moshen Kangarlou, who was introduced as a Foreign Ministry official, and Ali Samaii, who was introduced as a Revolutionary Guard Intelligence Officer.[167] The meeting did not go smoothly as it readily became apparent that Ghorbanifar had misled both sides as to what the other side had agreed to and was using his position as translator to glide over these differences. Eventually Albert Hakim, an Iranian who had become a U.S. citizen and was now a business partner of Secord's, took over the translating duties. Contrary to the plan that North had outlined in his "Notional Timeline," the Iranians maintained that Ghorbanifar had told them that the United States had "promised to deliver a lot of Phoenix

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[166]North to Poindexter, February 18, 1986, in *Joint Hearings*, 100-7, part 3, p. 1082.
[167]These two were also accompanied by two lower ranking intelligence officers. Kangarlou is often referred to as the "2nd Iranian official" or as the "Australian" in the official sources and Samaii was given the monikers "the Engine" and "the Monster." See Draper, *A Very Thin Line*, p. 284.

missiles" and that only after they were delivered would the Iranians "start on the hostages."[168]

The agreement that North thought he had in January was scrapped and a new deal negotiated. In this deal, America would send a second batch of 500 TOWs in return for the scheduling of a meeting between high-level U.S. and Iranian officials, during which, the hostages were to be released. While such a meeting could help initiate a process that could lead to a closer relationship in the future, it had two more immediate benefits; direct contact with the Iranians would allow the United States to cut Ghorbanifar out of the deal and, most importantly, attendance at the meeting could result in the release of the five remaining hostages. Although no hostages had been released, North remained upbeat, "With the grace of the good Lord and a little more hard work we will very soon have five AMCITS home and be on our way to a much more positive relationship than one which barters TOWs for lives."[169] In late February, 500 more TOWs were delivered.

On March 7, 1986, North and his team met in Paris with Ghorbanifar to set up the details of the promised high-level meeting. However, Ghorbanifar, was clearly more interested in discussing more arms sales than in setting up the meeting. He surprised the American team by announcing that Iran "didn't want TOWs after all. So the TOWs don't count. What we need now are HAWK spare parts."[170] Ghorbanifar then presented a list of 240 different types of HAWK spare

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[168]*Joint Hearings*, C/NE deposition, appendix B, vol. 5, pp. 935-938. The Phoenix is an air-to-air missile.

[169]See both of North's PROF notes to McFarlane on February 27, 1986 in *Joint Hearings*, appendix A, vol. 1, pp. 1178-1180.

[170]This is the paraphrasing of the Chief of the CIA's Near Eastern Division (who has been identified as Thomas Twetten) who accompanied North to Paris, *Tower*, p. 260.

parts that the Iranians were interested in buying in various quantities. In effect, North and his colleagues were told that the 1000 TOWs had not been enough. If they wanted the release of the hostages and the high-level meeting, Iran now wanted more weapons. Rather than complain that the Iranians were again not living up to their agreements and cut off talks, the initiative continued. Why? What was keeping the initiative alive in the face of these continuing disappointments? According to one member of the American team at Paris, the answer was not the promise of a strategic relationship with Iran. While such an outcome would have been "nice:"

> The real thing that was driving this was that there was
> in early '86, late '85, a lot of pressure from the hostage
> families to meet with the President and there were articles
> in the magazines about forgotten hostages, and there were a
> lot of things being said that the U.S. Government isn't doing
> anything. . .
>
> And, of course what is being done we are desperately
> trying to keep secret. And there is a lot of fear about the
> yellow ribbons going back up and that this President would
> have the same problems that the last President had had with
> Iranian hostages.[171]

As a result, the United States plunged ahead. The next major event was Ghorbanifar's early April visit to Washington to continue the haggling over the proposed high-level meeting and the HAWK spare parts. Immediately following these discussions, North penned a memo

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[171]Twetten, *Tower*, p. 261,

to Poindexter that recounted the history of what North describes as their efforts, not to improve relations with Iran, but to "effect the release of the American hostages." North attached an addendum to this memo that started off with a section on what North saw as the "Basic Pillars of U.S. Foreign Policy." What is most striking about this section is that in it, North defines what the Reagan administration stands for by explicitly contrasting Reagan's policies with the failure of the Carter administration to find a quick solution to the Iranian Hostage Crisis:

> -- President Reagan came into office at a time when Iran had had a certain impact on the American political process-- perhaps not what you intended
>
> -- The President represented and embodied America's recovery from a period of weakness. He has rebuilt American military and economic strength
>
> -- Most important, he has restored American will and self-confidence

The message is clear, if the Reagan administration wants to avoid becoming like everything it stands against, it must act quickly on the hostages.

Regarding the specific discussions with Ghorbanifar, North asserts in this memo that Ghorbanifar has agreed that a senior level meeting could take place in Tehran on April 20, without any prior delivery of weapons, provided that the United States agree to transfer the requested HAWK parts immediately after the hostages had been released.[172]

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[172]This is all taken from the now infamous "diversion memo," which gained notoriety by being the first piece of concrete evidence discovered indicating that funds from the Iranian arms sales were being used to support the Contras, see *Joint Hearings*, 100-7, part 3, pp. 1-8. While this chapter only focuses on the Iran side of Iran-Contra, it is well to keep it mind that at least one of the incentives North had in

However, the report of another member of the U.S. negotiating team suggests that this deal was not finalized, but merely that Ghorbanifar "kept insisting that we bring some of the spares with us and we keep insisting that we wouldn't[,] although a small sample is an option.[173]

The arrangement that North outlined in this early April memo was evidently far from a done deal, as haggling over the HAWKs, hostages, and the high level meeting continued throughout April and into May. While the Iranians continued to push for a sequential arrangement consisting of some arms shipments, then some hostages, and then some more arms shipments, etc.; the United States insisted that, "there are not to be any parts delivered until all the hostages are free . . . None of this half shipment before any are released crap."[174] Adding a sense of urgency to these negotiations was the murder of hostage Peter Kilburn, who was reportedly killed in retaliation for the U.S. bombing of Libya.

At a May 6, meeting in London, the United States agreed to a compromise whereby the U.S. delegation to the meeting in Tehran would bring along "a small portion" of the HAWK parts; "whatever we can carry with us on one plane . . . which would be about one pallet" (approximately one-twelfth of the entire shipment). Then, presumably, all the hostages were to be released and the remaining spare parts

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continuing the arms sales is that they were providing money for the Contras. On this point, see McFarlane testimony, 100-2, pp. 168 and 276-277; North testimony, 100-7, part 2, pp. 109 and 121-122 and part 2, pp. 167-8; Poindexter testimony, 100-8, p. 50; Earl deposition, appendix B, vol. 9, pp. 713-714; and Report, pp. 7-8, 280 and 519. See also, Leeden, *Perilous Statecraft*, pp. 194, 200, 207-208, and 223-226; McFarlane, *Special Trust*, p. 50; Mayer and McManus, *Landslide*, p. 225, Schieffer and Gates, *The Acting President*, pp. 261 and 267-278; and Constantine Menges, *Inside The National Security Council: The True Story of The Making and UnMaking of Reagan's Foreign Policy* (New York: Touchstone, 1988) p. 355. North later converted the above quoted section on basic pillars of U.S. foreign policy into talking points to be used with the Iranians, see *Tower*, p. 294.
[173]Cave memo, April 3, 1986, *Joint Hearings*, appendix A, vol. 1, p. 1198.
[174]Poindexter to North, April 16, 1986, *Joint Hearings*, 100-7, part 3, p. 1093. See also Poindexter to McFarlane, April 22, 1986 and McFarlane to Poindexter, April 22, 1986, appendix A, vol. 1, pp. 1212-1213; and Report, pp. 227-228.

shipped. The Americans were also told by Ghorbanifar that once they arrived in Tehran they would be meeting with the Prime Minister (Musavi), the Speaker of the Majlis (Rafsanjani), the President (Khameini), and possibly with Khomeini's son (Ahmed).[175] While it took a few weeks to straighten out the logistics of the arms and financial transfers, by May 25, one pallet of spare HAWK parts was on its way to Iran, along with the U.S. delegation. As North saw it, the objective of the trip was simply "To secure the return of four American hostages who continue to be held by Hizballah elements in Lebanon" by providing "incentives for the Government of Iran to intervene with those who hold the American hostages and secure their safe release."[176]

The meeting in Tehran went as badly as all the other meetings with the Iranians. McFarlane was chosen as the President's personal emissary to head the delegation. Although he had retired in December of 1985, he had stayed in touch with North and Poindexter by a secure communication link that he had been allowed to keep after his retirement so he could continue to work on the hostage problem.[177] Accompanying McFarlane to the negotiations were North, George Cave, who was a retired CIA expert on Iran, Howard Teicher, who was another member of the NSC staff, and Amiram Nir, the adviser on terrorism to the Israeli Prime Minister who now attempted to pass himself off to the Iranians as an American. Thus, the "high-level" American delegation, which hoped to meet with the three top government officials in Iran consisted of a retired National Security Adviser (who, it was later

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[175]*Joint Hearings*, Cave deposition, appendix B, vol. 3, pp. 627-629 and Report, pp. 229-230.
[176]North to Poindexter, May 22, 1986, *Joint Hearings*, 100-11, p. 460.
[177]This secure link was a PROFS terminal, Mayer and McManus, *Landslide*, p. 182.

claimed, the Iranians had never heard of), three relatively low level staff members, one of whom was retired, and an Israeli.

The trip got off to an inauspicious start when the delegation arrived in Tehran on May 25 and there was no one to meet them. Eventually, Ghorbanifar did come to the airport to pick them up and the American delegation was sequestered in the top floor of a Tehran hotel. The spare parts they had brought with them were immediately taken off the plane, but no hostages were released. Also, during the four days the delegation spent in Tehran, the promised senior level meetings never materialized. According to the Iranians the U.S. team did negotiate with, none of the top leaders would meet with them because they are all "traumatized by the recollection that after Bazargan met with Brzezinski in the Spring of 1980, he was deposed."[178]

The Tehran meeting was plagued by the same problems that had beset the entire initiative. First, it soon became clear that again, Ghorbanifar had lied to both sides regarding what the other had promised. Whereas the U.S. delegation expected all the hostages to be released upon their arrival, the Iranians expected the Americans to arrive with half of the requested spare parts in return for their promise to start on the hostage problem. Second, and most important, was the dispute between both sides over the timing of the trades. The Iranians demanded that the arms be delivered first and the Americans demanded that the hostages be released first.

During these meetings, the Iranians told the U.S. delegation that for the release of the captives, the hostage takers were demanding that

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[178]See the reports on the meeting in *Joint Hearings*, appendix A, vol. 1, pp. 1253, 1263, and 1279. See also *Tower*, p. 350; North, *Under Fire*, p. 60 and McFarlane, *Special Trust*, pp. 59-60.

Israel withdraw from the Golan Heights and Southern Lebanon, that the Shiite prisoners held by the Southern Lebanon army be released, that the Da'wa prisoners being held in Kuwait be released, and that the United States pay for the expenses they have incurred as a result of holding the hostages. The Iranians later informed the American delegation that they were continuing to work with Hizballah, that they would take care of Hizballah's demands for money, and that they had dropped all their demands except for the release of the Da'wa prisoners. The Da'wa prisoners were terrorists who had been convicted for a string of bombings directed at U.S. and French targets in Kuwait that resulted in six deaths and over 80 other casualties. McFarlane told the Iranians that the United States would not intervene to change Kuwait's judicial decisions, but North was willing to be more forthcoming and promised that, "The U.S. will make every effort through and with international organizations . . . and other third parties in a humanitarian effort to achieve the release and the just and fair treatment for Shiites held in confinement." If arms were not enough to get the hostages out, North was willing to make a terrorist-for-hostages exchange.[179]

Regarding arms for hostages, two formulas were offered to bridge the gap between the American and Iranians. The Americans offered to launch the plane carrying the spare parts and to have the hostages released while the plane was in the air. The plane was launched, but it turned around in mid-flight when no hostages were released. The Iranians offered to release two hostages now and two later after the delivery of all the spare parts. Neither sides' formula was

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[179]*Joint Hearings*, appendix A, vol. 1, pp. 1262, 1286, 1291 and 1297.

acceptable to the other. The meetings ended in failure and the American delegation departed.[180] A small shipment of HAWK spare parts had been added to the total of arms delivered to Iran, but no further hostages were released.

The failed Tehran meeting did not end the Iran initiative. Reagan called the failure of the meeting "heart breaking" and "he thought that there were still possibilities and his message was always try harder; and we kept trying. And that is why we continued."[181] Throughout June and July, the adminstration kept in touch with the Iranians through Ghorbanifar, who continued to lobby both sides. Ghorbanifar finally achieved a breakthrough on July 26, 1986, when one hostage, Reverend Lawrence Jenco, was released. Jenco's release led to a late July meeting in Frankfurt between North and Ghorbanifar. The Iranians had spent the last month complaining, quite accurately, that they were being vastly overcharged for the weapons they were buying, and at the Frankfurt meeting, Ghorbanifar told North what he had to promise the Iranians to obtain Jenco's release. Without clearing it with anyone on the American side, Ghorbanifar had promised that upon the release of Jenco, the United States would deliver the remaining HAWK parts and 500 TOWs. Then, after a second hostage was released, an additional 500 TOWs and a HAWK radar would be sent, which would lead to the release of the third hostage, followed by a new meeting in Tehran where the final hostage would be released and one more HAWK radar delivered.[182]

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[180]On the Tehran meeting as a whole, see the reports made by the American delegation in *Joint Hearings*, appendix A, vol. 1, pp. 1252-1254 and 1256-1309; North testimony, 100-7, pp. 229-231 and 294-296; *Tower*, pp. 296-338 and Draper, *A Very Thin Line*, pp. 315-331. For an account of it from the Iranian side see Taheri, *Nest of Spies*, pp. 196-203.

[181]Reagan, *An American Life*, p. 521 and *Joint Hearings*, Poindexter testimony, 100-8, pp. 355-356.

[182]North to Poindexter, July 29, 1986, *Joint Hearings*, 100-7, part 3, p. 1182.

Ghorbanifar's action forced the U.S.'s hand, the Reagan administration now had to respond to Jenco's release. As North saw it, doing nothing would endanger the lives of the Iranians they were dealing with, Ghorbanifar, and most importantly, the hostages themselves: "if we want to prevent the death of one of the three remaining hostages, we are going to have do something." North's recommendation was that they keep the deal and the hostages alive by sending the remaining HAWK parts and scheduling a new meeting with the Iranians.[183] CIA Director Casey concurred, he argued that the Ghorbanifar channel had "now worked for the second time" and that to do nothing would result in the deaths of "one or more of the remaining hostages." "Although I am not pleased by segmented release of the American hostages, I am convinced that this may be the only way to proceed."[184] The President agreed and in early August, the remaining HAWK parts arrived in Tehran.

Although in May, McFarlane had rejected a deal for two hostages in exchange for the HAWK parts, now the United States was willing to accept only one hostage for the spares. According to Donald Regan, the administration gave in because it simply could not resist the "bait" of the hostages or give up the hope that "we could save a life here, a life there."[185] North continued to meet with Ghorbanifar and to work out new arms for hostages exchanges.[186]

On September 9, while the newest arms for hostages proposals were under consideration, another American, Frank Reed, was seized in

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[183]North/Cave memo, June [sic] 27, 1986, *Joint Hearings*, 100-7, part 3, p. 1186 and North to Poindexter, July 29, 1986, pp. 1182.
[184]Casey to Poindexter, July 26, 1986, *Joint Hearings*, 100-7, part 3, pp. 1197-1199.
[185]*Joint Hearings*, Regan testimony, 100-10, p. 49.
[186]See North to Poindexter, September 2 and 8, 1986, *Joint Hearings*, 100-7, part 3, pp. 1205-1211.

Lebanon. Reed's kidnapping was followed by the September 15 seizure of Joseph Cicippio and the October 21 seizure of Edward Tracy. Even in the face of these additional kidnappings, the Reagan administration refused to stop its arms for hostages program. After Reed's kidnapping, the only change in the initiative the administration made was to put Ghorbanifar's contacts in Iran, the so-called "first channel," on hold and to try to obtain the release of the hostages through new contacts the United States had been developing, which came to be known as the "second channel."[187]

Throughout the initiative, the administration had very little information on the hostage-holders. When the new hostages were taken, all the administration could do was to speculate on who had taken them and why. They entertained a number of possibilities: they could have been taken by a group in Lebanon unresponsive to Iran, or a faction in Iran could have encouraged the seizures to undermine the initiative, or the Iranian government could have encouraged the seizures to increase the number of hostages they had to trade with, or the first channel could have ordered the seizure in response to reports that the United States was attempting to develop a second channel. To add to the confusion, the administration did not know how or even if the proposed second channel was different from the channel with which they had already been working. Despite the ominous consequences of any of these scenarios, more weapons would soon be sent to Iran through the new "second

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[187]Allen to Casey, September 10, 1986, *Joint Hearings*, appendix B, vol. 3, p. 1031 and *Tower*, pp. 399-400.

channel," because Reagan, according to Poindexter, "was unwilling to give up the possibility of at least getting some out."[188]

Albert Hakim and Richard Secord played the leading roles in the development of this new "second channel" into Iran. The second channel was also referred to as "the relative," because the primary figure involved was purported to be a member of Majli Speaker Rafsanjani's family.[189] "The relative" held his first meting with North on September 19, 1986, in Washington. Although no specific agreement was reached, North and "the relative" discussed many of the topics that dominated the entire life of the second channel--arms, hostages, the Da'wa prisoners, and U.S. policy towards the Iran-Iraq war and Iraq's Saddam Hussein.[190]

The Washington meeting was a prelude to the far more consequential meeting between the U.S. representatives and the second channel that took place in early October in Frankfurt. The central theme stressed by the U.S. negotiators at this meeting was that America could offer so much to Iran, if only the hostages were released. North claimed that the President reproached him "for thinking so small." According to North, Reagan was willing to help Iran end the war with Iraq on terms acceptable to Iran, aid the two million Iranians that had no homes as a result of the war, and rebuild Iran's industrial base. All this and more, North promised, could be done for Iran, on the condition that

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[188]Poindexter deposition, *Joint Hearings*, appendix B, vol. 20, p. 1467. On the speculation on the taking of the new hostages and what one Congressman accurately saw as the Iranian faction version of "Good cop/bad cop;" see also the documents in 100-7, part 3, pp. 186, 792, 1249, and 1254-1255; 100-6, p. 714; Poindexter testimony, 100-8, p. 71; *Tower*, pp. 420 and 426; North, *Under Fire*, pp. 334-335; Cannon, *President Reagan*, pp. 661-662, 664 and 669; and Mayer and McManus, *Landslide*, pp. 264, 276 and 289.

[189]There remains some uncertainty whether "the relative" was Mehdi Bahremani, the Majlis Speaker's son or Ali Hashemi Bahremani, the Speaker's nephew. See Draper, *A Very Thin Line*, pp. 398-400.

[190]On this meeting see, the reports in *Joint Hearings*, 100-7, part 3, pp. 773-793; Report, pp. 251-253 and *Tower*, pp. 408-414.

the hostages be released. The U.S. negotiators told the Iranians that they had already begun working on the release of the Da'wa prisoners, that they would help depose Saddam Hussein in Iraq, and that America would come to the assistance of the Iranians if the Soviets ever invaded Iran.[191]

In addition to these vague promises of future aid, the Frankfurt meeting also resulted in a new concrete arms-for-hostages proposal, or more accurately a new arms, intelligence, medical supplies, technical support, Shiite prisoners and convicted terrorists-for-hostages exchange. Under a 9-point plan agreed to at Frankfurt and later approved by Reagan, the United States would provide 500 TOWs, some more HAWK parts, medical supplies, and a plan from Hakim for the release of the Da'wa prisoners in Kuwait, in return for one and one half hostages (one definitely and an honest effort to get a second). Then, the United States would deliver more TOWs, technical support on the weapons Iran already had, updated intelligence, and help from Secord on the problem of Shiite prisoners being held in Lebanon, in return for Iran's continued efforts on behalf of the hostages. Despite all the concessions made by the United States here, Iran had only offered a firm promise to secure the release of one hostage. In the administration's zeal to get the hostages out of Lebanon, "they got," according to Secretary Shultz, "taken to the cleaners" on this deal.[192]

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[191]On these points, see the tapes of the Frankfurt meeting, *Joint Hearings*, appendix A, vol. 1, pp. 1442-1454 and 1473-1539, see especially, pp. 1474-1476, 1479-1481 and 1529-1531. See also, 100-5, p. 1072. North later defended many of these promises as pure lies he told the Iranians to get them to help release the hostages (so much for using these meetings as an opportunity for building a groundwork of trust that could serve as the basis of a long term relationship). North testimony, 100-7, part 1, pp. 8, 290, 233 and 332-333; and North, *Under Fire*, p. 353.

[192]For the precise terms of the 9-point plan, also known as the "Hakim accords" because Hakim oversaw the final agreement as North had left Frankfurt to deal with problems involving Nicaragua, see *Joint Hearings*, 100-7, pp. 1237-1240. The most controversial portion of the 9-points proved to be the sections on the Da'wa prisoners. North and Poindexter contend that Reagan approved the entire plan, but Reagan later claimed that he had approved of no plan that entailed any U.S. actions on the release of

In mid-October, *Newsweek* carried a story on "America's Forgotten Hostages," which centered on the very comparisons to the Iranian Hostage Crisis that the Reagan administration had been trying to avoid. The article asked whether the captives in Lebanon would lead to "a Reagan hostage crisis" and warned that "with the families breaking silence, an administration that has so successfully avoided the fate of Jimmy Carter in Iran could finally face its own hostage crisis."[193] The administration's hopes of avoiding such a fate now rested on the successful implementation of the 9-point plan. By late October the administration carried out its initial obligations under the plan by shipping 500 TOWs to Iran.[194]

Following the delivery of the TOWs, North and his team met with the second channel in Mainz to discuss the release of the hostages and the

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the Da'wa prisoners. Poindexter later attempted to explain away these differences by maintaining that the 9-point plan did not entail the United States doing anything on the Da'was, the plan was to be developed by Hakim, a private citizen. Thus, how much Ronald Reagan knew about the specifics of the Da'wa portions of the 9-point plan is still a subject of controversy. See, *Joint Hearings*, North testimony, 100-7, part 1, pp. 335-336 and part 2, pp. 6-7 and 125-126; Secord testimony, 100-1, p. 123; Hakim testimony, 100-5. pp. 324; Poindexter testimony, 100-8, pp. 67-69, 234, and 377; Poindexter deposition, appendix B, vol. 20, pp. 1472-1473; Regan testimony, 100-10, pp. 21 and 121-122; Shultz testimony, 100-9, pp. 4, 46-49, 61-63, 66 and 147; and Report, pp. 8-9. Reagan, *An American Life*, p. 523; Draper, *A Very Thin Line*, 433-435, and Cannon, *President Reagan*, pp. 667-669. It should be noted that there is evidence that North and Poindexter did indeed pressure Kuwait to release the Da'wa prisoners, see *Joint Hearings*, Shultz testimony, 100-9, pp. 146, Cave deposition, appendix B, vol. 3, p. 985; appendix A, vol. 1, p. 1479, 1529-1531 and 1607; Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p. 638; and Mayer and McManus, *Landslide*, p. 278. One further controversy regarding the 9-point plan, Hakim later claimed that he had been pressured by North to come to an agreement that would get a hostage freed in time for the upcoming Congressional elections. While North does not deny making the comment, it is unlikely that North or anyone else foresaw any electoral benefit coming from the release of the hostages or that the administration viewed the initiative in electoral terms. Indeed, the evidence indicates that most saw the arms for hostages trades as a domestic liability. The most likely explanation for North's statements on this point is his explanation that he said this simply to create a deadline that could help speed up the negotiations, as other dates, such as the fourth of July had been used in the past. See *Joint Hearings*, Hakim testimony, 100-5, pp. 289-291 and 342, and North testimony, 100-7, part 1, pp. 289-290. See also, North, *Under Fire*, pp. 337-339 and 356-357; Secord, *Honored and Betrayed*, pp. 306-307; and Cannon, *The Acting President*, pp. 666 and 669-671.
[193]Rod Nordland, "America's Forgotten Hostages" *Newsweek*, October 20, 1986, pp. 38-47.
[194]The actual TOWs shipped to Iran were ones that had been earlier shipped to Israel in exchange for the 500 TOWs they had sent to Iran in 1985. Israel claimed these replacement TOWs were inadequate and they wanted newer models. North agreed to the switch, unconcerned about the possible ramifications of sending Iran missiles the Israelis saw as inadequate.

implementation of the remaining points of the plan. Again the U.S. contingent stressed how much America could do for Iran if only they got the hostages out.[195] On November 2, 1986, Iran carried out its initial obligations under the plan by securing the release of David Jacobsen. The exchange of 500 TOWs for Jacobsen turned out to be the last of the Reagan administration's arms for hostages trades, because the day after Jacobsen's release, the administration's covert initiative became public. On that day, a Lebanese newspaper ran a story reporting on McFarlane's secret mission to Tehran and on the following day, Rafsanjani made a speech conceding that such a meeting had taken place.

However, the power of the Iranian Hostage Crisis analogy, or more specifically, Reagan's determination to avoid becoming as "weak" and "ineffectual" as he had accused Carter of being, made Reagan extremely reluctant to shut the initiative down, even after it had become public. As a result of the Iranian Hostage Crisis, Reagan believed it was the duty of the President to secure the release of Americans held captive overseas, even if it entailed compromising the interests of the nation or the interests of the President. Thus, even in the midst of the administration's greatest scandal, when Shultz and Weinberger's pessimistic predictions of what the arms for hostages program would do to the United States and the Reagan Presidency were coming true, Reagan wanted to continue the initiative.[196] In the early days of November, the administration decided to continue the initiative, while saying as little as possible publicly about the growing scandal. If forced to say something, the administration decided that it would downplay the

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[195]See the transcripts of this meeting in *Joint Hearings*, appendix A, vol. 1, pp. 1571-1618.
[196]See Draper, *A Very Thin Line*, pp. 465-468 and Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, pp. 808-859.

arms for hostages angle by stressing that the arms had been sent to bolster the U.S. position in Iran and not as part of a direct trade for the hostages. In essence, Reagan had decided to continue the arms for hostages exchange, while denying there had ever been any arms for hostages exchanges. Within days of the story's exposure, North was back in Europe meeting with the second channel trying to iron out further arms for hostages deals. Shultz continued to oppose the initiative:

> "So if the 500 TOWs plus other items have been supplied to Iran in the context of hostage releases," I asked incredulously, "How can you say this is not an arms-for-hostages deal?"
>
> The president jumped in, asserting, "It's not linked!" Poindexter undercut him. "How else will we get the hostages out?" he asked me in an accusing tone. In that flash of candor, Poindexter had unwittingly ripped away whatever veil was left to the rationale of a "changed Iran" as the reason for our arms sales.[197]

Even after the Iran affair became the Iran-Contra affair with the November 25, announcement that some of the profits from the arms sales had been donated to the Contras in Nicaragua, Reagan was still drawn to the initiative, despite its obvious and growing costs. In a private phone call to the sister of one of the hostages, Reagan declared that "I don't care what anyone else says, . . . I'm going to bring those

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[197]Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p. 813. See also the various notes and memos on the November 10, 1986, meeting in *Joint Hearings*, 100-9, p. 450 and 100-10, pp. 370-378, 379-392, and 578-580.

men home."[198] Only after the exposure of the Iranian arms sales, the disclosure of the diversion to the Contras, the resignation of Poindexter, the firing of North, a number of Presidential speeches and embarrassing press conferences that raised more questions than they answered, overwhelming evidence that the majority of the American people did not believe Reagan's account of the Iran-Contra affair, the appointment by the President of a Special Review Board and an Independent Counsel, the largest one-month drop in a President's approval rating in the history of the poll, and announcements by various Congressional committees that they would investigate the Iran-Contra affair, did Reagan finally concede that the initiative could not continue.[199]

One final indication of the extent to which securing the release of the hostages held in Lebanon was central to Reagan's definition of himself as a good President is his consistent refusal, even given the benefit of hindsight, to admit that trading arms for hostages was a mistake. Throughout the initiative, Reagan consistently and knowingly jeopardized the interests of the United States and his own domestic interests to attain what he saw as a more important goal, securing the release of the hostages. Even after suffering through the scandal this policy created, Reagan maintains he made the correct choice. Part of his defense is the cover story that the initiative was designed to "open Iran" and not primarily to trade arms for hostages, but in his more candid

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[198]Mayer and McManus, *Landslide*, p. 355.

[199]This account of the post-exposure period necessarily condenses a great deal of material. On this period of the Iran-Contra affair, see Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, pp. 808-859; Draper, *A Very Thin Line*, pp. 457-557; *Joint Hearings*, Report, pp. 261-263; Lawrence E. Walsh, *Firewall: The Iran Contra Conspiracy and Coverr-up* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997); and Paul Kowert, "Between Reason and Passion: A Systems Theory of Foreign Policy Learning" Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, 1992, pp. 350-376.

moments, Reagan staunchly defends his policy of trading arms for hostages. The problems arose, Reagan argues, not because of his arms for hostages policy, but because those policies became public before he had a chance to trade for all the hostages. Consider these excerpts from his memoirs:

> The journalistic firestorm got larger and larger and, in it, I saw our expectations of bringing home Terry Anderson and Thomas Sutherland go up in smoke. It was one of the most unpleasant experiences of my presidency to watch this happen. . . .
>
> There's a difference between having done something wrong and feeling bad about it, on the one hand, and, on the other, having an inner feeling that says you haven't done anything wrong--and that's how I felt. . . .
>
> I didn't care what anybody said, I hadn't done anything wrong.
>
> In time, my ranking in the public opinion polls rose. But that never made me feel as happy as some people might think it would: It was as if Americans were forgiving me for something I hadn't done.
>
> And one thing about the Iran initiative will never change: we did bring home three hostages.[200]

Reagan accepted responsibility for the actions of his administration, while claiming that at worst, all he could be "blamed" for was caring too

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[200]Reagan, *An American Life*, pp. 527, 532, 534, and 541-542. See also, Nancy Reagan with William Novak, *My Turn: The Memoirs of Nancy Reagan* (New York: Random House, 1989), p. 109; and *Independent Counsel Report*, vol. 1, pp. 467 and vol. 2, pp. 716.

much about the hostages, which in Reagan's mind was no blame at all.[201]
Indeed, while his policies certainly resulted in international and domestic
costs, to have done any less for the hostages would have struck Reagan as
a dereliction of his duty as President.

COMPETING EXPLANATIONS AND COUNTERFACTUALS

This chapter has already discussed a number of competing
explanations regarding Reagan's decision to sell arms to Iran. One
explanation favored by the administration and its supporters during the
early days of the crisis was an analogical one, that Reagan was trying to
repeat Nixon's success in opening China by using the arms sales as a way
of re-establishing friendly relations with Iran. While the administration
would undoubtedly have welcomed better relations with revolutionary
Iran, the evidence presented above clearly challenges such an
explanation. Indeed, the administration's invocation of the China
analogy is a good example of a case where the critics of the analogical
approach, who claim that the lessons of history are merely rhetorical
devices designed to justify and not to inform policy, would be correct.[202]
The documentary record clearly shows that the China analogy played
almost no role in the administration's private discussions during the
initiative and that discussions of it only take center stage later, when the
administration attempts to defend its policies publicly. Moreover, the
administration's actions also suggest that establishing good will in Iran

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[201]See his March 4, 1987, and his August 12, 1987, speeches in *Public Papers*, 1987, vol. 1, p. 209 and 1987, vol. 2, p. 942. See also, Reagan, *An American Life*, pp. 540-541.

[202]For the arguments of these critics see the discussion of analogies versus interests in Chapter 1.

or moderating the Iranian government always took a back seat to the primary goal of securing the release of the hostages. Indeed, many of the actions taken by the United States clearly harmed the prospects of better relations and only buttressed radical elements in Iran.

However, this does not mean that the interest-based explanations favored by the critics of the analogical approach can do a much better job of explaining the administration's actions. Indeed, one of the most puzzling aspects of Reagan's policy is that it was pursued even though its supporters, with the strongest supporter being the President himself, believed that it would damage the international interests of the United States and the domestic interests of the President. Reagan was willing to accept these costs, if that is what it took to get the hostages out.

To understand why the Reagan administration acted as it did, it is necessary to combine considerations of analogies and interests. In the previous cases explored in this dissertation, and in the literature on analogies as a whole, this combination takes the form of examining how analogies give policy makers information on cause and effect relations that tell them how to best advance their pre-existing international and domestic goals. However, this case demonstrates the limits of that combination and suggests an alternative one; namely, that analogies may in certain cases also help define what a policy maker sees as his interests. As a direct result of the Hostage Crisis, Reagan came to define his interests as President in such a way that securing the release of hostages was a priority regardless of the possible damage this could do to his international and domestic interests.

Without the Iranian Hostage Crisis it is very unlikely that there would have been an Iran-Contra scandal. The Hostage Crisis was a defining event for the Reagan Presidency, it played an important role in his election and its ending dominated his inauguration and the opening days of his administration. Without it, American hostages abroad would not have been as high profile a problem as it was for Reagan and without it, Reagan would not have been desperate enough to try virtually anything, including trading arms for hostages, to secure their release. Failing, as he had perceived Carter as failing, was unacceptable.

While necessary, the experience of the Hostage Crisis was probably not sufficient to lead to Iran-Contra. For instance, many of Reagan's top aides, like Shultz and Weinberger, though they too had witnessed the Hostage Crisis, argued strongly against the decision to trade arms for hostages. If their advice had been heeded, or if they or someone like them had sat in the President's chair, it is unlikely the initiative would have gotten off the ground.

To understand why the Hostage Crisis led Reagan to approve the arms shipments it is also necessary to understand his personality. More specifically, those close to Reagan have long recognized a tendency for him to violate his deeply held political beliefs when confronted with individual cases of hardship. The decision to sell arms to Iran in exchange for the hostages can be seen as one manifestation of this tendency. Reagan's compassion towards the ordeals suffered by the hostages and their families moved him to disregard his deeply held beliefs about not negotiating with terrorists.[203]

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[203]See Cannon, *President Reagan*, pp. 609-610 and Mayer and McManus, *Landslide*, pp. 94-101.

This factor certainly contributed to Reagan's decision to sell arms for hostages. However, by itself it is not a complete explanation. Out of all the cases of individual suffering in the world, why did Reagan focus so heavily on the hostages? Why did he constantly barrage his subordinates with questions about possible progress on securing their release? Why was alleviating this type of personal suffering so important to the President? As has been argued throughout this chapter, the answer is the Hostage Crisis analogy. It was this experience that put hostages in the center of the President's concern and made the hostages in Beirut the focus of the President's compassion.

Before moving on, it should be noted that this characteristic of Reagan's may help explain why the Hostage Crisis had such an enormous impact on the President and his definition of his duty and interests as President. If the existing literature on analogies and foreign policy is at all representative, and judging by the other cases explored in this dissertation, a significant redefinition of interests stemming from a particular historical analogy is a relatively rare occurrence. Indeed, even in this case, many of the people around the President questioned his decision to put the welfare of the hostages above the national interest and over his own domestic interests. Reagan's personality, his susceptibility towards making exceptions in cases of individual hardship, may help explain why the Hostage Crisis analogy took on an interest-defining role for him.

CONCLUSION

"I felt a heavy weight on my shoulders to get the hostages home. . . .
What American trapped in such circumstances wouldn't have wanted me
to do everything I possibly could to set them free? What Americans *not*
held captive under such circumstances would not want me to do my
utmost to get the hostages home? It was the President's *duty* to get them
home (italics in original).

<div align="right">-Ronald Reagan[204]</div>

Between August 1985 and November 1986, the Reagan
administration traded a total of just over 2,000 TOW missiles, 18
HAWK missiles (17 of which were returned as inadequate), and close to
240 different types of HAWK parts for three American hostages.
During this period, three additional Americans were taken hostage in
Lebanon to replace the three who had been set free. Reagan's decision
to sell arms for hostages was in direct contradiction to the
administration's publicly stated policy of not giving in to terrorists and
in direct contradiction to the administration's policy of containing the
Khomeini regime by limiting Iran's access to the international arms
market. Having one policy in public and another in private undermined
the U.S.'s position abroad and the President's popularity at home. Yet
Reagan willingly accepted these costs.

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[204]Reagan, *An American Life*, p. 513. See also p. 492.

The puzzle this chapter set out to explain is why did President Reagan support an arms for hostages policy that he knew would damage his international and domestic interests? The answer to this puzzle can be found in the experience of the United States during the Iranian Hostage Crisis, or more specifically, Reagan's desire to avoid becoming as helpless as he had accused Carter of being. Reagan defined his identity as President in opposition to what he saw as the weakness of the Carter administration and was unwilling to accept that he could be as powerless as Carter had been. As a result, Reagan desperately tried to find some policy, any policy, that would secure the release of the hostages, virtually without regard to other consequences his policy could have. Reagan ultimately settled on a policy of selling arms for hostages simply because weapons were what Iran wanted.

In this case, the Carter analogy did not work in the same way as the lessons of history had worked in the previous chapters. In those chapters, analogies were cognitive tools that gave policy makers information regarding what particular policies would best advance their international and domestic interests. However, in this case, Reagan did not look to the Hostage Crisis for lessons on how he could best protect those interests. Instead, the Hostage Crisis analogy redefined what Reagan saw his interests as being. Reagan's definition of his Presidency in opposition to what he saw as the failures of the Carter years, as represented by the Hostage Crisis, led Reagan to define his interests in such a way that the goal of securing the release of the hostages became more important to him than protecting his international and domestic interests.

While Carter certainly did see the release of the hostages as an important goal, throughout the Hostage Crisis that goal remained subordinate to protecting the international interests of the nation and the domestic interests of his administration. The same can not be said for Reagan's policies towards the hostages in Lebanon. There, as a result of the experience of the Iranian Hostage Crisis, Reagan made securing the release of the hostages his number one goal and was willing to sacrifice his international and domestic interests to achieve it. Whereas Carter did not want his efforts to secure the release of the hostages to stand in the way of his more important international and domestic goals, Reagan would not let his international and domestic goals stand in the way of his more important efforts to secure the release of the hostages.

Ironically, after the arms for hostages initiative became public and Congress and the Independent Counsel began asking "what did the President know and when did he know it?" it turned out that perhaps the most apt analogy did indeed, as Reagan and his associates tried to maintain, go back to the Nixon administration. However, unfortunately for Reagan, the appropriate analogy was not to Nixon's opening to China, but to Nixon's troubles with Watergate.[205]

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[205]On the influence of the Watergate analogy during the post-exposure period see *Joint Hearings*, McFarlane testimony, 100-2, p. 80; Poindexter testimony, 100-8, p. 288; Secord testimony, 100-1, pp. 21-22; Earl deposition, appendix B, vol. 9, pp. 1051-1052 and 100-2, p. 637; and 100-9, pp. 50-51 and 112-113; *Independent Counsel Report*, vol. 1, p. 460 and 507; Walsh, *Firewall*, pp. 10, 136, 207, 334, 360, 375, 379, 382, 417-418, 503, 507, and 512; McFarlane, *Special Trust*, p. 95; Leeden, *Perilous Statecraft*, pp. 247 and 251; Meese, *With Reagan*, p. 246; North, *Under Fire*, pp. 7-8; Reagan, *An American Life*, p. 528; Nancy Reagan, *My Turn*, pp. 319-320 and 235; Regan, *For The Record*, p. 56; Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, pp. 783, 787, 790-791, 815 and 825; Secord, *Honored and Betrayed*, pp. 326-328; Speakes, *Speaking Out*, p. 288; Cannon, *President Reagan*, pp. 703-704 and 733; Draper, *A Very Thin Line*, pp. 474-475 and 522; Mayer and McManus, *Landslide*, pp. 322 and 359-360; Congressional Quarterly, *The Iran-Contra Puzzle*, pp. 86, 122, 127, 131, and 312; *Time*, December 8, 1986, pp. 16-17, 27 and 43; and *U.S. News and World Report*, December 8, 1986, pp. 16-25.

CHAPTER EIGHT
CONCLUSION:
THE LESSONS OF HISTORY AND FOREIGN POLICY
SOME RESULTS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The central purpose of this dissertation has been to contribute to the literature on the sources of foreign policy by taking ideas seriously and attempting to answer the critical but often unexplored questions of which ideas matter and why?. Specifically, this study has focused on one particular type of idea, the historical analogy. While previous work on the lessons of history and foreign policy has shown that decision makers often turn to historical analogies for guidance when faced with a novel foreign policy problem, this literature has not yet produced a complete theory of analogical reasoning. To help contribute to the development of such a model, this study has focused on exploring two major gaps in the existing literature on the lessons of history and foreign policy.

First, this literature, has either ignored domestic politics or treated it in a severely limited fashion. The existing work on historical analogies and international relations implicitly accepts the assumption that foreign policy makers are concerned entirely with the international consequences of their actions. Historical analogies are invoked to explain why particular policy makers believed specific policies would best protect their state's national interests.[1] This conception of a foreign

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[1] As discussed in Chapter One, the literature on historical analogies has recognized that domestic politics can be a *source* of lessons, meaning that decision makers may take lessons from domestic events, but

policy maker's interests is too limited. As much of the work on the domestic sources of foreign policy has shown, policy makers also have an interest in maintaining and advancing their domestic political positions. Therefore, policy makers may also seek domestic lessons from prior events that focus on the internal repercussions of different foreign policies, in addition to the internationally focused lessons stressed in the literature.[2]

The second gap in the existing literature on historical analogies and foreign policy that this study attempts to address is the question of what determines which specific historical lesson a policy maker will see as relevant when confronted with a particular foreign policy problem. The study of historical analogies in international relations suffers in one sense from an embarrassment of riches that afflicts virtually the entire literature that explores the role of ideas in foreign policy. There are numerous ideas and "lessons of history" floating around, which leads to the question of why does a specific policy maker select a specific lesson in any specific situation?

To help fill both of these gaps, this study has offered a model of analogical choice designed to include both international and domestic analogies, and to explain why policy makers choose particular historical lessons over others. While by itself, this model does not offer a complete model of analogical reasoning, it does help advance that goal

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these same works also argue that these policy makers then *apply* these lessons to advance their state's international interests.

[2]To clarify the terminology used here, "domestic analogies" or "domestic lessons" are used to denote historical lessons that give policy makers information concerning the domestic ramifications of foreign policy options whether those lessons were derived from previous domestic events or international ones. Similarly, "international analogies" or "international lessons" are ones that give policy makers information about the international consequences of different foreign policy options regardless of the source of those lessons.

by addressing the gaps mentioned above, as well as by raising questions that point to areas for future research. After a brief review of the model of analogical choice offered and tested in this dissertation, this chapter will explore the relationship between the analogical approach to foreign policy employed here and other approaches to the study of foreign policy, both those that stress ideational factors and those that do not, as well as discussing areas where more work needs to be done.

ASSESSING THE MODEL

The basic premise of the analogical approach to foreign policy is that historical lessons influence policy by giving decision makers information regarding the expected results of different options. This information on the likely consequences of different options allows policy makers to determine what policies they want to pursue. The model of analogical choice presented in Chapter One is designed to explain why policy makers choose specific lessons on which to base their policies, rather than other available lessons, while recognizing that policy makers may choose either domestically or internationally focused lessons. The overall emphasis of this model, is that contrary to the existing literature on analogical choice that portrays policy makers as virtual prisoners to particular analogies, policy makers should be viewed as active and discriminating choosers of analogies. The proffered model consists of three steps:

STEP ONE: THE HISTORICAL REPERTOIRE

Based largely on the existing literature that does attempt to address the question of why policy makers select the analogies they do, the first step in the model offered here is to compile a list of salient historical analogies. Not all historical analogies are created equal; policy makers are most likely to apply historical lessons from recent historical events, events that occurred during the formative years of a policy maker's political career, and events that were emotionally involving because they were personally experienced or because they had important consequences for a policy maker or her state. This list represents a policy maker's historical repertoire from which she is most likely to draw historical lessons to apply to future foreign policy problems.

STEP TWO: INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC THREATS

Once the policy maker's historical repertoire has been assembled, the necessary next step is to narrow down what lessons from that mental reservoir a policy maker is likely to choose by examining the interests that a policy maker is looking to further. The model of analogical choice offered takes a rationalist approach that assumes that policy makers are looking to advance two broad sets of exogenously defined interests; the national interests of their state, which focus on their country's international status, and their own domestic interests, which focus on the policy maker's domestic political position. The interests

policy makers are looking to advance will help determine what type of analogy they will look for. If a policy maker is facing a threat or opportunity more relevant to her international interests, she will look in her historical repertoire for international lessons, and if the policy maker is facing a threat or opportunity more relevant to her domestic interests, she will search her repertoire for lessons that speak to her domestic interests.

STEP THREE: CAUSAL SIMILARITIES

Whether a policy maker is searching for lessons that speak to her domestic or international interests, the third step in the model of analogical choice offered here maintains that she will choose a particular analogy from the subset of either her domestic or international lessons by focusing on causal factors and causal similarities. The choice of a particular domestic or international analogy comes down to a question of determining which possible historical analogy's causally relevant factors are best represented in the current situation, given the information available to the decision maker.

THE CASES

To test this model of analogical choice and to study the importance of analogical reasoning in the making of foreign policy, a small number of case studies were examined where the following questions were explored: Do policy makers choose their historical analogies from a

relatively small set of salient analogies? Do policy makers select internationally or domestically focused analogies based upon the particular interests they are trying to further? Do policy makers choose particular historical analogies based on the similarity between what is known about the current situation and the factors that were seen as causally important in driving the outcomes of previous events? And most importantly, does the analogical approach employed here help explain foreign policy?

Overall, the cases studied, which span two very different historical eras, provide strong support for the model. However, the case studies also point to areas where more research needs to be done. The rest of this section will focus primarily on the support for the model evidenced in the cases, and the following section on alternative explanations will address those areas where the cases suggest the need for further research.

For example, John Quincy Adams and James Monroe's policy towards Spanish Florida, which led to the signing of the Adams-Onís Treaty, was driven largely by lessons derived from the British invasion of Florida during the War of 1812. The United States was willing to exchange its claims to Texas for Florida, the basic trade embodied in the treaty, because the recent experience of Britain's use of Florida as a military base during the War of 1812 convinced U.S. policy makers that acquiring Florida was necessary to the national security of the United States, while Texas was not.

Other historical lessons were available to these policy makers, and if they had been chosen would have led to different policies. For

example, if Adams and Monroe had instead chosen the Louisiana Purchase as their analogy, the United States most likely would have adopted a policy of waiting rather than trading. The Louisiana Purchase analogy would suggest that there was no need to trade Texas for Florida, and that the best strategy would be simply to wait for Spain's troubles in Europe to increase until Madrid decided to be more forthcoming. However, the Louisiana Purchase analogy was not an attractive analogue, because a crucial causal factor in America's success in 1803, America's ability and willingness to wait, no longer existed. The importance of Florida for the security of the nation meant that America could no longer afford to wait. Therefore, Adams and Monroe concluded that the lessons of the Louisiana Purchase were not a valid guide for action. Noteworthy as well is the fact that Adams and Monroe choose an international analogy as the basis for their policy. In 1818 and 1819, the United States was still a relatively young nation fresh from a war with Great Britain in which it had narrowly escaped disaster. Moreover, at this point, the Federalist Party had been all but destroyed as a political force at the national level. These factors combined to make the question of expansion a more important issue for the international interests of the foreign policy makers of 1819 rather than their domestic interests. Therefore, domestic lessons were less important than international ones.

This focus on the international War of 1812 analogy remained strong two years later when the Adams-Onís Treaty came up for re-ratification in the Senate following Spain's long-delayed ratification. This is important because this second ratification came after the explosion of the Missouri Crisis. What this demonstrates is that the

mere presence of the Missouri Crisis analogy in the historical repertoire of the day was not enough to make it the accepted analogy. To be accepted, policy makers had to be convinced that current conditions made its domestic lessons applicable. In 1821, Adams, Monroe and the bulk of the Senate decided they were not. America's weakness vis a vis Great Britain had not radically changed and the destruction of the Federalist Party still gave the Monroe administration some domestic breathing space.

By 1836, that situation had reversed. The United States had grown stronger and more secure as a nation, and the developing highly competitive second party system combined to make the issue of territorial expansion a more important question for the domestic interests of U.S. policy makers than their international interests. As expected, a domestic analogy came to the fore at this time. Moreover, the absence of any wartime-type security threat and the growing strength of the second party system made the cause and effect relationships posited by the Missouri Crisis analogy more pertinent to the current situation than the domestically focused lessons of the Hartford Convention, which warned of the dangers of being seen as sacrificing the national interest in pursuit of sectional ones.

As a result, the Missouri Crisis analogy came to dominate U.S. policy towards the possible annexation of Texas. Party leaders such as Andrew Jackson and Martin Van Buren on the Democratic side and Henry Clay on the Whig side, following the lessons of the Missouri Crisis for party insiders, endeavored to prevent debates over the possible annexation of Texas, fearing that such a debate could tear apart their

inter-sectional parties and possibly the nation. However, these efforts only served to delay the annexation of Texas, not prevent it. When the Presidency fell into the hands of a President, John Tyler, who had deserted the Democratic Party for the Whigs and in turn had been abandoned by the Whig Party, Texas was forced onto the political agenda. Tyler, as a President without a party, followed the lessons of the Missouri Crisis for political outsiders and sought to improve his domestic prospects by disrupting the existing parties by thrusting the annexation of Texas onto the national agenda.

Before moving to the other cases, it should be stressed at this point that the three-step model of analogical choice offered here is not intended to be a descriptively accurate account of how policy makers go about choosing a relevant analogy. Instead, it is offered as an analytical device designed to help researchers explain and hopefully predict why policy makers choose the analogies they do. I do not maintain that policy makers actually go through these three steps in their minds. Therefore it is important not to reify the distinctions made here between the different steps. As suggested by these cases, the steps are clearly interrelated. For example, judgments concerning whether the situation is more important for a policy maker's domestic or international interests (step 2) may be hard to separate in practice from judgments concerning the relevance of different cause and effect relations (step 3).

Moving to an entirely different historical era, the model of analogical choice tested here, with its emphasis on the ability of policy makers to pick and choose among analogies based on the interests they are attempting to further and what they learn about what cause and

effect relations may be operative, also gets strong support from the Carter administration's handling of the Hostage Crisis. In the opening weeks of the crisis, when the taking of the embassy bolstered Carter's domestic position, his administration applied lessons from history designed to get the hostages out while protecting the international interests of the United States (the Angus Ward and *Pueblo* analogies). However, as the crisis dragged on and Carter's standing in the polls began to fall precipitously, the Hostage Crisis became more important to Carter's domestic interests. As a result, lessons that stressed the domestic implications of different policy options began to take on a larger role (like the *Mayaguez* incident), which culminated in Carter's decision to launch an Entebbe-style military rescue attempt. The failure of that attempt, and the domestic breathing room this gave the administration then led it to return to the lessons that stressed the international ramifications of different policy options (Ward and *Pueblo*). Moreover, the model of analogical choice offered here can also help explain differences between Carter's advisers. Those who were more attuned to the U.S.'s international interests pushed for the policies recommended by the international lessons, and those who were more attuned to Carter's domestic interests pushed for the policies recommended by the domestic lessons they had available.

In addition, this case also demonstrates the importance of judgments regarding similarities between what is known about the current situation and the factors that were seen as causally important in driving the outcomes of the previous events. This is best demonstrated by the Carter administration's rejection and later acceptance of the

Entebbe analogy as a possible model. In the opening weeks of the crisis, the administration rejected an Entebbe-style raid because of the differences between the causal factors that had allowed the Israeli raid to succeed and the current situation (namely the differences between a raid on an isolated airfield compared to a raid on downtown Tehran). It was not until the military planners had come up with a plan that promised to overcome these differences, a plan that tried to make the American Embassy in Tehran more like Entebbe airport, did the administration conclude that a military rescue was possible.

Collectively, these cases suggest that the answer to each of the questions posed above is yes. Policy makers do choose their historical analogies from a relatively small set of salient analogies.[3] Policy makers do select internationally or domestically focused analogies based on the particular interests they are trying to further. Policy makers do choose particular historical analogies based on the similarity between what is known about the current situation and the factors that were seen as causally important in driving the outcomes of previous events. And, finally, the analogies that policy makers select do influence the foreign policy they pursue by giving them information regarding the likely consequences of different options.

The one case examined here that clearly lies outside the rationalist model of analogical choice offered here is the Reagan administration's policy towards the hostages in Lebanon. In this case, an historical analogy was used not to determine what particular policy would best

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[3]The one exception to this is the important role played by the Angus Ward analogy in the Carter administration's decision making. On this, and the importance of taking into account an organization's institutional memory, see the discussion of the Ward analogy in Chapter six.

further the President's pre-existing interests, but was used to define the interests themselves. This case, and its implications for the study of historical analogies and foreign policy will be discussed below in the section on constructivist approaches.

ANALOGIES AND ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO FOREIGN POLICY STUDIES

HISTORICAL ANALOGIES AND INTEREST-BASED APPROACHES

Explanations of foreign policy are dominated by interest-based approaches. The logic of interest-based approaches is for the analyst to deduce an actor's interests given that actor's place in a particular system and then argue that those interests give the actor specific preferences for some policies over others. These interest-based approaches come in a number of different forms depending on the theoretical view of the analyst. For example, realists can talk about pursuing objective national interests, Marxists can look at objective economic interests, and theorists who focus on domestic politics can focus on an objective interest in remaining in power.

The argument that runs throughout this study is that all these interest-based explanations share a common problem, the problem of specifying how the general interests that these theories posit lead policy makers to specific policy preferences. The link between deducible interests and policy preferences is often problematic, and decision makers need cognitive tools, such as historical analogies, to tell them

what particular policies will further their interests. Simply positing that foreign policy makers want to further the national interests of their state and their own domestic interests does not translate directly into a preference for one policy option over another. To determine what policy they want to implement, decision makers need to form expectations regarding how the available policy options will affect their interests. Here is where historical analogies come in and provide a needed complement to these interest-based approaches. By giving policy makers information about the likely consequences of different policy options, historical analogies allow policy makers to determine what policy will further their interests.

For example, consider Andrew Jackson, Martin Van Buren and Henry Clay's policies with regard to the possible annexation of Texas. Those who espouse interest-based explanations could argue that avoiding sectional conflict by attempting to bury the issue was the "obvious policy" towards continental expansion. Therefore, they could argue, their interests as national party leaders led them directly to their policy stances on Texas, and there is no need to invoke historical analogies.

However, the problem with this argument is that there is no reason why the fear of igniting a sectional conflict over the extension of slavery needed to be the "self evident" concern for U.S. policy makers with regard to the issue of territorial expansion. For example, as the chapter on the Adams-Onís Treaty demonstrates, although slavery had been a divisive question as early as the Constitutional Convention, it was not "self evident" to John Quincy Adams, even on the very eve of the Missouri Crisis, that concerns over the sectional consequences of

expansion should be the "natural" concern for a U.S. policy maker. It was not until after the Missouri Crisis had occurred and after U.S. policy makers had adopted the lessons embodied in that debate as the soundest guide for action, that avoiding the issue became the "natural" policy to pursue. Faced with similar situations and endowed with similar interests, Adams opted for a different policy than Jackson, Clay and Van Buren because he selected a different analogy to translate his interests into policy preferences.

Similarly, one can not explain why Jimmy Carter adopted the policies he did during the Hostage Crisis, simply by positing that he wanted to protect his international and domestic interests. Before knowing what policies Carter and those around him would see as being in their interests, their beliefs concerning the likely consequences of the different policy options need to be examined. Historical lessons, like those embodied in the Angus Ward, *Pueblo, Mayaguez,* and Entebbe analogies, allowed them to form such expectations, and thus played a crucial role in their decision making.

Collectively, these cases demonstrate that the analogical approach to foreign policy is a necessary counter part to the interest-based approaches that dominate the field.

OTHER IDEATIONAL APPROACHES

Even if one accepts the argument that the ideas of policy makers must be studied before their policy preferences can be explained, that does not necessarily mean that one must study historical analogies. Ideas

come in many forms, why privilege historical analogies over other types of ideas in the study of foreign policy? This section discusses the relationship between historical analogies and other ideational approaches and argues that historical analogies deserve the privileged position that they have been given in this study for two reasons. First, unlike the ideas stressed in approaches that focus on broad constructs such as world views or ideologies, historical analogies give policy makers the specific policy-relevant information they need when making decisions. In short, the link between historical analogies and actual foreign policy decisions is much closer than the link between a policy maker's world view and his policy decisions. Second, unlike those approaches that focus on the impact of a specific policy-relevant idea (like studies of the "cult of the offensive" for example), the historical analogy approach provides a built in mechanism for explaining where these ideas come from and how these ideas might change.

First, the ideational arguments that focus on sweeping ideas such as studies of ideologies, world views, strategic culture or operational codes, suffer from the same problem as the interest-based approaches discussed above.[4] It is often difficult if not impossible to link these broad ideas to specific policy decisions. These constructs are simply too vague to tell policy makers what specific options they should prefer in any concrete situation. For example, consider Zbigniew Brzezinski's initial support for a punitive military strike over a rescue attempt early in the Hostage Crisis and his later support for a rescue attempt over a

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[4]On these approaches, see, Goldstein and Keohane, "Ideas and Foreign Policy," pp. 8-9; George, "The Causal Nexus"; and Shafer, *Deadly Paradigms*. For a similar argument on the role that metaphors may play in the policy making process see Keith Shimko, "Metaphors and Foreign Policy Decision Making" *Political Psychology* 15,4 (December 1994): 655-671.

military strike. Can these policy preferences be explained simply by Brzezinski's "hawkish" ideology? The simple fact that his policy preference changed while his ideology remained the same clearly suggests that the answer is no. To understand why Brzezinski made the choices he did you need to know more than his relatively "hawkish" world view. As discussed in Chapter Six, you need to know about the historical analogies he looked to during the crisis, specifically his thoughts on the possibility of the United States pulling off a successful Entebbe-style raid.

This does not mean that studies of world views or ideologies are irrelevant to the study of foreign policy. On the contrary, such studies are vital. For example, as suggested by the contrast offered in Chapter Six between the lessons learned by the "hawkish" Brzezinski and the "dovish" Cyrus Vance, ideologies may play an important role in determining why policy makers learn the specific lessons they do. Therefore, what this suggests is that the value of studies of ideologies or world views may not lie in the explanation of specific foreign policy decisions, but in playing a critical role in the development of a complete theory of analogical reasoning by answering the crucial and understudied question of why do policy makers learn the lessons they do? One of the clear limitations of the model of analogical choice offered here is its relative silence on this important question. Future work on the role of ideology and world views on policy makers' interpretations of historical events holds the promise of helping to fill that gap.

An alternate ideational approach is to study the impact of specific, policy-relevant ideas. Examples include such varied work as studies that focus on the "cult of the offensive" in military organizations, studies of the impact of Keynesian economic theory on government policy, and studies of how the specific ideas of various "epistemic communities" become adopted by government policy makers. While such studies are useful in showing the impact of ideas on specific policy decisions, a focus on historical analogies may help explain where these ideas come from, why they are attractive to policy makers, and how these ideas may change over time.

For example, consider Elizabeth Kier's work on the adoption of offensive or defensive strategies by military organizations. Kier argues that a key determinant of a particular country's military doctrine is that country's "political military subculture," which she defines as the "policy makers' beliefs about the role of armed force in the domestic arena." Interestingly, Kier explicitly rejects explanations of military doctrine that rely on the lessons of history. However, this rejection stems more from the limitations of the current literature on the lessons of history and foreign policy than from Kier's empirical findings. As discussed above, the existing literature on analogies fails to take into account the possibility of domestically focused analogies. Thus, when Kier tests the analogical approach, she only tests the international analogy of the last war, because that is what the existing literature focuses on. However, opening up to the possibility of domestic lessons allows the analogical approach to increase its explanatory power. When explaining where the beliefs that comprise the "political military subculture" come from and

why they differ from country to country, Kier turns implicitly towards domestic historical analogies by arguing that these beliefs "usually originate in each state's experience with the military in the state-building process."[5]

The same argument could be made concerning the study of the spread of Keynesianism or studies of epistemic communities. It is difficult to imagine studying the origin and spread of Keynesian ideas without discussing the impact of the Great Depression, and an explicit focus on historical analogies may also help explain how the ideas supported by different epistemic communities originate and why policy makers may come to find these ideas compelling.[6] I am not arguing that such studies of specific ideas do not help advance the study of international relations, but simply, that in future studies, an explicit focus on how decision makers learn from history may help uncover where their ideas come from, why they become politically important, and why they may vary across time and space.

A similar argument can be made regarding the relationship between the analogical approach and prospect theory. The central contention of prospect theory is based on the finding that decision makers tend to be risk averse when dealing with opportunities for gains, but risk acceptant when confronted with threats of losses. From this, prospect theory argues that how decision makers "frame" the issue,

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[5] Elizabeth Kier, "Culture and French Military Doctrine Before World War II," in Peter Katzenstein, ed. *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 197-202.
[6] On the spread of Keynesian ideas see Hall, *The Political Power of Economic Ideas* and on epistemic communities, Peter Haas, "Knowledge, Power and International Policy Coordination."

whether they see themselves as realizing gains or avoiding losses will determine whether they will adopt risky policies or not.[7]

The central difference between work in prospect theory and the analogical approach offered here lies in the dependent variable each is trying to explain. In the analogical approach, the dependent variable is a policy maker's specific policy preference, but for prospect theory the dependent variable is slightly different, it is a policy maker's approach to the issue of risk. As work in prospect theory shows, while a policy maker's attitude toward risk can certainly affect policy choices, by itself, prospect theory is underdetermining when it comes to explaining specific foreign policy choices in four different ways.

First, while prospect theory predicts that a policy maker will tend to accept great risks in an attempt to avoid serious losses, it does not say very much about what specific risky policy a policy maker may prefer. In contrast to the analogical approach, if there is more than one risky policy, prospect theory says very little about the choice of one over another.

Second, prospect theory is intended to account only for a select universe of cases. Rather than attempting to account for all policy decisions, prospect theory is best equipped to explain cases where either policy makers accept huge risks or cases where policy makers shun relatively small risks. Decisions where it is not clear whether policy makers see themselves as being squarely in the domain of gains or losses, and cases where the different policy options available do not differ

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[7]On prospect theory, see McDermott, *Risk Taking In International Politics* and Barbara Farnham, ed. special edition of *Political Psychology*, on Prospect Theory, 13,2 (June 1992).

significantly in terms of their riskiness, lie outside the realm of prospect theory, but within the realm of the analogical approach.

Third, prospect theory's sole focus on the riskiness of different options leads it to ignore other important distinctions between policy options. For example, consider Carter's handling of the Hostage Crisis. Why does Carter not choose the risky punitive military strike option after the rescue attempt fails, when he is still clearly in the realm of losses? He does not choose this risky option because the historical record tells him that such a punitive strike would probably do nothing to secure the release of the hostages. Prospect theory may indeed be correct that policy makers looking to avoid losses may be risk-acceptant and those looking to exploit gains may be risk-averse, but those predictions will prove to be misleading if the historical record tells the policy maker in the realm of losses that the risky policy will not help him with his problems or the historical record tells the policy maker looking to exploit gains that the risky policy may be the only option that holds out the hope of advancing his interests.

Finally, prospect theory places a great deal of explanatory weight on how policy makers "frame" the issue, because it is this frame that determines whether policy makers see themselves as in the realm of losses or gains. The analogical approach suggests that this link between framing and choice may be spurious because the historical analogies that policy makers use to interpret their current situation may provide them with their frame as well as their policy preference.[8]

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[8]On the danger of a spurious link between framing and choice in prospect theory, see Robert Jervis, "Political Implications of Loss Aversion" *Political Psychology* 13,2 (June 1992), p. 202. For the role that historical analogies may play in the framing process see McDermott, *Risk Taking in International Politics*, pp. 56, 74 and 104.

Constructivist approaches to international politics depart from rationalist approaches by questioning the value of the rationalist assumption that an actor's interests can be treated as exogenous to the actor itself and simply deduced from that actor's position in a certain international or domestic (material) structure. Instead, constructivists argue that an actor's identity and interests should be seen as "constructed through a process of social interaction."[9]

The process of analogical reasoning as it is conceived of in the existing literature and in the model of analogical choice employed here, lies squarely within the rationalist framework. For example, the model of analogical choice presented here treats the interests of actors as exogenous by simply assuming that foreign policy makers have two broad sets of interests, protecting the international standing of their state and their political standing at home, and then investigates how historical analogies help policy makers determine what policies will advance those pre-existing interests. Constructivism suggests that there are inherent limits to this approach because it ignores the possibility that certain actors may come to define their identity and interests in a way that is different from the identity and interests imputed to them by any rationalist theory.

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[9]On constructivism see Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security* (the quote here is taken from p. 2) and Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics" *International Organization* 46,2 (Spring 1992): 391-425.

For the bulk of the dissertation, the rationalist approach worked well. Combining simple assumptions about domestically and internationally based interests with an emphasis on the historical analogies policy makers use to determine what policies will advance those stipulated interests, allowed us to explain a great deal about the policy adopted by the United States with regard to Spanish Florida, the possible annexation of Texas, and the American hostages held in Iran.

However, the final case examined in this project clearly demonstrates the limits of the rationalist approach to analogical reasoning used here and throughout the literature on historical analogies and foreign policy. It proved impossible to account for Reagan's policy towards the hostages in Lebanon simply by assuming that Reagan wanted to advance his international and domestic interests and then examining the historical lessons he used to translate those stipulated interests into specific policy decisions. Instead, in this case, a historical analogy, Carter's experience with the Iranian Hostage Crisis, determined the very interests Reagan wanted to further. Reagan had defined his Presidency in opposition to what he saw as the weakness of Carter's handling of the Hostage Crisis, which led Reagan to define his interests in such a way that made securing the release of the hostages more important to him than furthering his international and domestic interests as they have been defined in the earlier chapters. While the limitations of the cases explored here do not allow me to reach any conclusions regarding how often analogies may serve to determine interests and not just policy preferences, or allow me to speculate on the different conditions that may lead to analogies playing these different roles, the Reagan case

clearly demonstrates the need for further research on this possibility and the need for expanded models of analogical reasoning that can account for such interest-defining analogies.

The Reagan case suggests not only that students of analogical reasoning should be open to the constructivist approach to politics, but also that constructivists should be open to the analogical approach to politics. While constructivists maintain that an actor's identity and interests are socially constructed, they often have difficulty explaining how identities or interests get constructed.[10] As Reagan's policy towards the hostages in Lebanon suggests, historical analogies can be one source.

CONCLUSION

The model of analogical choice and the cases presented here demonstrate that all who are interested in why policy makers adopt the policies they do, in how foreign and domestic politics interact, in the relationship between ideas and interests, and in the question of where policy makers' ideas and even their interests may come from, should take historical analogies seriously. This study provides evidence for where the existing literature on historical analogies and foreign policy is right, where it has been misleading, and where it needs to be expanded. First, this literature is correct in viewing historical analogies as important cognitive tools that influence policy choices by giving decision makers information regarding how they can translate their interests into specific policy decisions. Second, the existing literature is misleading in

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[10]Paul Kowert and Jeffrey Legro, "Norms, Identity and Their Limits: A Theoretical Reprise" in Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security*, p. 469.

its portrayal of policy makers as mindless prisoners to any particular overwhelming analogy. Instead, policy makers should be seen as discriminating consumers of analogies in line with the model of analogical choice presented here. Finally, this study demonstrates that the existing literature on historical analogies and foreign policy needs to be expanded to include: a concern for domestic politics, like the one included in the model used here, a concern for how analogies may help determine the very interests that a policy maker wants to pursue, as manifest in the chapter on Reagan's policy toward the hostages in Lebanon; and finally, there must be more work done on the question of why policy makers learn the lessons they do.

It is customary to end studies of the role played by historical analogies in the foreign policy making process with expressions of mourning concerning how poorly policy makers use history and suggestions regarding how their use of history can be improved. I will not add to these lamentations because this study suggests that these concerns are vastly overstated.

Too often analysts only invoke ideas like historical analogies to explain policy disasters, while ignoring a policy maker's ideas when explaining policy successes because they view rational responses to external constraints as the norm and only turn to ideational explanations to explain what they see as aberrant and foolish behavior. The image one gets in much of this literature is that policy makers would be able to do so much better if only they did not let all their foolish ideas get in the way.[11]

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[11]For example, see Snyder's discussion of how "ideological blowback" helps account for self defeating over-expansionist behavior, in *The Myths of Empire*. Yuen Foong Khong in his excellent study on

A fairer and more accurate assessment of how well policy makers use history would start from the premise that ideas like historical analogies are prevalent in all decision making environments, not simply those that end in disasters. For example, the cases examined here document a number of successful uses of analogies. John Quincy Adams and James Monroe used the lessons gained from the British invasion of Florida during the War of 1812 to obtain a treaty that helped to secure the southeastern portion of the United States from foreign invasion and provided the growing empire with a transcontinental border. Andrew Jackson, Martin Van Buren, and Henry Clay used the lessons of the Missouri Crisis to hold their parties together and to dampen sectional conflict. Moreover, while Jimmy Carter can certainly be criticized for the decisions he made with regard to the failed rescue mission as he attempted to follow the lessons of the *Mayaguez* and Entebbe analogies, it is only fair to note that other analogies used by the administration, namely Angus Ward and *Pueblo*, did eventually succeed in securing the release of the hostages.

Richard Neustadt and Ernest May, to help policy makers use history more effectively, offer policy makers a number of suggestions concerning how they can avoid falling victim to what they call "irresistible," "captivating," "seductive," analogies or the "analogy next door." These suggestions are designed to induce policy makers to be more discriminating users of history. They recommend, for example, that for each possible historical analogy, policy makers compile a list of its similarities to the current situation and its differences. Yuen Foong

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historical analogies and foreign policy recognizes this possible bias in the literature, but his substantive interest in U.S. policy towards Vietnam does not allow him to redress it, *Analogies At War*, pp. 30-31.

Khong expresses a much deeper pessimism by arguing that the reason policy makers use history so poorly is that the psychological basis of analogical reasoning itself is inherently flawed. Khong argues that policy makers simply apply the lessons of whatever analogy shares the most superficial similarities to the current situation and are then stuck with that analogy because cognitively they are unable to shift gears.[12]

The cases examined here throw the basis for this pessimism into doubt. Policy makers already, at least informally, go through many of the steps Neustadt and May recommend, and Khong's despondency derives from a misleading portrayal of the process of analogical choice. Policy makers do not senselessly become seduced by analogies on the basis of a few superficial similarities or become forever locked into a specific analogy. Instead, policy makers already go through the process of judging possible analogies on the basis of causal similarities and are able to update their assessments as they learn new information. The Carter administration's handling of the Hostage Crisis provides the best example. While Carter and his aides relied on analogies throughout the crisis, the specific analogy they relied on changed over time. As Carter received more information about the existing cause and effect relations or information about changing threats to his domestic or international interests, he updated his assessment of the different available analogies and changed his policies as a result.

This is not to argue that the use of historical lessons guarantees effective policies, or that shifting from one analogy to another always results in better policies. However, I do argue that it is wrong to see

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[12]Neustadt and May, *Thinking In Time*, pp. 34-74 and 232-246; and Khong, *Analogies At War*, pp. 212-227 and 254-257.

policy makers as mindlessly falling prey to alluring analogies regardless of any information they receive. While many policy makers could certainly benefit from learning more history or subjecting their historical lessons to increased scrutiny, the hand-wringing that characterizes most of the literature on analogies and foreign policy is excessive and misplaced. Policy makers are far more discriminating users of analogies than the current literature allows and reasoning by analogy often results in successful policies. Instead of seeing failed policies as a result of an inherently flawed analogical reasoning process, or suggesting that dramatic improvements can be realized from procedural and organizational reforms, it would be more accurate to attribute many of these failures to the inherent difficulty of learning from history; a difficulty with which all historically oriented social scientists are probably all too familiar.

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