

BEYOND THE CABINET: ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI'S EXPANSION OF THE  
NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR POSITION.

Erika McLean, B.A., B.A.

Thesis Prepared for the Degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

August 2011

APPROVED:

Nancy Stockdale, Major Professor  
Robert Citino, Committee Member  
Guy Chet, Committee Member  
Richard B. McCaslin, Chair of the  
Department of History  
James D. Meernik, Acting Dean of the  
Toulouse Graduate School

UMI Number: 1511443

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent on the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



UMI 1511443

Copyright 2012 by ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This edition of the work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.



ProQuest LLC.  
789 East Eisenhower Parkway  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346

McLean, Erika. *Beyond the Cabinet: Zbigniew Brzezinski's Expansion of the National Security Adviser Position*. Master of Arts (History), August 2011, 87 pp., references, 33 titles.

The argument illustrated in the thesis outlines Zbigniew Brzezinski's ability to manipulate himself and his agenda to top priority as the national security advisor to President Carter. It further argues that Brzezinski deserves more blame for the failure of American foreign policy towards Iran; not President Carter. The sources include primary sources such as Zbigniew Brzezinski and President Jimmy Carter's memoirs as well as information from President Carter's library in Atlanta, Georgia. Secondary sources include historians who focus on both presidential policy and President Carter and his staff. The thesis is organized as follows: the introduction of Brzezinski, then the focus turns to his time in the White House, Iran, then what he is doing today.

Copyright 2011

By

Erika McLean

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI AND THE WHITE HOUSE.....	8
Brzezinski's Background	
Jimmy Carter and the Trilateral Commission	
The Carter White House	
Brzezinski's "Arc of Crisis" Theory	
The Structure of the Carter White House	
Criticism of Brzezinski	
III. IRAN: BRZEZINSKI TAKES MATTERS INTO HIS OWN HANDS.....	28
Iran Prior to the Revolution	
The Overthrow of Mosaddeq	
The Islamic Revolution	
SAVAK and Human Rights Abuses	
Increased Anti-Americanism and Opposition Forces	
Opposition Forces Unite	
The United States and Unrest in Iran	
IV. THE FALL OF THE SHAH.....	49
Indecision in the White House	
The Reign of Ruhollah Khomeini	
The Hostage Crisis	
Operation Eagle Claw	
The End of the Carter Presidency	
V. CONCLUSION.....	80
National Security Advisors Before and After Brzezinski	
Brzezinski's Failure as National Security Advisor	
Brzezinski Today	
WORKS REFERENCED.....	87

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

As national security advisor to the Carter administration, Zbigniew Brzezinski drastically transformed the role of advisor far beyond its intended function, as evidenced by his involvement in America's foreign policy concerning Iran. This involvement included the actions he took with and without the approval of the president and the interception of communications sent to the White House from various places around the world. Many historians regard President Carter's foreign policy as a failure solely blaming the president for his contribution. This analysis argues that his national security advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, deserves this charge. Brzezinski worked outside the scope of his office resulting in his position becoming more powerful than it ever had been.

His foreign policy ambitions were illustrated greatly when he helped found the Trilateral Commission, whose sole purpose was to strengthen relations between the United States, Western Europe, and Japan. It was through this organization that he was introduced to then Governor Jimmy Carter. In 1976, Jimmy Carter announced his candidacy for president, noting that he was an "eager student" of Brzezinski. From the beginning, President Carter gave the national security advisor great room to implement policy. Although he dealt with foreign policy as a whole, it is while he dealt with the uprisings in Iran that we truly see the role of national security advisor become transformed.

Brzezinski's foreign policy concerning Iran illustrates this role transformation in numerous ways. As this study shows, Brzezinski transformed the scope of his role by

chairing Special Coordinating Committee meetings that illustrated his policy agenda more than other members. Further, disappointed in communications between the White House and the Shah, Brzezinski decided that he should make contact with the Shah to ensure his policy was implemented over others. Another area illustrating this role transformation dealt with Brzezinski intercepting cables between Iran and the White House. The cables he deemed unnecessary for the president's attention were disregarded while other cables that he felt were important were sure to reach the president quickly. These are only a few examples of Brzezinski's disregard for his position as the national security advisor, but illustrate the depth in which he was willing to go to further his agenda.

The foreign policy of Iran, during the Carter administration, illustrated this role modification because the foreign policy decision making was centralized in the Special Coordinating Committee of the National Security Council, which was chaired by Brzezinski.<sup>1</sup> Further, Brzezinski led a very small and highly secret group which discussed the development of military options if the need of force were to arise.<sup>2</sup> Brzezinski piloted most of the foreign policy decisions concerning Iran, and it is through these decisions, phone calls, and meetings that we see Brzezinski disregard the true purpose and scope of his position.

This issue has an important place in the study of American history because there was a great amount of power placed into the hands of one person, with no ability for any

---

<sup>1</sup>Betty Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, 2009), 180.

<sup>2</sup>Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981* (New York, New York: Collins Publishers, Inc., 1985), 478.

strategic oversight. Unlike the United States government as a whole, the president's cabinet members do not engage in a system of checks and balance. There was no one to watch Brzezinski utilize the power he obtained. With this power, Brzezinski manipulated his position to become not only a primary spokesman for the administration, but a barrier of information between the White House and the international community. The questions that arise out of this situation include, should one person have this power? Should one person be afforded the leeway to assert his agenda over the cumulative White House agenda?

This study illustrates that one person in any administration should not have this level of power. Regarding the second question, it will become apparent through these pages that a president should not allot such leeway to one person in an administration. This power poses numerous problems including being used to persuade various domestic and international officials on a variety of issues. Not only may he be able to persuade officials, but also be able to persuade or manipulate policy implementation. Both were the case with Zbigniew Brzezinski. The power accumulated by Brzezinski was unprecedented and allowed for numerous mistakes.

The relationship between Jimmy Carter and Zbigniew Brzezinski not only prohibited the cohesion of foreign policy, but further altered the agenda initially outlined by the Carter White House. President Carter received much blame for the failed U.S. policy toward Iran, but much of the blame should go to National Security Advisor Brzezinski because it was his role that was to alert and put pressure on the president to acknowledge and formulate difficult decisions including the course of action to take during the Islamic Revolution.



Historians regard Brzezinski as a historically powerful and arrogant man. Richard Falk and others consider him to be an unpredictable and chaotic man.<sup>3</sup> Falk further states, “He dwells in the domain of geopolitical abstraction, believes in the global character of the Soviet challenge (except when he doesn’t) and would not flinch at threatening a nuclear holocaust.”<sup>4</sup> Brzezinski was very reactive and much convicted in his beliefs. Allowing this man the sort of leverage given him proved disastrous for the Carter administration.

Historian David Farber and numerous others considered Brzezinski to be extremely hard-headed and “fiercely” anti-Communist.<sup>5</sup> These characteristics are important to consider because much of his characteristics are brought to life through his reactions to events that required to decisions formulated. Brzezinski exemplifies a man who was hard headed during his role as the national security advisor and still acts in this manner today.

In 1977, *Time* magazine characterized Brzezinski as a man, “who is variously considered brilliant, arrogant and ambitious, is thus in a position to translate many of his long-held theories into policy.”<sup>6</sup> This article foreshadowed Brzezinski’s ability to turn his agenda into the foreign policy of the Carter administration, thus illustrating a man who took his role as national security advisor far outside its intended scope. Another

---

<sup>3</sup>Richard A. Falk, “Khomeini’s Promise,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 34 (1979): 280, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1148516> (accessed June 10, 2010).

<sup>4</sup>Richard Falk, “Brzezinski: Looking Out for #1,” *The Nation*, September 27, 1980, <http://www.thenation.com/archive/brzezinski-looking-out-1> (accessed June 10, 2010).

<sup>5</sup>David Farber, *Taken Hostage* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), 44.

<sup>6</sup>“Zbig’s Optimism in a Hostile World.” *Time Magazine*, August, 8, 1977, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,915198,00.html> (accessed June 10, 2010).

historian questions, albeit with sarcasm, if Brzezinski ever seriously studied current political issues because he was too busy grand-standing and involving himself in some form of self-advertisement.<sup>7</sup> Aside from its importance to the study of United States history, another goal of this analysis is to understand how Brzezinski altered his role as national security advisor and worked outside its intended parameters.

The American public tends to characterize the Carter administration as a failure. Unfortunately, there is not much talk about how greatly his national security advisor contributed to this label. As this study shows, Zbigniew Brzezinski is more to blame than Carter's chief of staff. Regarding foreign policy as whole, other historians including David Farber and Betty Glad regard his policy as an overall failure.

Although the office of president acts as a symbol to the foreign policy agenda, the men behind the president helped to create and implement this policy; therefore, Carter is not solely responsible for any "failures" during his term in office. Historian Betty Glad states, "If the outsider has neither practical experience in the field of foreign policy this dependence on others will pose special problems for him. The danger is that his staff and policy choices may make him too vulnerable to the strongest voices around him."<sup>8</sup> Ultimately, the president was the voice of foreign policy, but manipulation via communication interception and misguided information set the stage for President Carter to become the puppet of Brzezinski.

---

<sup>7</sup>Henry Trofimenko, "Struggle for the Turf," review of *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Advisor 1977 – 1981*, by Zbigniew Brzezinski, World Politics, 1985, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2010249> (accessed March 11, 2011).

<sup>8</sup>Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, 279.

To understand how Zbigniew Brzezinski transformed the role of the national security advisor, a brief history of the office is necessary. The National Security Council was created two years following the end of the Second World War.<sup>9</sup> “The National Security Act of July 26, 1947 provided more formal machinery to deal with America’s new involvement in global realities over a longer term.”<sup>10</sup> Further this act called on the president to consult the closest members of his staff on foreign-policy decision making.<sup>11</sup> This type of consultation between his staff and himself laid the foundation for the chair of the National Security Council to become a key player in foreign policy implementation. Not until the late 1970s did the United States see the emergence of this role begin to work beyond its intended purpose.

Under President Harry Truman, the National Security Council was greatly ignored. The Korean War forced Truman to utilize the new council with the hopes of ending the war. As the council increasingly became utilized, someone to head the committee was needed. President Eisenhower appointed a special assistant for national security affairs and advocated for the NSC to be “capable of planning and implementing foreign policy.”<sup>12</sup> Under the Kennedy Administration, the NSC broke into several groups to become more “personalized,” allowing McGregor Bundy, the special assistant for

---

<sup>9</sup>Zbigniew Brzezinski, “The NSC’s Midlife Crisis,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 69 (1987-1988): 80, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1148589> (accessed January 3, 2011).

<sup>10</sup>Brzezinski, “The NSC’s Midlife Crisis,” 80.

<sup>11</sup>Brzezinski, “The NSC’s Midlife Crisis,” 83.

<sup>12</sup>Brzezinski, “The NSC’s Midlife Crisis,” 85.

national security affairs, to actively participate in the policy process.<sup>13</sup> Thus, the power of this position began to take shape.

The office of assistant for national security affairs eventually became a key player in the White House. This remained true throughout the Nixon administration which changed the title from assistant of national security affairs to the national security advisor. Henry Kissinger, like Zbigniew Brzezinski, was a strong national security advisor, but it was not until Brzezinski's appointment that we see the position and the power associated with it taken for granted.

---

<sup>13</sup>Brzezinski, "The NSC's Midlife Crisis," 86.

## CHAPTER II

### ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI AND THE WHITE HOUSE

#### Brzezinski's Background

Zbigniew Brzezinski was born in Poland on March 28, 1928. Members of the Polish nobility, Brzezinski's family loved and respected their country. His father, Tadeusz Brzezinski, was a diplomat stationed in Germany for several years.<sup>14</sup> Growing up, Brzezinski understood the terms of patriotism and responsibility to one's country. These lessons from his childhood helped to cement his role as decision-maker in the foreign policy arena. The Brzezinski family moved to Canada at the outset of World War II.<sup>15</sup> At the end of the war, the Yalta Conference declared the addition of Poland to the Soviet sphere of influence. Following the conference, the Brzezinski family knew they could not return safely to Poland. Growing up during the Second World War, hatred of the Soviet Union grew within Brzezinski. His childhood thus became the foundation for his ardent beliefs regarding foreign policy.

Brzezinski received both his bachelor's and his master's degree from McGill University in 1945, and his doctoral degree from Harvard in 1953. In 1959, Brzezinski became a United States citizen and began teaching at Columbia University. He entered into the political arena in 1960 as an advisor to John F. Kennedy, and continued his political career in 1964 by becoming a member of the Policy Planning Council.

Brzezinski remained active in the political arena, specifically in areas that dealt with the

---

<sup>14</sup>Mark Bowden, *Guests of the Ayatollah: The First Battle in America's War with Militant Islam* (New York, New York: Grove Press, 2006), 123.

<sup>15</sup>"Zbigniew Brzezinski: 'Tactician for the Establishment,'" *MERIP Reports*, no. 54 (February, 1977): 18-19, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3011264> (accessed January 3, 2011).

Soviet Union. He worked in 1968 as chairman of Hubert Humphrey's Foreign Policy Task Force, and in 1970 he developed the Trilateral Commission with David Rockefeller. This commission is where he was introduced to Jimmy Carter.<sup>16</sup>

### Jimmy Carter and the Trilateral Commission

Jimmy Carter was born in Plains, GA and grew up to be successful in his small business activities.<sup>17</sup> Carter put himself through school and decided to join the Navy, "where he worked his way up to chief engineer of the *Sea-wolf*, a prototype nuclear submarine."<sup>18</sup> Jimmy Carter's father died in 1953. Carter decided to return to Plains where he took over his father's peanut business and increasingly became involved in local and state politics.<sup>19</sup> In 1970, Jimmy Carter became governor of Georgia, and only after two years in office, he decided to run for president. During his term as governor, Carter became a member of the Trilateral Commission.

Governor Carter's introduction to the world of big-time international relations came by way of the Trilateral Commission. Carter was invited to join the exclusive, members-only group by its director, Zbigniew Brzezinski, who saw something special—intelligence, high ambition, and political savvy—in the governor.<sup>20</sup>

The stated purpose of the Trilateral Commission was, "To develop practical proposals for joint action on issues such as energy, relations with the third world,

---

<sup>16</sup>"Zbigniew Brzezinski: 'Tactician for the Establishment.'"

<sup>17</sup>Farber, *Taken Hostage*, 40.

<sup>18</sup>Farber, *Taken Hostage*, 40.

<sup>19</sup>Farber, *Taken Hostage*, 40.

<sup>20</sup>Farber, *Taken Hostage*, 41.

international finance and governability at home.”<sup>21</sup> Members of the commission who eventually joined the Carter administration included Walter Mondale, Cyrus Vance, Harold Brown, and W Michael Blumenthal.<sup>22</sup> The commission was established by Zbigniew Brzezinski and his long-time friend, David Rockefeller and was comprised of two hundred individuals, all of which had top-level access to their government officials.<sup>23</sup>

The two men sought to promote greater communication and cooperation between three actors of the international community: North America, Western Europe, and Japan. During the Cold War, communication between these countries was lacking. These regions were the largest three non-communist industrial regions of the world. Rockefeller realized the importance of private communication between these areas, and was determined to foster greater contact between the nations.

In conjunction with the desire of greater economic expansion, the commission called for wealthier nations to strive for “new deals” with developing nations. The hope was that the Third World, or developing nations, would not use their resources against wealthier countries. For example, oil is very important to the United States. If it was not exported to the United States, the result would be catastrophic to the US economy. In return for not holding their resources against a particular country, the developing countries would receive payments from the wealthier country. According to the commission, both goals could be attained through the ‘new deal’ process.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup>Jay Peterzell, “The Trilateral Commission and the Carter Administration,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 12, no. 51 (1977): 2097, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4366204> (accessed January 3, 2011).

<sup>22</sup>Peterzell, “The Trilateral Commission and the Carter Administration,” 2097.

<sup>23</sup>Peterzell, “The Trilateral Commission and the Carter Administration,” 2097.

<sup>24</sup>Peterzell, “The Trilateral Commission and the Carter Administration,” 2099.

President Carter not only was a member of the commission, but was recognized as a very active member. He helped circulate information about the commission as well as generated new ideas for the Commission's Task Force.<sup>25</sup> Brzezinski realized this ambition, and both he and the Georgia governor worked together a great deal to advance the commission's plan. Further, Brzezinski was one of the only people in Jimmy Carter's circle to take him seriously when he decided to run for president. The objectives of the commission and the loyalty between the two men helped lay the foundation for President Carter's agenda, with Zbigniew Brzezinski as its greatest promoter, in the White House.

Following Carter's announcement to run for president, Brzezinski felt that he needed to approach Carter to aide him in his foreign policy analysis.

In the course of 1974 I was told that Jimmy Carter had declared his candidacy for the Presidency and that he needed advice. I decided, therefore, to approach him, largely because I felt that he would spread the Trilateral Commission's concept of closer and more cooperative relations between the United States on the one hand and Europe and Japan on the other.<sup>26</sup>

Following his proposal to help, Carter and Brzezinski began working on their analysis on foreign affairs. The Trilateral Commission and Brzezinski's arrogance of the foreign policy arena were the watershed events of Brzezinski's power.

#### The Carter White House

During the years prior to the Carter White House, chaos consumed both the international and domestic scene. Domestically, the United States coped with President Nixon's involvement in the Watergate Scandal, as well as inflation, and high oil prices. Internationally, the United States had just pulled out of Vietnam, and was in the midst of

---

<sup>25</sup>Peterzell, "The Trilateral Commission and the Carter Administration," 2101.

<sup>26</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 5.



the Cold War with the Soviet Union. Further, “Vietnam syndrome” plagued the United States, creating little hope and much despair.<sup>27</sup> Vietnam syndrome was the perceived popular sentiment among Americans following the Vietnam conflict. This conflict was regarded as a loss by Americans, despite the wealth and military of the United States. This “loss” left Americans feeling little hope and much remorse. Through this national insecurity, caused by the current economic climate and the aforementioned Vietnam syndrome, Brzezinski created a position with more accumulated strength than ever held by his predecessors.

Former Secretary of Defense, Clark Clifford, advised the president about his choice for national security advisor by saying:

[Brzezinski was] too much of an advocate and not enough of an honest broker to fill this post in the way I believed appropriate. Also, I was certain he would clash with the gentle and collegial Vance. This I stated frankly to the President-elect, who was not pleased...Even after Carter told me Vance had said he could work with Brzezinski, I persisted in my objections. Finally, he said, “Well, if we don’t put Zbig there, what should I do with him?” With deliberately exaggerated seriousness, I replied, “Make him the first American ambassador to the Bermuda Triangle.” The president-elect laughed, and our conversation was over.<sup>28</sup>

Clifford had accurately pointed out what might happen if Brzezinski came to office, but Carter did not take his advice. Everything that Clifford discussed would soon take place in the administration.

Both Brzezinski and the president centered their ideology on an anti-Soviet foundation. Brzezinski stated, “A panicky disengagement from world affairs because of frustrations by the Vietnam War would have a catastrophic effect on world stability

---

<sup>27</sup>Farber, *Taken Hostage*, 20.

<sup>28</sup>Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, 26.

particularly in the less developed countries where at the minimum, one American-Soviet confrontation could be expected.”<sup>29</sup> This theme outlined the foundation for the White House agenda. Further, as supported by the Trilateral Commission, both men advocated greater equality among wealthy and poor nations.

These are only a few policies agreed upon by Carter and Brzezinski. The congruence in their formulation of policy helped forge a relationship unlike past presidents and their national security advisors. Although the two agreed on much, Brzezinski still had his own agenda to implement while in the White House. One of Carter’s top priorities was to help disintegrate international human rights abuses, which Brzezinski did not have high on his agenda to conquer.

When Brzezinski was appointed national security advisor by Carter he brought a fully developed agenda to the job. Little on his list had anything directly to do with honoring international ‘human-rights’ or establishing American foreign policy as a simple reflection of America’s ‘basic, priceless values.’<sup>30</sup>

Prior to and during the Administration, the president and Brzezinski discussed a range of issues. Their numerous discussions involved philosophy, religion, and anything that might educate Carter, which only strengthened their bond. Saturday afternoon meetings furthered strengthen their relationship. These meetings became mini-seminars taught by Brzezinski to a president who was more than willing to listen. Carter welcomed this new avenue of education, and was a willing and able student. The president further respected and grew close to Brzezinski because Rosalyn Carter was very close to him. “First Lady Rosalynn Carter’s attitude toward him was perhaps an even more important factor in his gaining influence with the president. She liked

---

<sup>29</sup>Simon Serfaty, “Brzezinski: Play It Again, Zbig,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 32 (1978): <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1148392> (accessed January 3, 2011).

<sup>30</sup>Farber, *Taken Hostage*, 43.

Brzezinski, and when she left the White House, she remarked to him that he was her 'special person.'"<sup>31</sup>

"Brzezinski made himself into the figure whose influence over foreign policy arose from his role as the sideline coach of the President, rather than as the grandstanding superstar."<sup>32</sup> President Carter appreciated Brzezinski's articulate abilities, and his historical intelligence. Laying the ground work for Brzezinski's leverage on the president, Carter asked him to develop and write a four year strategy outlining goals to be accomplished while in the White House. Thus, Brzezinski drew up the document that would set the tone for foreign policy initiatives.<sup>33</sup> President Carter outlined three goals that his Administration sought to tackle, "defending human rights, exhibiting principled behavior abroad, and limiting world armaments."<sup>34</sup> Brzezinski supported these initiatives, but as the first year in the White House commenced, heated debate among cabinet members increased. One area in particular that caused a great deal of discussion and debate was Brzezinski's theory, the "Arc of Crisis."

### Brzezinski's "Arc of Crisis Theory"

Brzezinski's arc of crisis theory illustrates what he saw as international deterioration in the Persian Gulf and Iran, through the Middle East, toward southern

---

<sup>31</sup>Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, 136.

<sup>32</sup>Falk, "Brzezinski: Looking Out for #1."

<sup>33</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 88.

<sup>34</sup>Farber, *Taken Hostage*, 77.

Africa.<sup>35</sup> He characterized this region with fragile social and political structures.<sup>36</sup> One historian argued that Iran was the “gravity of the arc” because it was the fourth largest producer of oil in the world.<sup>37</sup> This label had the potential to carry heavy implications for foreign policy.

Looking at the globe this way forced policy to be centered on this one topic, which is what happened during President Carter’s administration and Iran. This much emphasis on Iran placed the administration in complex situations causing discontinuity among the president’s advisors. At the time, the Soviet Union was almost short of the oil it needed to continue its economic expansion. This area referenced by Brzezinski, from the Middle East to Southern Africa, distributed about 71 percent of the oil consumed by Western Europe, so this was a very important and volatile area.<sup>38</sup>

Russia has had a long history of interests in Iran; therefore, Brzezinski believed that the Soviet Union might try and take over the region, not only for their oil production, but to the Communist ideology. Their valuable resources and the instability within the region were only a few reasons for Soviet intrusion. If the power of less developed countries decreased there would be a resulting rise of influence by the Soviet Union. Brzezinski believed that this power vacuum would thus lead to the deterioration of the United States because if Russia were to take over the area and govern the area that controls that much oil and other resources then the United States would fail to play a

---

<sup>35</sup>Jeral A. Rosati, “Continuity and Change in the Foreign Policy Beliefs of Political Leaders: Addressing the Controversy over the Carter Administration,” *Political Psychology* 9, no. 3 (1988): 487, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3791726> (accessed June 10, 2010).

<sup>36</sup>“Iran: The Crescent of Crisis.” *Time Magazine*, January 15, 1979, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,919995,00.html> (accessed June 10, 2010).

<sup>37</sup>“Iran: The Crescent of Crisis.”

<sup>38</sup>“Iran: The Crescent of Crisis.”

part in decisions affecting the area. The United States would become the number two leader in the world if this migration of power were to take place. Brzezinski understood the importance of Iran and its natural resources, which is why illustrating US-Iranian relations is vital to understanding Brzezinski's expansion of the role as National Security Adviser.

Brzezinski realized that Iran was one of the most pro-US regimes in the world. The Shah acted as a stabilizer in the region for American interests, therefore, the relationship between the Shah and the United States was important.

He nonetheless proclaimed his determination to assure the security of vital oil shipping lanes in the Persian Gulf. He took steps to stamp out radical movements such as the rebellion in Dhofar province of Oman. In addition to supporting the rightist cause in Lebanon, he joined with Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger in encouraging a hopeless rebellion of the Kurd in Iraq. Most important, after the death of Gamal Abdel Nasser, the Shah strengthened ties with Anwar El-Sadat in Egypt and gave full support to American peace efforts in the Middle East."<sup>39</sup>

The arc of crisis theory resulted in varying opinions among the Carter administration which created a foreign policy with little cohesion. Iran illustrated the foundation of this instability within the Administration.

#### The Structure of the Carter White House

One of the first items on the agendas of both President Carter and his newly appointed national security advisor dealt with restructuring the National Security Council. Brzezinski suggested that Carter "embrace the Kennedy model of government; including a 'strong president' with a relatively 'secure and strong' secretary of state and

---

<sup>39</sup>Richard Cottam, "Goodbye to America's Shah," *Foreign Policy*, no. 34 (1979): 9, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1148512> (accessed June 10, 2010).

an equally confident and energetic White House.”<sup>40</sup> President Carter instituted an open-advisory system, so one individual would not have more power than another.

This open-advisory system included two committees, the Special Coordinating Committee and the Policy Review Committee. The Special Coordinating Committee was always chaired by Brzezinski; whereas, the other committee, the Policy Review Committee, always rotated its chairman. All issues referred to the NSC were reviewed by one of the two new committees. Through this restructuring, Brzezinski ensured that the national security advisor would have access to all foreign policy matters before a final decision was made.

President Carter’s intention for restructuring the National Security Council ensured that it was not the primary dominating influence on foreign policy decisions. President Nixon’s administration, characterized as a strong, policy-driven National Security Council who played the largest role and had the final say on matters dealing with foreign policy, set the tone for the restructuring process. President Carter had to rely on two to three page memos of these meetings to understand the consensus on any decision. These memos were typed by Brzezinski.<sup>41</sup> By allowing Brzezinski to type up memos outlining the consensus of the meeting, the president was placing a great amount of power in one man’s hands.

President Carter sought greater equality among his cabinet and committee members to prevent this lack of balance to occur while he was president. The role of

---

<sup>40</sup>Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, 20.

<sup>41</sup>Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, 84.

gatekeeper to President Carter ultimately resulted from this new arrangement. “All major cables with policy implications had to be cleared with relevant NSC staff before they could be sent out. Since much of the policy is made by cables, control in this area gave the NSC staff considerable leverage over both the making and implementation of policy.”<sup>42</sup>

Essentially, Brzezinski would decipher the issues that the President needed to confront and discard issues that he did not deem important. Brzezinski stated, “In the latter phases of the Administration, as the President became increasingly absorbed in domestic matters, I tried to relieve him of the time-consuming task of having to resolve issues of secondary importance. Thus at SCC sessions, I would announce my interpretation of our consensus, leaving it up to any individual to appeal to the President if he so wished.”<sup>43</sup> Many people chose not to bother the president if they disagreed with the outcome of the meetings because the president was usually busy with other matters. This allowed for Brzezinski’s consensus of the meetings, which was his opinion on the issue, to dominate alternative options. If someone was to attend an SCC meeting that opposed Brzezinski, he would ensure that they would not be present at the following meetings. Therefore, the president had created a communication buffer to his office.

Brzezinski would schedule SCC meetings at times that would assure the absence of his opposition. He would schedule them when he knew that his colleague was in another meeting or otherwise busy. This occurred at the beginning of the

---

<sup>42</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 72.

<sup>43</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 66.

administration when Attorney General Griffin Bell was left uninvited to the NSC meetings.<sup>44</sup> Brzezinski manipulated the times of the meetings to control who would and would not attend them. He further manipulated the outcome of meetings as indicated on September 1, 1978 by insisting that all decisions going to the president be unanimous. This greatly complicated matters. As the chairman, Brzezinski could essentially veto any decision that did not conform to his ideology.<sup>45</sup>

As should be the case, President Carter wanted to be the final decision maker. Brzezinski stated in his memoir that his ultimate goal was to have an arrangement that shaped the decisions made by the president.<sup>46</sup> Brzezinski did not want the president to make any decisions without him knowing, or any decisions that differed from his ideology. Brzezinski did everything in his power to prevent these decisions from taking place. He noted in his memoir that he used the SCC to “try and shape our policy toward the Persian Gulf, on European security issues, on strategic matters, as well as determining our response to Soviet aggression.”<sup>47</sup> Brzezinski set the tone and agenda for the meetings with the desire to promote his own agenda.

President Carter did everything possible to ensure that his cabinet structure was nothing like the past administration. Unfortunately, the foreign policy arena resembled Nixon’s foreign policy structure more than any other president. The president liked to fashion himself as a nonconformist politician. Prior to Carter taking office, presidents

---

<sup>44</sup>Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, 15.

<sup>45</sup>Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, 59.

<sup>46</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 62.

<sup>47</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 66.



would hold very few meetings with members of his cabinet. These meetings were also very formal; something that President Carter wanted to change. Therefore, Carter requested more frequent and casual meetings, such as Friday breakfasts with some of his staff.

The president also altered the formality of these meetings by requesting that Brzezinski meet with him every morning. Zbigniew Brzezinski received much of the leverage that he desired because the president requested that they meet every morning for a quick review of the prior day. In conjunction with the documents that Brzezinski brought to the morning briefings, he would attach a one-page editorial piece entitled, "Opinion."<sup>48</sup> In these memorandums, Brzezinski discussed a range of issues including the "Administration's performance, alerted him to possible problems, conveyed occasionally some criticism, and attempted to impart a global perspective."<sup>49</sup> Regardless of what the memo entailed, it was sure to clearly outline what Brzezinski believed would be the best course of action or directive.

With his opinion attached to all memos traveling between other advisors and the White House, Brzezinski was able to ensure that his opinion was known to the president. Brzezinski stated, "I had a half an hour allotted to me...and I would therefore prepare myself before coming in...to tell him what line I intended to take or what I would push."<sup>50</sup> Before walking into the meetings, Brzezinski was aware of all issues that the president would confront. This allowed him to advance his agenda on every problem

---

<sup>48</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 65.

<sup>49</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 65.

<sup>50</sup>Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, 31.

and decision brought before the president. Brzezinski rarely gave people on the opposing side of his view the attention they deserved; which illustrated another example of Brzezinski working outside the scope of his office.

Typically, the director of the CIA was included in these morning briefings, but Brzezinski managed to edge out Director Stansfield Turner. These meetings were then named, “National Security Briefings.”<sup>51</sup> Generally, these meetings not only kept the president informed of what his cabinet members were doing, but kept Brzezinski informed of the president’s beliefs on key issues. Brzezinski stated in his memoirs, “Maintaining tight control was more difficult with the domestic political advisers of the president, whose participation I tried to limit since so much of the discussion was based on extraordinarily sensitive information and the domestic people often had no basis for judging what was sensitive or not.”<sup>52</sup> Even in retrospect, while writing his memoirs was he arrogant about his abilities over others.

During the first year of the Carter White House, Brzezinski’s foreign policy placed “greater emphasis on political military issues and the need to contain the Soviet Union’s foreign interventionism.”<sup>53</sup> This differed with Carter and Vance’s focus on the pursuit of a global community. Brzezinski states of Vance’s ideology, “I think he is weaker on the longer-range perspective, overoptimistic on our relations with the Soviets, and does not stand up strongly enough to the President on really important issues.”<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup>Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, 31.

<sup>52</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 73.

<sup>53</sup>Rosati, “Continuity and Change in the Foreign Policy Beliefs of Political Leaders: Addressing the Controversy over the Carter Administration,” 486.

<sup>54</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 37.

Overall, Brzezinski sought to undermine many of the policies that Vance favored. One manner in which Brzezinski was able to undermine Vance was through the media. “Unable to secure support for a shoe of force in the Red Sea, Brzezinski began making public statements indicating the SALT negotiations process was linked to Soviet behavior.”<sup>55</sup> He was willing to use any means necessary to relay his point to the president and to the American people. Betty Glad captured this sentiment by stating:

In addition, he employed a series of salami-slicing tactics, restricted others’ access to Carter, wooed and won over allies in the administration, all the while amassing support for his own goals. He framed issues and presented himself in a way that made his objectives attractive to the president.<sup>56</sup>

Another example that illustrated Brzezinski undermining other cabinet members and President Carter was seen in Brzezinski insisting that normalizing relations with China was integral to US security. Betty Glad captured this event clearly when she stated:

At times, especially when a president is inexperienced in policymaking and the ways of Washington, advisors may actually put their own goals ahead of the president. Brzezinski, as we shall see, subtly undermined Carter’s SALT II policy and maneuvered the president into dealing with China as a counterpoise to the Soviet Union. In this respect an advisor acts as a ‘motivated tacticians.’<sup>57</sup>

This exemplified Zbigniew Brzezinski’s true agenda as the national security advisor to President Carter throughout the entirety of the administration. Instability plagued the international stage, via the Soviet Union. Brzezinski realized the increasing importance of the Middle East, particularly Iran, and planned to peruse the area for any threats of a

---

<sup>55</sup>Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, 80.

<sup>56</sup>Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, 124.

<sup>57</sup>Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, 16.

communist following. As time passed, it was obvious that President Carter sided more with Brzezinski than with other cabinet members.

Other members of the Carter administration did not advocate the hard-line supported by Brzezinski. There were three issues that illustrated the differences in agendas between Brzezinski and Cyrus Vance. Both men represented the two groups in the White House that constantly sought approval from Carter.

Though Cy and I both tried to confine them to our in-house discussions, the varying viewpoints filtered down to the bureaucracy, became increasingly the object of interagency conflicts and of gossip, and then started to leak out. This was the case, first, over the issue of the Soviet-Cuban role in the African Horn and the likely impact of that on SALT; then came the China question; and in the final year and a half we differed on how to respond to the Iranian crisis.<sup>58</sup>

On almost all issues brought to the president, it was the State Department versus Brzezinski representing the various opinions. Brzezinski sought numerous avenues for his foreign policy to prevail.

Brzezinski utilized and took advantage of his relationship with the President by creating his own outline for their morning meetings. All of the briefs from other departments and cabinet members went through him so he made the decision to address or not address that particular topic with the president. Brzezinski stated, "All major cables with policy implications had to be cleared with relevant NSC staff before they could be sent out. Since much of policy is made by cables, control in this area gave the NSC staff considerable leverage over both the making and the implementation of policy."<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>58</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 38.

<sup>59</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 72.

It was estimated that Brzezinski reviewed some four hundred papers with only roughly one hundred of them making it to the president's office.<sup>60</sup> Later on in this study, the importance of Iran will be illustrated because Brzezinski received cables discussing the growing unrest in Iran. Brzezinski wanted to address other issues, so the instability growing in Iran was not addressed. This is the foundation for his failure as a national security advisor. He not only worked outside the intended scope of his office, but he also did not engage in the responsibilities outlined for him as the national security advisor.

Both the president and Brzezinski kept a file of the aforementioned meetings, which ultimately became the foundation for the actions and policies employed by the National Security Council. As the meetings increased, Brzezinski believed that the President's agenda paralleled his agenda, so Brzezinski began making decisions for the president without his knowledge and consent. Brzezinski admitted to making decisions in the president's stead, stating that the president had too many other issues to think about. He stated that the president would discover these decisions after they were made.<sup>61</sup>

Brzezinski stated in his memoirs, "I have no doubt that Carter both respected and resented the fact that I pushed hard on some key issues, that I became a protagonist as well as a coordinator of foreign policy"<sup>62</sup> This identifies one of the largest ways in which Brzezinski expanded the role of National Security Adviser. He continued to assume that

---

<sup>60</sup>Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, 32.

<sup>61</sup>Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, 32.

<sup>62</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 29.

it was acceptable for him to speak for the president. Carter criticized Brzezinski for some of these decisions, but not enough to ensure that Brzezinski would not repeat his mistake.

Brzezinski further broadened his role through foreign travel. "The NSC was also responsible for clearing foreign travel by the Cabinet, and this involved me on several occasions in some unpleasantness with Cabinet members."<sup>63</sup> Brzezinski assumed the role as Presidential Emissary, illustrated by his trip to Beijing, to lay the groundwork for a peaceful relationship between the United States and China. He would advise the president on what cabinet member should visit a particular nation; usually resulting in a great amount of debate. Although the President did not always follow the advice of Brzezinski, regarding foreign travel, he did play a vital role in who would be traveling where.

#### Criticism of Brzezinski

Brzezinski began to receive much criticism from other cabinet members, but Cyrus Vance was the person who dealt it out the most. While trying to establish their footing in the White House, Zbigniew Brzezinski often combated with the Secretary of State. The two disagreed over issues ranging from Russia and the Cold War to stimulating the domestic economy to the arc of crisis theory.

The NSC's Zbigniew Brzezinski believed Vance had the wrong priorities. As he succinctly wrote in his memoirs, he and his NSC team 'focused on the central importance of Iran to the safe guarding of the American and, more generally, Western interests in the oil region of the Persian Gulf.' Vance and his peoples, while certainly not inclined to reject that view, were much more preoccupied with the goal of promoting the democratization of Iran.<sup>64</sup>

---

<sup>63</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 72.

<sup>64</sup>Farber, *Taken Hostage*, 84.

The tension between the two cabinet members was greatly exacerbated by the media's attention to their relationship. "But in 1978 almost weekly communiqués, in the form of highly exaggerated accounts of the 'Vance-Brzezinski' struggle, started appearing prominently in the press, particularly in the *Washington Post*."<sup>65</sup> Almost every week, anyone could read about the issues that sparked debate between the two men and what became of the argument.

On December 19, 1978, Vance called Carter to discuss the decline in the National Security Council-State relationship. Brzezinski stated, "He asserted that cables had been sent by me to his ambassadors without his knowledge, that in the China issue Warren Christopher was not brought into the decision-making process until the last moment, and Dick Holbrooke, Assistant Secretary for the Far East, was brought in even later, that I negotiated without informing the State Department, that NSC committee procedures should be changed, and that I should not see foreign ambassadors."<sup>66</sup>

Brzezinski replied to all allegations outlining why certain decisions were made, and had the president's support throughout the entirety of the conversation.<sup>67</sup> This was the cycle throughout Carter's term in the White House that resulted in Vance's resignation. Brzezinski brought more to the table than wisdom. He brought Zbigniew Brzezinski, the media mogul. Whether in front of the camera or in front of the president, Brzezinski was able to put a spin on any argument or foreign policy issue that resulted in his audience's support.

---

<sup>65</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 38.

<sup>66</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 41.

<sup>67</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 41.

## CHAPTER III

### IRAN: BRZEZINSKI TAKES MATTERS INTO HIS OWN HANDS

#### Iran Prior to the Revolution

In 1926, Reza Khan went from Prime Minister of Iran to the Shah of Iran bringing a nationalistic and militaristic government with him.<sup>68</sup> Iran's military expanded as well as its power, but in 1942 the armies of Great Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union began to occupy Iran "in the interests of supplying the Soviet Union with much needed logistics against Nazi Germany."<sup>69</sup> Because of this occupation, all of Iran's resources were turned over to the Allied governments to aid in the fight against Germany. After the war, the United States and Britain both left Iran, leaving the Soviets behind in Azerbaijan.

The United States disagreed with the Soviets continued military presence in Iran, thus laying a foundation for the Cold War and American animosity towards the Soviets. The last thing that the United States wanted to do was to engage in another war following the Second World War. To prevent this from happening, the United States decided not to involve itself with the Soviets for the time being. The attention of the British and American governments turned to Anglo-Iranian Oil Company.<sup>70</sup>

First named the National Iranian Oil Company, the Anglo Iranian Oil Company is now in its twenty-fourth year of oil production.<sup>71</sup> NIOC was formed as a result of tensions

---

<sup>68</sup>Ali Ansari, *Confronting Iran* (New York, New York: Basic Books, 2006), 22.

<sup>69</sup>Ansari, *Confronting Iran*, 22.

<sup>70</sup>Ansari, *Confronting Iran*, 24.

<sup>71</sup> "National Iranian Oil Company," *Funding Universe*, <http://www.fundinguniverse.com/company-histories/National-Iranian-Oil-Company-Company-History.html>.



between the British-owned Anglo-Persian Oil Company--renamed Anglo-Iranian Oil Company in 1935 and British Petroleum Company in 1954--and the Persian and then Iranian government, which came to a head after World War II. The British oil company had found oil in southwest Iran in 1908 and, on the basis of this discovery and the support of the British government, which acquired a 51 percent shareholding in it in 1914, it had grown to become one of the world's largest international oil companies by the 1930s.<sup>72</sup>

Members of the government in Iran, as well as its citizens, began to resent the company because it was not adequately and equally sharing its profits with Iran. Due to the surmounting frustration within Iran, Prime Minister, Muhammad Mosaddeq nationalized the company resulting in his overthrow in 1953, thus adding to the lack of trust between the United States and Iran.

#### The Overthrow of Mohammad Mosaddeq

Mohammad Mosaddeq was a “Swiss trained lawyer who believed in the Constitution and the principle that the monarch must reign and not rule. He had publicly argued that Reza Khan should not be elevated to the throne—because then the country would be deprived of his executive abilities.”<sup>73</sup> Following the abdication of the throne by the Shah and the Allied occupation, Mosaddeq was able to come to power. The Shah offered the premiership to Mosaddeq who only agreed to it if Iran’s parliament, the Majlis, would ratify the oil nationalization bill. The Majlis did this on April 28, 1951 with

---

<sup>72</sup>“National Iranian Oil Company.”

<sup>73</sup>Ansari, *Confronting Iran*, 28.

Mosaddeq as their leader.<sup>74</sup> “Two central beliefs shaped Mossadegh’s [sp.] political consciousness. The first was a passionate faith in the rule of law, which made him an enemy of autocracy, and in particular, Reza Shah. The second was a conviction that Iranian’s must rule themselves and not submit to the will of foreigners.”<sup>75</sup> Further Mosaddeq helped to found an Iranian coalition that would drastically change the political climate in Iran. One supporter of Mosaddeq recalls this momentous occasion:

After leaving the palace grounds following their successful sit-in, twenty of the triumphant protestors had met at Mossadegh’s [sp.] house and made a historic decision. They resolved to build on their victory by forming a new coalition of political parties, trade unions, civic groups, and other organizations devoted to democracy and limiting the power of foreigners in Iran. They christened it the National Front and by unanimous vote chose Mossadegh [sp.] as its leaders.<sup>76</sup>

Mosaddeq was determined in his mission to rid Iran of the Anglo Iranian Oil Company. “He pledged to throw the company out of Iran, reclaim the country’s vast petroleum reserves, and free Iran from subjection to foreign power.”<sup>77</sup> Support grew for Mosaddeq, particularly after he nationalized what was the most profitable British business.<sup>78</sup> The British were extremely upset and began designing a plan to overthrow the popular prime minister. Britain immediately sought help from United States president, Harry Truman. Fortunately for Mosaddeq, President Truman admired the stance the Prime Minister was taking, and thus did nothing to stop the nationalization process. Once President Eisenhower came to office, United States’ support for

---

<sup>74</sup>Ansari, *Confronting Iran*, 30.

<sup>75</sup>Stephen Kinzer, *All the Shah’s Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror*, (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons Inc., 2003), 53.

<sup>76</sup>Kinzer, *All the Shah’s Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror*, 71.

<sup>77</sup>Kinzer, *All the Shah’s Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror*, 2.

<sup>78</sup>Kinzer, *All the Shah’s Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror*, 2.

Mosaddeq ceased. “Soon after President Eisenhower took office on January 20, 1953, John Foster Dulles and Allen Dulles told their British counterparts that they were ready to move against Mossadegh [sp].”<sup>79</sup>

Thus, Operation Ajax emerged with Kermit Roosevelt as its director.<sup>80</sup> The operation sought to topple the democratically elected Mosaddeq and install Mohammad Reza Shah back to the throne.<sup>81</sup> Kermit Roosevelt introduced the plan to the Shah:

He described Operation Ajax as based on ‘four lines of attack.’ First, a campaign in mosques, the press, and the streets would undermine Mossadegh’s [sp.] popularity. Second, royalist military officers would deliver the decree dismissing him. Third, mobs would take control of the streets. Fourth, General Zahedi would emerge triumphantly and accept the Shah’s nomination as prime minister.<sup>82</sup>

The operation succeeded, and Mosaddeq was sentenced to three years in prison, and then was put on house arrest for the rest of his life.<sup>83</sup> When the Shah came back to power, his first words were, “I owe my throne to God, my people, my army—and to you [the United States].”<sup>84</sup>

Historian, Stephen Kinzer, outlined Iranian sentiment towards Mosaddeq by saying, “His achievements were profound and even earth-shattering. He set his people off on what would be a long and difficult voyage toward democracy and self-sufficiency, forever altering not only their history but the way they viewed themselves and the world

---

<sup>79</sup>Kinzer, *All the Shah’s Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror*, 4.

<sup>80</sup>Farber, *Taken Hostage*, 56.

<sup>81</sup>Kinzer, *All the Shah’s Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror*, X.

<sup>82</sup>Farber, *Taken Hostage*, 10.

<sup>83</sup>Kinzer, *All the Shah’s Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror*, 193.

<sup>84</sup>Ansari, *Confronting Iran*, 36.

around them.”<sup>85</sup> The Iranian people respected Mosaddeq, and were upset and angry over the United States’ role in his overthrow. Hussein Fatemi, Mosaddeq’s foreign minister captures this sentiments by saying, “O traitor Shah, you shameless person, you have completed the criminal history of the Pahlavi regime! The people want revenge. They want to drag you from behind your desk to the gallows.”<sup>86</sup>

Iranians understood very soon after the coup that foreigners had played a central role in organizing it. In the United States, however, that realization was very slow in coming. Only when anti-American hatred exploded in Iran after the Islamic Revolution of 1979 did Americans even realize that their country was unloved there. Slowly, they were able to discover the reason why.<sup>87</sup>

If the United States had participated in a coup that would overthrow the current leader in 1953, why would they not do the same thing again in 1979? This was the question that plagued Iranians during the revolution, and would fuel a surge of Anti-Americanism. “Until the 1950’s, the tendency was to believe that American people and government were genuinely sympathetic to Iranian yearnings for national independence.”<sup>88</sup> This drastically changed after 1953. The overthrow of Mosaddeq laid the groundwork for what would be a very intimate relationship between the Shah and the United States. Kinzer also pointed out another interesting point, “Only one important figure in the Eisenhower administration still hoped for compromise with Mossadegh [sp]: President Eisenhower himself.”<sup>89</sup> Mosaddeq concluded this period in his life by stating “My only crime is that I nationalized the Iranian oil industry and removed from this land

---

<sup>85</sup>Kinzer, *All the Shah’s Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror*, 207-208.

<sup>86</sup>Kinzer, *All the Shah’s Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror*, 194.

<sup>87</sup>Kinzer, *All the Shah’s Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror*, 211.

<sup>88</sup>Cottam, “Goodbye to America’s Shah.”

<sup>89</sup>Kinzer, *All the Shah’s Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror*, 156.

the network of colonialism and the political and economic influence of the greatest empire on earth.”<sup>90</sup>

From this point on, the Shah acted as a puppet to the U.S. government, and still managed to cater to his excessive lifestyle. The largest area that illustrated his excessive lifestyle was his accumulation of weapons from the United States. “The Shah was playing the Cold War game well, emphasizing the need for a strong military so that Iran could assume her proper place at the vanguard of the free world’s defenses against an encroaching Soviet Union.”<sup>91</sup> The United States lent a great deal of financial and military support to Iran to prevent Soviet intervention in the region.

American assistance has equipped with American weapons and dressed in American uniforms an army of 200,000 men; peopled the administration with American advisers; sprinkled the country with American projects; and trained some thousands of young Iranians in American office procedures. All of this is profoundly disturbing to traditional ways of life in Iran.<sup>92</sup>

The Iranian military was large and was equipped with the latest weapons. In conjunction with this and the American presence created unrest among Iranians and greater opposition to the Shah.

Anti-Americanism began to fester among Iranians, particularly between bazaari merchants and the ulama, but was about to climax because of the advice given to the Shah by the United States. “Spurred on by the Iraqi Revolution of 1958 and the coup against Menderes in Turkey in 1960, the United States impressed upon the Shah that the country’s social structure required fundamental change if his dynasty was to survive

---

<sup>90</sup>Kinzer, *All the Shah’s Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror*, 193.

<sup>91</sup>Ansari, *Confronting Iran*, 42.

<sup>92</sup>Ansari, *Confronting Iran*, 45.

and his country not succumb to communism.”<sup>93</sup> Thus, the White Revolution called for a great amount of land reform “in which feudal tenants were replaced by small landowners with a vested interest in maintaining and defending the land, cultivating both economic regeneration and nationalism.”<sup>94</sup> This alienated the aristocracy, and the ulama, and resulted in violence in 1963 with Ruhollah Khomeini as facilitator. Thus, the Shah was alienating the very people that have supported him since Mosaddeq’s overthrow. His supporters were the aristocracy, or the landowners, of Iran which began to be replaced by the peasantry during the White Revolution.<sup>95</sup>

### The Islamic Revolution

In 1977, Iranian citizens, specifically the bazaari merchants, ulama, and the students, began to protest the rule of the Shah. As the Shah of Iran sought to “westernize” Iran, one of the most violent times in Iranian history was emerging. The Shah of Iran sought greater liberal policies for his nation such as advocating equal rights for women and a more western style of dress. “He had been impressed and excited by what the Turks were doing in the post-World War I years in modernizing their Islamic nation.”<sup>96</sup> The Shah began to fashion himself as Kamal Ataturk had by modernizing or westernizing his nation in the same manner.

Although the Shah was fixated on westernizing his country, he understood that opposition to his policies was accumulating among the ulama and Iranian merchants. In hopes of rectifying this unrest, he made structural changes within the government.

---

<sup>93</sup>Ansari, *Confronting Iran*, 46.

<sup>94</sup>Ansari, *Confronting Iran*, 46.

<sup>95</sup>Ansari, *Confronting Iran*, 48.

<sup>96</sup>Farber, *Taken Hostage*, 62.

Jamshid Amuzegar was assigned the post of prime minister in 1977. Unfortunately, his appointment only created greater animosity among Iranians.

In fact, his attempts to cool off inflation and the overheated economy without reducing the huge sacrosanct military budget resulted in mass unemployment and other problems. Construction jobs in particular, which began falling in 1976, tumbled further and discontents increased.<sup>97</sup>

To accomplish his plan of westernization, the Shah partnered with the United States. Thus, the Iranian economy was flooded with merchants from the United States, decimating the Iranian economy. The Shah desired this partnership because he wanted to “develop the Iranian economy along western lines.”<sup>98</sup> The United States agreed to this new partnership for numerous reasons.

Ultimately, the threat of Soviet expansion was the sole motivator in the evolving relationship. Iran was located in a strategic position for the United States as it acted as a buffer to Soviet influence. “The United States, particularly after the shock its government and business interests had received from the Mosaddeq years, was prepared to give extensive financial aid and advice to a regime that they knew to be strongly anti-Communist; which was making the right noises about economic development, social progress, and reform; and which seemed eager to take American advice regarding the use of United States aid.”<sup>99</sup> The United States also desired this relationship because of the Iranian oil supply which held the second highest oil reserves in the world.<sup>100</sup>

---

<sup>97</sup>Nikki Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2003), 217.

<sup>98</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 134.

<sup>99</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 136.

<sup>100</sup>Ansari, *Confronting Iran*, 2.

Since 1952 or a little earlier American grants and loans in several forms to Iran have totaled about \$1,135m...Of this about \$631m has been for economic help and \$504m for military assistance...All the military and well over half the economic assistance has been in grants, leaving only some \$225m in loans whose repayment has scarcely begun. The Shah insisted on this help, playing heavily on the US fear of communism and particularly on Iran's strategic role in being able to confront the Soviet threat.<sup>101</sup>

As stated by the Trilateral Commission and the early policy agenda of the White House, increased economic expansion of under-developed countries supported global stability. So, the United States had no reason not to support Iran with the exception of allegations of human-rights abuses, which was a very large exception. In his policy agenda, President Carter stipulated that he would hold accountable all nations that participated in human rights abuses. "The influence of the human-rights policy was not due to any significant American pressures, however, but to the belief by both the shah and the opposition that the United States might act for human rights."<sup>102</sup> Opposition to the Shah grew because Iranians believed that the Shah would be held accountable by the United States for his human rights abuses. The Shah's only domestic protector was SAVAK.

### SAVAK and Human Rights Abuses

SAVAK was created in 1957 as an internal security service for the Shah. He decided that SAVAK was necessary to ensure that another occurrence similar to the overthrow of Mosaddeq would never take place.<sup>103</sup> Keddie notes, "One part of SAVAK was involved in the jailings, beatings, and tortures that became notorious in the years

---

<sup>101</sup>Ansari, *Confronting Iran*, 41.

<sup>102</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 214.

<sup>103</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 134.



before the revolution, but there were also suave, educated operatives in coats and ties who persuaded people of the dangers of speaking or acting out of turn.”<sup>104</sup> SAVAK was known as a torturous army with the goal of eradicating any opposition to the Shah, which further laid the groundwork for President Carter to begin holding these people accountable for the torture and murder of innocent men and women. Human rights was an important issue to Iranians because they felt that their government should be held accountable for the atrocities that it had committed.

The end of 1977 saw a number of “mysterious beatings and bombings” that no one was ever held accountable for, but the general opinion was that SAVAK was to blame.<sup>105</sup> When President Carter outlined the rectification of human rights abuses as a pillar of his foreign policy agenda, many members of the United States government believed that this would help bring an end to SAVAK because of their notoriety for torture and the unlawful imprisonment of foreign peoples.<sup>106</sup>

“It was generally accepted in opposition circles that the number of political prisoners was in the range of 50,000 – 100,000, and there were detailed and convincing reports of brutal torture. Iran’s military was nearly half a million strong, and its equipment was becoming the best money could buy.”<sup>107</sup> Unfortunately, President Carter never pressed the Shah about human rights abuses because of rising oil prices inflicted upon the United States. “It seems likely that, as the Iranian opposition believed, in return

---

<sup>104</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 134.

<sup>105</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 217.

<sup>106</sup>Alexander Moens, “President Carter’s Advisers and the Fall of the Shah,” *The Academy of Political Science* 106, no. 2 (1991): 214, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2152227> (accessed June 10, 2010).

<sup>107</sup>Cottam, “Goodbye to America’s Shah,” 8.

for Iran's moderating its stand on oil prices, the United States guaranteed continued arms supplies, diplomatic support, and a downplaying of the human-rights issue."<sup>108</sup>

To not discourage US-Iranian relations, the human rights debate never fully developed between the two nations. Because of the increase in the liberal agenda and the human rights atrocities committed by SAVAK, such as the torture and murder of Iranians who opposed the Shah, the Shah's popularity was low; to say the least, and mass unrest was in the near future. One historian states, "He lost contact with the peasants. He lost control of inflation. He lost contact with the mullahs. He lost control of SAVAK. He lost control of his own family and all the outrageous deals they made for personal profit. All he had left was the army."<sup>109</sup>

Further complicating matters, particularly with SAVAK, was the Yom Kippur War in 1973 which resulted in an oil boycott with the price of oil skyrocketing.

The first oil crisis came in October 1973 at the tail end of the Israeli-Arab Yom Kippur War. Arab nations launched an oil embargo to punish the United States for providing Israel, hard-pressed by Egyptian and Syrian forces, with military equipment in the middle of the conflict. By year's end the price of a barrel of oil had risen to \$12.<sup>110</sup>

The United States and Iranian economy greatly began to decline; therefore, for the sake of himself and his country, the Shah decided to increase the price of oil coming from his country. "The price of oil went up, and dour warnings emerged that the good times were over. Iran, one of the largest producers in OPEC, remained aloof, and the Shah in a protestation of principle argued that it was unethical to use oil as a weapon."<sup>111</sup> The

---

<sup>108</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 217.

<sup>109</sup>"Iran: The Crescent of Crisis."

<sup>110</sup>Farber, *Taken Hostage*, 23.

<sup>111</sup>Ansari, *Confronting Iran*, 61.

Shah increased the price of oil and began to purchase military arms from the United States. The Shah's extravagance led to increasing amounts of poverty within the nation. Opposition for the Shah was growing at exponential rates.

#### Increased Anti-Americanism and Opposition Forces

Iran successfully became a significant force in the Middle East because of its oil and financial resources. To be an industrial power, the Shah desired greater weapons. President Carter desired to maintain the stable relationship with Iran as past presidents had done. Almost all of the weapons requests made by the Shah were fulfilled by President Carter.<sup>112</sup> "In contradiction to his own arms sale directive, the president became the first to introduce this advanced radar system into the Persian Gulf region...He also agreed to sell Iran several nuclear power plants. Carter's 1978 fiscal year arms sales budget exceeded 1977 by some \$4 billion."<sup>113</sup> The Shah's extravagance greatly hurt Iran's economy and its citizens. Opposition to his policies was festering. Nikki Keddie accurately summed up the mood of Iranians prior to the revolution by stating:

By 1977 an economic recession, inflation, urban overcrowding, government policies that hurt the bazaar classes, glaring income gaps, and conspicuous Western-style consumption by the elite and the lack of political freedom or participation were all widely felt and belied the numerous official predictions that the 'Great Civilization' was just around the corner.<sup>114</sup>

Iran began growing in a new direction; towards greater liberalization accompanied by a more advanced weapons system. These new liberal policies

---

<sup>112</sup>Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, 168.

<sup>113</sup>Moens, "President Carter's Advisers and the Fall of the Shah," 216.

<sup>114</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 168.

consisted of the secularization of the legal and educational systems and allowing women in public without wearing the veil. Unfortunately, for the Shah, this new-fast paced environment created greater opposition within his country. Despite the close relationship between Iran and the United States, their communication was miniscule; therefore, knowledge of the uprisings beginning to take place was not fully recognized until early 1978. The CIA later claimed that the reason that the communications did not introduce the uprisings was because the CIA was only to communicate with SAVAK. This military force greatly downplayed the events in Iran; therefore, the CIA was not made aware of the instability.<sup>115</sup>

#### Opposition Forces Unite

Various groups within Iran consisted of the opposition including bazaari merchants, the ulama, and Iranian students. Numerous people from different backgrounds opposed the Shah. A great majority of his opposition were students, both at home and abroad. The following excerpt details Iranian student's dissatisfaction with the educational system in Iran:

With rapidly expanding universities and a large influx of poorly educated secondary students, many from rural areas, academic and economic frustrations also grew. Also, the great majority of university applicants failed to get in, and those who did were often dissatisfied with academic, housing, and educational conditions, as well as political ones. Hence there were frequent major student protests and strikes over the years, particularly in the main cities, and many campuses remained closed for months at a time.<sup>116</sup>

The political demonstrations began in January 1978, the police opened fire in Qom upon anti-government demonstrators. The violence that resulted concluded with

---

<sup>115</sup>Norman Birnbaum, "Failure of Intelligence," *The Nation*. January 20, 1979, <http://www.thenation.com/archive/failure-intelligence> (accessed June 10, 2010).

<sup>116</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 218.

seventy people dead. “The newspaper attack on Khomeini and the Qom incident may be seen as a key point—January 1978—in which much of the initiative in the protest movement swung from the secular forces, with their letters, petitions, organizations, and political poetry readings, to the religiously led opposition.”<sup>117</sup>

The attack referenced in the aforementioned quote referred to the Shah’s article attacking Ruhollah Khomeini that was published in the newspaper, *Ettela’at*.<sup>118</sup> The article stated that Khomeini was, “an adventurer, without faith, and tied to the centers of colonialism...a man with a dubious past, tied to the more superficial and reactionary colonialists.”<sup>119</sup> Following these events, the religious opposition took its place as the leader of all opposition forces to the Shah being led by Ruhollah Khomeini. The religious form of opposition appealed to more people than did the secular form; therefore, there was an increase in the number of Iranians participating in the protests.

Overall, there were roughly three large oppositional groups opposing the Shah for various reasons. The three groups consisted of the ulama, the bazaaris, and intellectuals. The ulama were frustrated with the increase in the westernization of Iran which evolved into increased secularization. The ulama believed that this new land reform went against Shi’a values because it was tied to a decline in Islamic practices. “Now with the prospective addition of a number of other reforms, including the political emancipation of women, the ulema were even more concerned.”<sup>120</sup>

---

<sup>117</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 225.

<sup>118</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 225.

<sup>119</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 225.

<sup>120</sup>Ansari, *Confronting Iran*, 49.

Additionally, the Shah continued to remove ulama power thus resulting in less governmental influence.<sup>121</sup> Khomeini was able to slowly take away the power of the ulama in a number of ways. One way in which he did this was by enforcing examinations upon men to qualify to wear a turban. Further, the liberalization and secularization of schools in Iran left the ulama without a job.<sup>122</sup> The bazaari merchants were experiencing an influx of American merchants thus eliminating their role in the economy.

Although Western goods are widely sold in the bazaars, the growth of supermarkets, department stores, large banks, and goods like machine-made carpeting that compete with Persian rugs added to Western control of Iran's economy and reduced the role of the bazaar.<sup>123</sup>

The relationship between the ulama and the bazaaris dates back to the early 1890's. "Religious taxes and gifts to ulama for religious, educational, charitable, and political purposes came from bazaaris, account for a high percentage of ulama influence, and help cement the political ties between bazaar and mosque."<sup>124</sup> Furthermore, these merchants held religious meetings discussing the current issues further tying the two groups together.

Following the violence in Qom, opposition forces began realizing their strength, thus increasing their demonstrations.<sup>125</sup> The incident in Qom was significant because approximately seventy men were killed which resulted in it becoming the bloodiest

---

<sup>121</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 222.

<sup>122</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 222.

<sup>123</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 227.

<sup>124</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 227.

<sup>125</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 226.

demonstration since 1963.<sup>126</sup> On September 5, 1977, due to the increase in demonstrations opposing the Shah, martial law was declared. The Shah announced martial law early that morning with many people unaware of his announcement. At a peaceful protest that day, shots were fired on a crowd in Jaleh Square. This day is known as “Black Friday.”<sup>127</sup> Some historians deem this event as the turning point of influence from secular forces to the religious opposition.<sup>128</sup>

The final major group comprising opposition to the shah were the intellectual, or more particularly, Iranian students. There were three different groups that comprised this faction of opposition to the Shah: the secular group, western-type group, and ulama students. “The strongest oppositional group was the Confederation of Iranian Students, which grew out of earlier varied Iranian student groups abroad coalesced in 1960 with considerable leftist and Tudeh party influence.”<sup>129</sup> Tudeh party influences declined in popularity with some students turning to pro-Chinese factions or other small guerilla factions living in Iran.<sup>130</sup> Another faction consisted of ulama students. Some members of this faction emerged from the Nationalist Front mentioned earlier in this study that was formed following the overthrow of Mosaddeq. Student groups opposing the Shah proved a valuable force in helping to bring Khomeini to power.

---

<sup>126</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 225.

<sup>127</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 232.

<sup>128</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 225.

<sup>129</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 218.

<sup>130</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 218-19.

Following the Shah's declaration of martial law and Black Friday, a stable Iran became a high priority on the White House agenda. Brzezinski called for greater military use and violence to repress the protestors from demonstrating.<sup>131</sup> Brzezinski believed that revolutions were only won by men who stood firm against any opposition, and the way to do this was only through military force.<sup>132</sup> This hard line of violence increasingly led Brzezinski to greater seclusion within the White House.

As indecision loomed within the White House, opposition forces within Iran continued to accumulate because of inflation, a slowing economy, and the Shah's desire to "westernize" Iran. Further, "After the oil price rise of 1973, Iran's economic growth rate soared, but so did inflation. Great fortunes were amassed by the favored few, but for the salaried majority, real income increased very little or even declined."<sup>133</sup> The opposition in Iran called for the abdication of the Shah because of his liberalization movement, his disregard for human rights, and Iran's current economic state.<sup>134</sup>

#### The United States and Unrest in Iran

The United States supported the Shah in his liberalization policy because it advocated public participation in the government, which in turned might help the Shah to maintain his position if this type of democracy was allowed. If Iranian citizens were to feel as if they had a voice within their country then they may begin to support the Shah in some of his policies. Unfortunately, these new liberal policies did not specify greater

---

<sup>131</sup>Bowden, *Guests of the Ayatollah: The First Battle in America's War with Militant Islam*, 239.

<sup>132</sup>Moens, "President Carter's Advisers and the Fall of the Shah," 221.

<sup>133</sup>Cottam, "Goodbye to America's Shah," 10.

<sup>134</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 216.



involvement between Iranian citizens and their government. The United States and Iran worked together on many issues. "Together, they were dedicated to open access to Persian Gulf Oil, economic development of the region, anti-Communism, and geopolitical stability in the Near and Middle East."<sup>135</sup> No administration had dealt with such instability in Iran since the overthrow of Mosaddeq in 1953.

The Carter administration did not respond to any of this unrest until the fall of 1978.<sup>136</sup> In conjunction with the communication issue, the president was greatly involved in the Camp David talks, between Israel and Egypt, leaving little attention for other issues. From the outset of Carter taking office, it was clear that talks between Israel and Egypt were at the top of his international agenda. The Camp David talks were important to the president for a number of reasons. "The new team believed that the stalemate that existed in 1977 would gradually fragment, with disastrous consequences for world peace as well as for the United States itself."<sup>137</sup> The president felt that there was a timeline on the Camp David talks; therefore, the majority of his attention was placed here.

Brzezinski discussed the aforementioned stalemate in his memoir, believing that the deadlock that existed in peace negotiations would soon falter and would erupt in chaos. Further, both Brzezinski and Carter believed that as the congressional elections of 1978 approached their leverage in possible negotiations was declining. They felt that they had to act fast. All of this combined together, as well as the president's genuine

---

<sup>135</sup>Farber, *Taken Hostage*, 47.

<sup>136</sup>Moens, "President Carter's Advisers and the Fall of the Shah," 217.

<sup>137</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 83.

desire for peace in the Eastern Mediterranean, gave the uprisings in Iran less priority than the Camp David talks. It must be noted here that although President Carter did not get much credit for his 4 years as president, his tenacity and spirit are evident in the Camp David Talks. Unfortunately, this zeal for some form of peace in the Middle East allowed him to disregard other important issues going on in the region; namely the chaos erupting in Iran.

Much of the Carter administration was at a deadlock at determining the best course of action to take in Iran. Moreover, lack of coordination among the president's top advisors on managing the Iranian uprisings began to climax, so Brzezinski took matters into his own hands. As early as May 26, 1978, Gary Sick sent Brzezinski a memo outlining Iranian instability, but Brzezinski never acted upon Sick's recommendations and suggestions.

For ten months, the SCC, chaired by Brzezinski, would discuss Iran in search of a solution.<sup>138</sup> Brzezinski seized these moments to implement his own agenda, rather than warn the president of the uprisings. This choice proved to be of catastrophic consequences to the United States. On October 24, 1978, the Department of State produced a memorandum outlining how the administration should deal with the uprisings in Iran stating that the Shah was politically unstable, and that the United States should prepare for this instability to result in violence. The memorandum called for the United States to remain strong in its opposition to any form of military takeover, and to begin to initiate communications between opposition forces. Because Brzezinski did not agree with the memo, he shelved it; not calling for a National Security Council

---

<sup>138</sup>Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, 43.

meeting to address the issue as he should have. Because of this, President Carter never knew of the State's advice or of the unrest growing in Iran.<sup>139</sup>

Further, as early as 1977, the United States had been advised to initiate some form of communication with the growing oppositional forces. Unfortunately, Brzezinski disagreed with this advice, and only later is the question brought up about why getting in contact with opposition to the Shah should not have occurred sooner. Here lies another fault of Zbigniew Brzezinski and his unwillingness to do what so many others were suggesting. The fault lies with Brzezinski and his inability to give less priority to his policy agenda, and more priority to the men and women who disagreed with him. This clearly illustrates what a national security advisor should never do when deciding foreign policy.

It is the primary job of the national security advisor to make the president aware of any policy issues that require his attention. The decision made to shelve this memo illustrated another choice, of many, that demonstrate Brzezinski's agenda taking priority over the cumulative White House agenda. Brzezinski was ultimately worried that Iran, under Khomeini, would support the spread of Communism which is why he supported the Shah. Brzezinski knew that the Shah did not support Communism, but anyone who came to power in Iran might fall victim to Communist beliefs and allow for the migration of Soviet support.

Brzezinski wanted the Shah to remain in power and was willing to do whatever was necessary for that to happen. Brzezinski sent the president a message claiming that Sullivan's cable was not something to worry about. The message read:

---

<sup>139</sup>Moens, "President Carter's Advisers and the Fall of the Shah," 219.

There is dissatisfaction with the Shah's tight control of the political process, but this does not at present threaten the government. Perhaps most important, the military, far from being a hotbed of conspiracies, supports the monarchy. Those who are in opposition, both the violent and the non-violent, do not have the ability to be more than troublesome in any transition to a new regime.<sup>140</sup>

Brzezinski greatly downplayed the uprisings in Iran further prohibiting any necessary actions to be taken by the United States. The last sentence of the above quote shows the steps that Brzezinski was willing to take to further his own agenda, when it was apparent that the new regime, which was gaining power every day, does have the ability to be more than troublesome in the transitioning to a new regime change.

---

<sup>140</sup> Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, 170.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE FALL OF THE SHAH

#### Indecision in the White House

On November 2, 1978, Ambassador Sullivan sent a cable to the White House asking for immediate instructions because the Shah was thinking of stepping down and establishing a military government in his place.<sup>141</sup> An SCC meeting was immediately called with Brzezinski as its chairman. He immediately laid out his agenda for Iran by stating that the United States should fully support the Shah and to halt all liberalization reforms. Further, he increasingly searched for permission to call for military resistance to any opposition of the Shah.

A decision was finally drafted among the administration illustrating how the Shah should handle the situation in Iran. The message received a great deal of resistance from Brzezinski. He pleaded with the president to allow a reformulation of the message. Brzezinski got what he requested and altered the message to the Shah. The next day Brzezinski called the Shah and stated that the United States would completely support him regardless of what was to happen, which was in total contrast to the memorandum brought forth by the rest of the president's cabinet.<sup>142</sup> Brzezinski claims that he had the full support from the president to make this phone call, but many cabinet members believed he was working outside of his role by engaging in these discussions.<sup>143</sup> Other national security advisors have never communicated policy between international

---

<sup>141</sup>Moens, "President Carter's Advisers and the Fall of the Shah," 219.

<sup>142</sup>Moens, "President Carter's Advisers and the Fall of the Shah," 221.

<sup>143</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 365.

leaders and the president; therefore, this was a very illustrative moment, highlighting Brzezinski's willingness to work outside the intended scope of his position. Almost immediately following the phone call, Brzezinski pressed the president to allow him to travel to Tehran in hopes of working with the Shah to form a peaceful solution to the uprisings.<sup>144</sup> Brzezinski was going to stop at nothing to ensure that his policy initiatives were furthered beyond the alternatives.

Displeased by the lack of communication between the White House and Iran, Brzezinski sent an emissary to Tehran, providing him with a direct line to the Shah<sup>145</sup> This caused much uproar because no one in the administration knew that Brzezinski was doing this, and further, many argued that it was not the place of the national security advisor to make such a move. Brzezinski additionally gained strength in his agenda by increasing his contacts with General Zahedi, who urged Brzezinski to convince President Carter of the need for Iranian military action.<sup>146</sup>

Brzezinski also called foreign ambassadors and dignitaries to advance his agenda of military action.<sup>147</sup> No type of action ever took place, even as Brzezinski vocally supported military resistance to the opposition. In a nut shell, Brzezinski was phoning other leaders in the international community to support his decision for military action, when it was obvious that President Carter did not completely agree with him. Further, these communications between other international leaders completely

---

<sup>144</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 373.

<sup>145</sup>Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, 170.

<sup>146</sup>Moens, "President Carter's Advisers and the Fall of the Shah," 224.

<sup>147</sup>Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, 171.

disregarded the opinions and ideas of Brzezinski's colleagues within the administration. It was at this moment that Brzezinski greatly separated himself with other cabinet members. He did not care who he had to run over to ensure that his ideology and policies were being implemented.

The Shah received different messages from members of the White House. Brzezinski stated that they could not undermine the Shah by not supporting him because interest in the Shah was vested too deeply by the United States government. This interest includes ensuring that the price of oil would not go up, as well as acting as the regional stabilizer in the Middle East. Further disagreements emerged such as how to handle the uprisings and the extent to which the United States should become involved in the process. Brzezinski continued calling for the administration to support the Shah in militarily taking down the opposition, which would of course at some point involve the United States military as the Iranian military was decreasing in strength by the day. Brzezinski's approaches to most issues were hard line, and were definitely of the minority opinion.

In regards to the extent to which the United States should be involved, Brzezinski believed that the Shah was too weak to make a decision calling for Iranian military action, so the United States should make the decision for him. Everyone, including cabinet members and the American people, wanted the president to take action, but the president was at a loss. The president was receiving conflicting reports from different cabinet members regarding Iran, he further had other issues on his mind such as the Camp David Talks and questions of morality were plaguing him as he tried to come to a

solution regarding the revolution. The mood in the United States was hopeless and powerless.<sup>148</sup>

Because of the indecision permeating the White House, Henry Precht, the Department of State desk officer for Iran, chose to bring his opinion to the administration. Precht called for the United States to immediately remove the Shah from the throne. Further, he stated that the United States should not deal with any civilian government who might take the Shah's place, but should get into contact with Khomeini forces in hopes of seeking a graceful exit for the Shah while receiving the credit for doing so.<sup>149</sup> This idea was completely ignored by Brzezinski and was never introduced to the president.

Iran became a subject that no one in the administration could agree upon. George Ball referenced Brzezinski's role in this by stating, "Brzezinski was operating in a free-wheeling manner, calling foreign ambassadors, telephoning or sending telegrams to foreign dignitaries outside State Department channels, and even hiring a press adviser so he could compete with the Secretary of State as enunciator of United States policy."<sup>150</sup> While dealing with Iran, more than any other issue brought before the Carter administration, did many see a national security advisor who completely worked outside the scope of his office.

The Shah finally proposed three possible options to stabilize the current Iranian state: he would continue working with the National Front in hopes of forming a coalition

---

<sup>148</sup>Bowden, *Guests of the Ayatollah: The First Battle in America's War with Militant Islam*, 192.

<sup>149</sup>Moens, "President Carter's Advisers and the Fall of the Shah," 226.

<sup>150</sup>Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, 171.



government, he could appoint a government similar to that proposed by Ball, or he would instruct his military to take action.<sup>151</sup> The SCC meeting dating December 13, 1978, illustrated the type of government advocated by Ball.

Ball stated that he thought the shah was damaged beyond repair. He proposed that the shah assume immediately the lesser role of a constitutional monarch, as prescribed by the 1906 constitution, while handing over power to a council of notables.<sup>152</sup>

Indecision still plagued the administration. Once again, there was no ultimate decision outlining the United States position; therefore, a message was sent to the Shah detailing a compromise between the president's advisors. Harold Brown stated, "He [the Shah] turned out to be a lot weaker than we thought. He'd been rescued in 1953 essentially without doing anything. And I think maybe he was looking for that again. But 1978-9 was not 1953."<sup>153</sup> With indecision still looming, Sullivan proposed opening communication between the United States and Khomeini.

The president finally asked his cabinet members if he should support the Shah or ask him to step down. It was decided that communication with Khomeini was the best route to take. The State Department began making attempts to get in contact with Khomeini, but ran into great resistance from Brzezinski. The final meeting of the SCC on February 11 illustrated the conclusion that the United States lost control of the situation in Iran.<sup>154</sup> Brzezinski was ultimately responsible for not forcing the process and

---

<sup>151</sup>Moens, "President Carter's Advisers and the Fall of the Shah," 227.

<sup>152</sup>Moens, "President Carter's Advisers and the Fall of the Shah," 225.

<sup>153</sup>Moens, "President Carter's Advisers and the Fall of the Shah," 217.

<sup>154</sup>Moens, "President Carter's Advisers and the Fall of the Shah," 231.

all options to Carter for him to make a clear decision.<sup>155</sup> He was too focused on his ideas of military action, to objectively weigh the other options. His arrogance and blindness to possible alternatives was a large factor in the failed US foreign policy toward Iran.

Brzezinski did not want to contact Khomeini because he did not want to discourage Iran's top military leaders.<sup>156</sup> Others, such as Gary Sick began to agree that the time had come to disengage their support from the Shah. Brzezinski did not agree with Precht, and once again did not call a meeting to discuss this option; therefore it was never brought before the president as a viable choice. From this point on, Henry Precht was excluded from all SCC meetings. Any idea presented to the president that went against Brzezinski's opinion brought much argument. Much of the indecisive behavior and communication road blocks were created by Brzezinski which was his demeanor throughout the administration. It is incredibly hard to understand how a man such as this received the power with which he did.

In conjunction with the lack of communication between the United States and Iran and the Shah's timidity ultimately resulted in his departure from Iran. Various reasons exist as to why different people with varying beliefs came together to assist in this transformation of power. One reason that Khomeini was able to amass support from groups with different ideologies was his promise that he not the ulama would never rule directly.<sup>157</sup> Furthermore, he appointed what appeared to be a secular government.<sup>158</sup>

---

<sup>155</sup>Moens, "President Carter's Advisers and the Fall of the Shah," 236.

<sup>156</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser 1977-1981*, 380.

<sup>157</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 240.

<sup>158</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 241.

Khomeini made numerous promises to various groups, such as the appointment of a secular government, and not himself, rallying support for his cause. The majority of the ulama did not support the Shah for reasons dating back to the White Revolution. When Khomeini returned to Iran, he was unsure of how the transition would take place between the Shah's departure and his arrival. The Ayatollah soon realized though that the people of Iran sought peace in their country. By siding with these radical forces, Khomeini was able to bring together the majority of Iran to use their support as his springboard to lead the country.

### The Reign of Ruhollah Khomeini

Ruhollah Khomeini was born Ruhollah Hendi in 1901 in Khomein. He devoted much of his time to religious studies, eventually becoming a teacher in Qom.

From his elder brother he acquired a basic education. In 1919 he went to Soltanabad (Arak), where he became the disciple of Ayatollah Abdol Karim Ha'eri Yazdi, and two years later followed him to Qom. In 1927, after finishing the lower degrees of the theological course, he continued studying under Ha'eri, and on Ha'eri's death in 1936, Khomeini became a respected mujtahid.<sup>159</sup>

Khomeini's voice began to be heard when Muhammad Reza Shah began a policy of modernization in Iran by reducing the authority and influence of religious leaders through legislation. He further sought to secularize education and to reform the legal system. Originally called the 'White Revolution,' this type of modernization in Iran caused much unrest among clerical leaders in the Iranian community with Khomeini as its greatest spokesperson.

During the 1960's, Khomeini's voice became more powerful which helped him solidify greater support for his pronouncements. Some of the changes that he greatly

---

<sup>159</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 191.

advocated dealt with doing away with the American presence in Iran, requiring Muslim women to cover themselves with the chador, which was in accordance with Sharia law, and the disintegration of co-educational schools, just to name a few. “Spurred on by the Iraqi Revolution of 1958 and the coup against Menderes in Turkey in 1960, the United States impressed upon the Shah that the country’s social structure required a fundamental change if his dynasty was to survive and his country not succumb to communism.”<sup>160</sup> Scientists and other researchers believed that the only way to accomplish this sort of social restructuring was through land reform. “In 1962, Khomeini and other senior clergy protested the reforms in terms that were remarkably conciliatory, urging the Shah to adhere to Islam so that the clergy may ‘pray for His Majesty.’”<sup>161</sup>

In 1963, as a teacher in Qom, Khomeini began to speak out against these new reforms receiving nation-wide attention. Two events that helped bring Khomeini to the fore as an oppositional leader were the riots in Qom and Tehran.

This time his rhetoric resulted in house arrest, which provided the spark for riots in Qom and Tehran. These were crushed, thus staining the White Revolution with blood. Although the casualties were modest, they provided the first martyrs for a revolutionary movement that was to increasingly define itself in religious terms, against a monarch who likewise considered himself divinely mandated to rule. Most importantly, it catapulted Ayatollah Khomeini into the top tier of the clerical leadership by casting him as a political leader.<sup>162</sup>

Khomeini and other opposition forces began to decry “westoxication,” or *gharbzadeg*. The term westoxication illustrated, “westernized habits that were associated with Western politico-economic domination and anti-Westernism and anti-

---

<sup>160</sup>Ansari, *Confronting Iran*, 46.

<sup>161</sup>Ansari, *Confronting Iran*, 49.

<sup>162</sup>Ansari, *Confronting Iran*, 49.

regime ideas turned increasingly to the masses' Shi'i outlook."<sup>163</sup> This term was coined by Jalal Al-e Ahmad and helped lay the foundation for opposition to the Shah, and further described the rapid Westernization following the overthrow of Mosaddeq.<sup>164</sup> Additionally Al-e Ahmad "berated the Iranian public for 'Aping a tribe of foreigners, with unfamiliar customs and culture which has no roots in our own cultural environment.'"<sup>165</sup>

Khomeini lived in exile between the years 1964 and 1978 for his open opposition to the Shah.<sup>166</sup> Forcing Khomeini out of the country had unfortunate consequences. "This proved a foolish move by Iran's regime, as telephone, airplane, and cassette communication was easier than before, Iraqi controls on Khomeini ended, and worldwide television and press coverage of Khomeini vastly increased."<sup>167</sup> Khomeini did many interviews featuring a recurring theme: the Shah was extravagant in his expenditures. Apart from the interviews, Khomeini has been successful in circulating his opinions about the Shah through leaflets and lectures on cassette tapes smuggled into Iran. "In speaking out in such uncompromising terms, Khomeini captured the national mood and positioned himself as a champion of the national agenda."<sup>168</sup>

Throughout the 1977-78 period Khomeini's popularity grew. In this more than in previous revolutionary protest movements the urban poor and subproletariate were represented, and because of their large numbers they at first came out in greater strength than did factory workers and the middle classes, despite the latter's importance. For the urban poor Khomeini and his words were supreme

---

<sup>163</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 189.

<sup>164</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 189.

<sup>165</sup>Ansari, *Confronting Iran*, 77.

<sup>166</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 192.

<sup>167</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 233.

<sup>168</sup>Ansari, *Confronting Iran*, 52.

guides, and as revolutionary anger, enthusiasm, and activity grew, Khomeini's refusal to make any compromise with the monarchy and his implication that problems could be solved by a return to Islamic ways had increasing appeal for the Muslim masses.<sup>169</sup>

This excerpt from Iranian expert, Nikki Keddie, illustrates how Khomeini gained support throughout the Revolution. He was able to bring together groups of varying opinions under the guise of change according to Islamic rule and uncompromising leadership. "Islam appeared, to those who rejected both liberalism and Marxism, as the natural ideological base from which to fight the West and the Pahlavi's, especially as Islam was believed by, and familiar to, the great mass of Iranians."<sup>170</sup> This, in conjunction with the indecisiveness of the Shah, allowed Khomeini to take over Iran following the Shah's departure. "Khomeini was popular because of his uncompromising attitude to the Shah, his anti-imperialist and populist rhetoric, his simple lifestyle and language, and his religious status."<sup>171</sup> All of these attributes paved the way for Khomeini to come to power and execute his plan for Iran.

Khomeini's ideas for Iran included increasing clerical power. "He made use of his power to appoint each city's Friday prayer leaders, who became the chief purveyors of his line to the population..."<sup>172</sup> Further, he sought to draft a constitution with the hopes of eradicating poverty and preventing any type of foreign domination. Khomeini sought to reverse everything that the Shah had supported. "After the Shah had been deposed, the Ayatollah Khomeini had authorized a secular government to run daily affairs while

---

<sup>169</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 232.

<sup>170</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 212.

<sup>171</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 244.

<sup>172</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 242.

he and other religious leaders supplied overall guidance in the transition to an Islamic state.”<sup>173</sup> Khomeini sought to get rid of the corruption under the Shah, and to further restore Shi’a values. Khomeini believed that the Shah was not running the government in accordance to Islamic law which was his greatest downfall; therefore, Shari’a law should be reintegrated into the Iranian community.

Khomeini began to remove all the westernized aspects of Iran, and began to reinstitute more traditional Islamic mores. Khomeini was determined to “free” Iran of the western and cultural presence allowed under the Shah. “Islam appeared, to those who rejected both liberalism and Marxism, as the natural ideological base from which to fight the West and the Pahlavi’s, especially as Islam was believed by, and familiar to, the great mass of Iranians.”<sup>174</sup> To free Iran of these Western attitudes, Khomeini knew that he needed to remove the American presence.

Ayatollah Khomeini believed that the Iranian government, led by the Shah, was a puppet government to the United States. Khomeini regarded President Carter as “being responsible for the Shah’s murderous regime.” He mocked the president by saying, “We have military bases in Iran; we can’t talk about human rights there. America propped up the Shah, demonstrating the cynical hypocrisy of a nation that claimed to champion freedom but supported only repression.”<sup>175</sup> “Khomeini’s ideas, which enjoyed hegemony in the post-Shah political scene, called for an unapologetic isolationism, a high priority

---

<sup>173</sup>Farber, *Taken Hostage*, 127.

<sup>174</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 212.

<sup>175</sup>Farber, *Taken Hostage*, 86.

for order and unity at home, and a popular dictatorship embodying and legitimized by Islamic symbols and practices.”<sup>176</sup>

As previously stated, Khomeini sought a return to Shari'a law. These new laws resulted in the reemergence of polygamy, temporary marriage, child marriage, a decrease in women's rights regarding divorce and child custody, and coeducation was abolished except in universities where men and women sat on different sides of the class. Groups of men would patrol Iran to ensure that none of these laws were being violated.<sup>177</sup>

Violence and anti-Americanism increased, and decisions facing the United States' intended policies were at a stalemate. The White House believed that the uprisings would cease following the departure of the Shah. “The assumption was that Khomeini would peacefully retire to Qom, the ardor of the revolution would gradually cool, and moderates, pragmatists, and technocrats would emerge as dominant in Tehran.” This was obviously not the case as the violence continued.

Anti-Americanism was at its peak in Iran for a number of reasons. First, most Iranians resented American support lent to Israel over the past few decades. Iran disagreed over existence of the state of Israel and many Iranians believed that its existence was “a profoundly ideological issue.”<sup>178</sup> Further, since Mosaddeq's overthrow, Iran became increasingly wary of any collaboration with the United States. These factors created a stalemate of communication between the two countries.

---

<sup>176</sup>Barry Rubin, “American Relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, 1979-1981,” *Iranian Studies* 13, no. ¼ (1980): 313, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4310345> (accessed March 14, 2011).

<sup>177</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 257.

<sup>178</sup>Ansari, *Confronting Iran*, 160.



Iran was an unmanageable situation. Workers, students, and members of the lower class composed parts of the opposition, calling itself the “religious opposition” with anti-Americanism as its predominant theme.<sup>179</sup> The United States believed that the uprisings would end for a number of reasons. First, Americans believed that the uprisings would disintegrate because of the sale of petroleum in the West as well as the continued arms repairs purchased by the Shah. These repairs could only be done by someone from the United States who helped assemble them.<sup>180</sup> The United States thought that violence would stop once the Shah left Iran. These reasons illustrate why quicker measures were not taken by the Carter administration to quell the instability.

In 1979, Khomeini appointed Mehdi Bazargan as prime minister of Iran. The United States sought peaceful relations with the country by, “face-to-face meetings, rapid recognition of the Bazargan regime, and material cooperation....President Carter told a press conference that he hoped to work with the new rulers and he noted Bazargan’s pledge to ensure the safety of Americans in Iran.”<sup>181</sup> Supported by Khomeini, it was apparent that the violence was going to continue in Iran.

Most of the Iranians that supported the Shah were executed by members of the Revolutionary Council.<sup>182</sup> “Anyone who objected or opposed him [Khomeini] or any part of his movement, therefore, was not a good Muslim but rather a traitor and a foreign agent seeking to return the shah to power or to establish some new client regime.”<sup>183</sup>

---

<sup>179</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 222.

<sup>180</sup>Rubin, “American Relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, 1979-1981,” 309.

<sup>181</sup>Rubin, “American Relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, 1979-1981,” 311.

<sup>182</sup>Rubin, “American Relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, 1979-1981,” 312.

<sup>183</sup>Rubin, “American Relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, 1979-1981,” 313.

Not only did Khomeini seek to rid Iran Iranian government officials working for the Shah, but further sought execution for anyone who did not support the rise of Khomeini.

### The Hostage Crisis

Thus far, Brzezinski had engaged in decisions that were not in his job description as national security advisor. As chairman of the SCC meetings, Brzezinski continued to discuss only the issues he agreed to, thus not presenting all of the options that could have been taken by the president. Overall, the largest action taken by Brzezinski that exceeded the scope of his job was his phone call to the Shah, which subtly tried to alter Carter's policy by Brzezinski's discussion of military action. Throughout the administration, Brzezinski called for hard-line policies on a variety of issues, which helped to alienate him from his colleagues. One issue that incited much debate between cabinet members was to admit the Shah to the United States for medical treatment, or not.

In October the Shah became seriously ill and sought asylum in the United States, but was not given it until the administration learned of his failing health. On October, 20, 1979, the president admitted the Shah into the United States, and on October 23 the news was released that the Shah required medical attention only available in the United States. Immediately, protests began in Iran and Khomeini called for the Shah to be brought back to Iran. This resulted in a hostage situation that lasted from November 4, 1979 to January 20, 1981.<sup>184</sup>

Khomeini called for and supported all student uprisings. Khomeini did not explicitly tell the students to take over the embassy; rather, he supported any attack

---

<sup>184</sup>Farber, *Taken Hostage*, 1.

made upon the United States. Opposition to the Shah manifested the most in the minds of Iranian students. “The strongest oppositional group was the Confederation of Iranian Students, which grew out of earlier varied Iranian student groups abroad but coalesced in 1960 with considerable leftist and Tudeh party influence.”<sup>185</sup> These student groups were some of the first people to expose the United States to the use of torture by SAVAK and the Shah.

The Students Following the Line of the Imam decided to take over the embassy for a number of reasons followed by their leader, Ibrahim Asgarzadeh.<sup>186</sup> Asgarzadeh stated, “What we are proposing is a peaceful occupation of the American Embassy—without arms. This will mean taking the embassy personnel hostage not as diplomatic personnel, but as agents of the American government.”<sup>187</sup> The student’s initial goal was to take over the embassy for only a day or two or until the Iranian government asked them to release the hostages.<sup>188</sup> When the Shah was admitted into the United States, the students believed that they needed to act in haste so as to not show weakness.<sup>189</sup>

“Sixty-six Americans were held in one form or another of captivity at the beginning of the ordeal; six other Americans escaped the immediate embassy takeover but were forced into hiding.”<sup>190</sup> The 444 day-long event was broadcasted nightly by

---

<sup>185</sup>Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 218.

<sup>186</sup>Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, 176.

<sup>187</sup>Farber, *Taken Hostage*, 129.

<sup>188</sup>Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, 176.

<sup>189</sup>Farber, *Taken Hostage*, 13.

<sup>190</sup>Farber, *Taken Hostage*, 1.

anchors such as Ted Koppel and Walter Cronkite.<sup>191</sup> The Hostage Crisis was introduced to the world with this message:

We Muslim students, followers of Ayatollah Khomeini, have occupied the espionage embassy of America in protest against the ploys of the imperialists and the Zionists. We announce our protest to the world; a protest against America for granting asylum and employing the criminal Shah...for creating a malignant atmosphere of biased and monopolized propaganda, and for supporting and recruiting counterrevolutionary agents against the Islamic Revolution of Iran.<sup>192</sup>

Khomeini's public statement regarding the hostage situation was not sympathetic. He said, "Today, underground plots are being hatched in these embassies, mostly by the Great Satan America...they must sit in their places and return the traitor [the Shah] soon."<sup>193</sup> American Cancer Specialist, Morton Coleman, examined the Shah noting that he might have to stay in New York for a year or more to receive the treatment he needed. This only increased the Iranian belief that the Shah had been admitted to the United States to plan an attack on Iran for his return to power.<sup>194</sup> Iranians believed that the longer he stayed in the United States, the greater chance he would have of conspiring with the United States to engage in a coup, similar to that of 1953.

The members of the Carter administration differed on how to retrieve the hostages, and no one was willing to submit. "Almost immediately, President Carter ruled out a quick rescue attempt. In large part, he was misled by the memory of how easily

---

<sup>191</sup>Farber, *Taken Hostage*, 7.

<sup>192</sup>Farber, *Taken Hostage*, 136.

<sup>193</sup>Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, 176.

<sup>194</sup>Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, 177.

the embassy takeover of the previous February had been resolved.”<sup>195</sup> Gary Sick, the principal staff adviser on Iran, described the Administration’s thinking the day after the takeover, “We anticipated that the (Iranian) government would do what it was supposed to do—send in police and security forces to protect the embassy.”<sup>196</sup> The White House assumed that this takeover was similar to the first and that the Iranian government would halt the takeover.

Earlier in the year, on February fourteenth, the Embassy was taken over, but was quickly restored through a few phone calls. Most people in the administration believed this embassy takeover would be similar to the first in that only a few phone calls needed to be made to rectify the situation. This exemplifies why the White House did not immediately react to the news of the Embassy takeover. Unfortunately, their assumptions proved to be wrong and unrest by the American public and within the White House began to fester.

Essentially, two schools of thought formed within the White House on how to handle the situation. One group, led by Cyrus Vance, believed in greater negotiations between the two countries. Further, Vance had State Department employees working at the Embassy in Tehran, so their safety was paramount to him.<sup>197</sup> Brzezinski pressed for a variety of military options thinking that this event could be the defining moment of the

---

<sup>195</sup>Rubin, “American Relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, 1979-1981,” 317.

<sup>196</sup>Charles E. Claffey, “The Hostage Crisis and Its Legacy,” *Boston Globe* (November 4, 1984, Sunday) [http://libproxy.library.unt.edu:3068/iw-search/we/InfoWeb?p\\_product=AWNB&p\\_theme=...](http://libproxy.library.unt.edu:3068/iw-search/we/InfoWeb?p_product=AWNB&p_theme=...) (accessed March 14, 2011).

<sup>197</sup>Bowden, *Guests of the Ayatollah: The First Battle in America’s War with Militant Islam*, 212.

Carter presidency.<sup>198</sup> Brzezinski believed that the use of force was a means of “attaining morally desirable ends.”<sup>199</sup>

The United States’ vital national interests and world stature were given a higher priority than peaceful negotiations.<sup>200</sup> Brzezinski believed that if nothing was done about the hostage situation, other countries in the Middle East may follow Iran and chaos may erupt. For Brzezinski, national honor was at stake. Betty Glad described Brzezinski’s thought process during the Hostage Crisis by saying:

Brzezinski put national honor above the rescue of the hostages. He pressed for a variety of punitive military actions against Iran, including mining Iranian harbors, bombing the oil fields of Abadan, and blockade of Iranian ports. The Iranian government might not deal with the United States, he charged, until it was faced with punitive measures. Hostage’s lives might be lost, but that was the risk he was willing to take to protect national honor, even if he was the only one.<sup>201</sup>

President Carter created a third group within the White House because he believed that the well-being of the hostages and national honor and the state’s interests were mutually inclusive. One could not distinguish between the two.

This idea, and new group, resulted in the president waiting to see if anyone in Iran was willing to negotiate.<sup>202</sup> Unfortunately, this hesitation created much resentment between cabinet officials and the American people.

---

<sup>198</sup>Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, 179.

<sup>199</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 49.

<sup>200</sup>Bowden, *Guests of the Ayatollah: The First Battle in America’s War with Militant Islam*, 212.

<sup>201</sup>Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, 179.

<sup>202</sup>Bowden, *Guests of the Ayatollah: The First Battle in America’s War with Militant Islam*, 218.

“The American captives in Iran became a living symbol and a pointed daily reminder of what had gone wrong in the United States.”<sup>203</sup> Each of the groups discussed above fought for the president’s support to implement what they perceived as the best course of action. The president understood the frustration of the American people, but was at a loss as to how to handle the situation. Sanctions were utilized in conjunction with diplomatic attempts for the hostage’s release, but nothing was done. “Khomeini, preoccupied with the consolidation of his power at home, had little concern with the outside world at this point.”<sup>204</sup>

The United States took a series of steps to increase the pressure on Khomeini, but nothing came to fruition. The United States froze Iranian deposits in American banks, cut off the shipments of spare military parts to Iran, terminated all crude oil imports from Iran, began special immigration checks on Iranian students living in the United States, and further began to deport Iranians who were living in the United States illegally.<sup>205</sup> “The U.S. diplomatic initiatives, it soon became apparent, would have not positive effect.”<sup>206</sup> With no success of negotiating with Khomeini, the President decided that a rescue mission was the only option left available.

---

<sup>203</sup>Farber, *Taken Hostage*, 14.

<sup>204</sup>Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, 182.

<sup>205</sup>Betty Glad, “Personality, Political and Group Process Variables in Foreign Policy Decision Making: Jimmy Carter’s Handling of the Iranian Hostage,” *International Political Science Review* 10, no. 1 (1989): 37, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1600729> (accessed June 10, 2010).

<sup>206</sup> Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, 182.

## Operation Eagle Claw

Around mid-March, Brzezinski noted in his diary that there was a reasonable chance that a rescue mission would be successful. Therefore, Brzezinski began speaking to other cabinet members about this possible rescue mission, trying to get some support to persuade the president for the mission. On April 10, Brzezinski gave the president a memorandum entitled, "Getting the Hostages Free," arguing that there was no room left for negotiation. A possible rescue mission was the only other option left available.<sup>207</sup> Brzezinski wrote:

In short, unless something is done to change the nature of the game, we must resign ourselves to the continued imprisonment of the hostages through the summer or even later...The above recommendation is not easy to make. It is ever more difficult for you to consider and accept. However, we can 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.<sup>208</sup>

On April 11, the President illustrated to his cabinet members that he was seriously considering a rescue mission by stating, "Experts on paramilitary operations now had confidence in their ability to rescue our people".<sup>209</sup> Brzezinski did not speak much during this meeting, but had provided the president with a detailed memorandum illustrating his opinions.<sup>210</sup> Not only did Brzezinski support the idea of a hostage mission, he believed that retaliatory measures should be included in the mission as

---

<sup>207</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 492.

<sup>208</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 492.

<sup>209</sup>Glad, "Personality, Political and Group Process Variables in Foreign Policy Decision Making: Jimmy Carter's Handling of the Iranian Hostage," 49.

<sup>210</sup>Glad, "Personality, Political and Group Process Variables in Foreign Policy Decision Making: Jimmy Carter's Handling of the Iranian Hostage," 49.



well.<sup>211</sup> Brzezinski strongly advocated the rescue mission. He was the one who called Hamilton Jordan to begin to create a possible rescue mission, and was the rescue mission's chief author.<sup>212</sup>

Brzezinski's primary reason for supporting the rescue mission illustrated his belief that the situation was going to get worse if the United States failed to intervene.<sup>213</sup> By April, almost all economic sanctions had been inflicted upon Iran, and there was still no change in the situation. Therefore, something with greater repercussions for Iran, other than economic sanctions and breaking diplomatic relations, had to be initiated.<sup>214</sup> The rescue mission took place on April 24, 1980. The result was disastrous, with eight American soldiers losing their lives and four additional American injuries.<sup>215</sup> "The mission failed. Three helicopters, on their way to the Desert One refueling location, suffered mechanical problems or perceived problems. An unexpected, severe dust storm likely caused those mechanical difficulties."<sup>216</sup> Following the attempted rescue mission, the President began focusing on other issues because rectifying the hostage crisis seemed almost impossible.

---

<sup>211</sup>Glad, "Personality, Political and Group Process Variables in Foreign Policy Decision Making: Jimmy Carter's Handling of the Iranian Hostage," 51.

<sup>212</sup>Rose McDermott, "Prospect Theory in International Relations: The Iranian Hostage Rescue Mission," *Political Psychology* 13, no. 2 (1992): 249, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3791680> (accessed March 11, 2011).

<sup>213</sup>McDermott, "Prospect Theory in International Relations: The Iranian Hostage Rescue Mission," 250.

<sup>214</sup>McDermott, "Prospect Theory in International Relations: The Iranian Hostage Rescue Mission," 257.

<sup>215</sup>McDermott, "Prospect Theory in International Relations: The Iranian Hostage Rescue Mission," 239.

<sup>216</sup>Farber, *Taken Hostage*, 174.

The US public responded in a number of ways. The media characterized Carter as inept and unfit for his job in a time of crisis.<sup>217</sup> The American public was fed up with the low morale that had plagued the nation since the withdrawal of Vietnam, and 1980 was an election year. Ronald Reagan stated:

I will not stand by and watch this great country destroy itself under mediocre leadership that drifts from one crisis to the next, eroding our national will and purpose...We need a rebirth of the American tradition of leadership at every level of government and in private life as well.<sup>218</sup>

United States citizens were very displeased by the Carter administration's impotence. The seventies was a difficult decade for the U.S. Morale was the lowest it had been in years, and the citizens of the United States were not going to stay dormant by keeping Carter in office.

Eventually, communication between Khomeini and the United States was prompted by a few events. Hoping to take advantage of Iran's political instability, Saddam Hussein invaded Iran's Khuzistan province.<sup>219</sup> "This invasion, Saddam conjectured, would reverse previous humiliations at the hands of the Shah, particularly the Algiers Agreement of 1975 (which had demarcated the international boundary of the Shatt al Arab waterway)."<sup>220</sup> The United States was not about to aid Iran in this war with their hostages still in captivity, and Iran was in trouble. In conjunction with the sanctions imposed on Iran, Americans did not enter Iran to repair any of the arms that were sold

---

<sup>217</sup> Farber, *Taken Hostage*, 175.

<sup>218</sup> Farber, *Taken Hostage*, 176.

<sup>219</sup> Farber, *Taken Hostage*, 178.

<sup>220</sup> Ansari, *Confronting Iran*, 98.

to them; therefore, Iran was in a war with only a few weapons in usable condition. The maintenance was not kept up on the weapons, so they were of no use in the war.

In November 1980, Khomeini illustrated the mandatory requirements for the hostages to be released. Khomeini realized that it was not politically advantageous to keep the hostages, so he illustrated four conditions for their liberation. "He called for the return of Iran's frozen assets, the sending to Iran of the royal family's wealth, and end to law suits filed against Iran by American companies and individuals, and a U.S. promise not to intervene in Iran in the future."<sup>221</sup> The parliament in Iran, the Majles, had been reconvened and approved the conditions outlined by Khomeini.<sup>222</sup> Compromise seemed impossible because of the mistrust of both countries towards each other, therefore intermediaries were necessary. Algeria emerged as the primary intermediary between the two nations.

On November 10, 1979, the United States sent a group to Algeria to complete the negotiations, which were not finalized until January.<sup>223</sup> "The arrangements involved the return of about \$11 billion of Iranian assets frozen by the U.S. government, with only \$1.5 billion actually going back to Iran."<sup>224</sup> Finally, on January 20, 1980, the hostages were released at the literal end of the Carter administration. What is interesting about the release of the hostages was the difference in perception between Iranians and the United States.

---

<sup>221</sup>Rubin, "American Relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, 1979-1981," 319.

<sup>222</sup>Rubin, "American Relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, 1979-1981," 319.

<sup>223</sup>Rubin, "American Relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, 1979-1981," 322.

<sup>224</sup>Rubin, "American Relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, 1979-1981," 323.

The American public was appalled by the hostage situation, and did not understand the resentment Iranians held towards the United States. The overthrow of Mosaddeq in 1953 was barely made public in the United States, but all Iranians knew of it. Americans felt as if this hostility was coming out of nowhere; whereas, the Iranians felt justified in their actions. As previously stated, the American public was not made aware of the CIA's involvement in the overthrow of Mosaddeq until after the revolution began. Furthermore, in theory many Americans supported Carter's platform to rid the international community of human rights abuses. Unfortunately, the United States economy was in bad shape, and the price of oil was continuing to go up. The Shah had already increased the price of oil coming from Iran in 1973. If the president was to continue to press the Shah about his human-rights abuses then he may feel inclined to increase the price of oil even more. Americans wanted cheaper oil; thus forsaking their principles. One frightening result of the hostage crisis was the increase in Iranian anti-Americanism following the revolution. Historian, Betty Glad, stated:

Their support for the hostage-takers who seized American diplomats in Tehran was only the beginning of their fierce anti-West campaign. Soon afterward, they began financing and arming Hamas, Hezbollah, and other Middle Eastern factions known for their involvement in political kidnapping and assassination.<sup>225</sup>

It was not until President Clinton was in office that the United States formally announced their involvement in the overthrow of the democratically elected Muhammad Mosaddeq.

### The End of the Carter Presidency

After the climax of the hostage situation and the Iranian Revolution, many of Carter's cabinet members, particularly William Sullivan, chastised Brzezinski as ultimately causing greater anti-Americanism among Khomeini forces. Sullivan supported

---

<sup>225</sup>Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror*, 212.

his argument by stating that Brzezinski tried to halt communications between Khomeini and Iranian military forces. He further received criticism for his lack of empathy for the hostages that was witnessed not only by other cabinet members, but the president as well. Brzezinski stated in his memoir:

But it must be noted here that until the crisis became very grave, the attention of the top decision makers, myself included, was riveted on other issues, all extraordinarily time consuming, personally absorbing, and physically demanding.<sup>226</sup>

Brzezinski did not completely admit his fault. This admission was a cumulative admission of guilt. However, it is the role of the national security advisor to alert the president to any possible threats to international peace with the objective of preparing him to make difficult decisions. Brzezinski placed the blame on the entire administration when the majority of it should rest with him. Brzezinski states, "In the deepest sense, the collapse of the Shah thus involved on the American side a failure of political intelligence in the widest meaning of the term 'intelligence.'"<sup>227</sup>

Gary Sick defined the White House's approach to Iran as ignorant.<sup>228</sup> Although he was the National Security Staffer for Iran and understood the country well, ignorance is not the best characterization to the United State's policy at the time. Brzezinski was not ignorant, but he did ultimately fail as the national security advisor for not working within the scope of his position. Brzezinski received information from both Gary Sick and Warren Christopher about the uprisings in Iran and their escalation of instability.<sup>229</sup>

---

<sup>226</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 358.

<sup>227</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 397.

<sup>228</sup>Farber, *Taken Hostage*, 37.

<sup>229</sup>Farber, *Taken Hostage*, 90.

Numerous times, Brzezinski had the chance to bring this information to the President, but he did not until it was too late.

Brzezinski believed that the revolution was reversible.<sup>230</sup> He believed it could be rectified via the military option, so he never advocated anything else. When an alternative to his idea was brought before him, he never took it to the president to get his opinion. Brzezinski's inability to raise the awareness of the president to issues that were going to force him to make tough decisions illustrated an advisor who was not doing the job intended for him. "Brzezinski was responsible for forcing the process through to get Carter to make a clear decision. He did not do so, because he was simply too committed to one option to play his role credibly."<sup>231</sup>

Overall, Brzezinski worked outside the intended scope of his position in a number of ways. The particular appointment of the national security advisor to become a cabinet member highlights the changing role of the NSA.<sup>232</sup> President Carter desired greater engagement between the cabinet and the decisions made about foreign policy, therefore, he promoted Brzezinski.<sup>233</sup> Not only was Brzezinski made a cabinet member, but his office was next to the Oval Office, so the two men met quite often. He and the president met so often that the in-house record keepers quit keeping track of their meetings. No one else in Carter's administration experienced this luxury.

---

<sup>230</sup>Moens, "President Carter's Advisers and the Fall of the Shah," 236.

<sup>231</sup>Moens, "President Carter's Advisers and the Fall of the Shah," 236.

<sup>232</sup>Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, 29.

<sup>233</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 60.

Brzezinski also became the first national security advisor to chair NSC subcommittee meetings.<sup>234</sup> He had the control of the paperwork coming into and leaving each of the meetings. Essentially, Brzezinski dictated the agenda of all of these meetings. Furthermore, all of the president's speeches regarding foreign policy had to be cleared through the NSC, making Brzezinski the de facto mouthpiece of the administration by using the president as his vehicle.

Another difference between Brzezinski and his predecessors was the creation of a press secretary to the national security advisor. The national security advisor never included a press secretary as a member of his team. The appointment of Jerry Schecter increased both his press briefings and requests from television news channels for interviews. Brzezinski became a very prominent figure in the Carter White House even in the era before twenty-four hour televised news.

He stated that the purpose of this new position was not for self gain, but to ensure that the foreign policy agenda was clearly articulated to the media.<sup>235</sup> Brzezinski understood the role of the press. "This is so because the modern press has an effective monopoly on the 'truth,' that public truth of the moment, which alone matters for effects and success in the fact-world, is today a product of the press."<sup>236</sup> How the press framed the news dictated the popularity of the president and his administration, which is why he hired Schecter.

---

<sup>234</sup>Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, 30.

<sup>235</sup>Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, 32.

<sup>236</sup>Brzezinski, "The NSC's Midlife Crisis," 38.

In these interviews, Brzezinski began publicly speaking for the administration instead of Cyrus Vance or Jody Powell. Brzezinski notes, "His (Cyrus Vance) reluctance to speak up publicly, to provide a conceptual explanation for what our Administration was trying to do, and Carter's lack of preparation for doing it himself, pushed me to the forefront. (I will not claim I resisted strongly.) That in turn fueled resentments, if not initially on Cy's part, then clearly so on the part of his subordinates."<sup>237</sup> Further, regarding Powell, Brzezinski states, "...the new press secretary, Jody Powell ...did not know much about foreign affairs, and I felt that his office needed reinforcement."<sup>238</sup>

Through all of the decisions that Brzezinski made there was no greater moment that set his role apart more from past National Security Advisers than this decision. Brzezinski discussed the tension this caused in the White House by stating, "There certainly was [conflict] between our [NSC and State Department] stags...On the one hand I was made a spokesman; on the other hand, I was never designated as a spokesman and I was therefore attacked for speaking up."<sup>239</sup> Through this outlet, Brzezinski controlled the messages from the administration as well as policy implementation because he felt he could do so successfully. Brzezinski thought very highly of himself:

I prefer to perceive myself as possessing an adequate measure of self-confidence, which is, of course, an absolute requisite for someone like me. I am very achievement oriented, and I have this peculiarity in my

---

<sup>237</sup>Brzezinski, "The NSC's Midlife Crisis," 37.

<sup>238</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 77.

<sup>239</sup>Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, 32.



personality that I have to come to accept: By a very large margin, I prefer winning over losing—and, although, I do not say this immodestly, I'm pretty good at winning, I win a great deal. I seldom lose, very seldom.<sup>240</sup>

He was determined to clearly articulate his position on foreign policy issues in hopes of gaining the support of the President. He firmly pushed his agenda on the American public as well. He was doing interviews for the Washington Post, Time Magazine, and the National Press Club and became a household name.<sup>241</sup> He was not being scorned for any of these interviews; rather both President and First Lady Carter were praising him.

In his memoirs, Brzezinski discussed the result of some of his public appearances, “Unfortunately, and with adverse consequences not only for me personally but more significantly for the President himself, these public appearances did fuel the image of an Administration in which the national security advisor overshadowed the Secretary of State, and in retrospect it probably would have been wiser for me to have been the invisible man.”<sup>242</sup> Although he wished to be the man behind the scenes, it is apparent, even today, that he would not be able to play this role. Brzezinski was a man that liked the attention, and he still craves it today. He may regret that he acted publicly at times, but if given the chance to change it, he would not do it.

A recent example of this occurred during the presidential election of 2008. Brzezinski went on the talk show, *Morning Joe*, hosted by his daughter, to lend his support to presidential-hopeful, Barack Obama. According to the website, [rense.com](http://www.rense.com),

---

<sup>240</sup>Rosati, “Continuity and Change in the Foreign Policy Beliefs of Political Leaders: Addressing the Controversy over the Carter Administration,” 500.

<sup>241</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 30.

<sup>242</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 30.

Brzezinski praised Obama for opposing the war in Iraq, “saying that he himself was the source of Obama’s argument.” Brzezinski could have remained quiet and not mentioned that “he was the source of some of Obama’s arguments,” as the website states. Rather, Brzezinski felt inclined to let the public know that he had been working with Obama since his days at Columbia. Brzezinski may state that he wants to act behind the scenes, but is clearly incapable of doing so.

At this point, the role of National Security Adviser drastically changed in comparison to his predecessors. First, he made the decision in August 1978, to schedule a meeting with Iranian Ambassador, Ardeshir Zahedi, to discuss the uprisings.<sup>243</sup> He made this decision without consulting anyone, and he received little cabinet support in his decision. Khomeini heard of these meetings, which greatly increased the hostility between himself and the United States. This was three days before the U.S. Embassy seizure.

---

<sup>243</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 358.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

#### National Security Advisors Before and After Brzezinski

The National Security Act of 1947 developed the National Security Council, a move that “called on the president to draw on the collective advice of the NSC, composed –according to the amended 1947 statute—of himself, the vice president, the secretary of state, and the secretary of defense.”<sup>244</sup> Historians have discovered two different patterns of presidential leadership with the National Security Council. The presidential system outlines the first pattern, encompassing a president who is greatly involved in the creation of the National Security Council strategy. The second model highlights a president that leaves a majority of control to the secretary of state. In an article discussing the National Security Council, Brzezinski outlines each president’s model choice by stating that Kennedy, Nixon, and Carter fell into the presidential system and Truman, Eisenhower, Johnson, and Ford comprised the second model.<sup>245</sup>

Eisenhower first utilized the National Security Council to make decisions and plan policy.<sup>246</sup> During Kennedy’s term, the amount of power the NSC had declined with the breakdown of the council. Nixon brought back the power of the National Security Council with his designation of the head of the NSC staff given the title of assistant for national security affairs.<sup>247</sup> The president solidified this power by making the new assistant a cabinet member of the administration.

---

<sup>244</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 81.

<sup>245</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 82.

<sup>246</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 84.

<sup>247</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 86.

Of all the past national security advisors, Brzezinski was most similar to Kissinger. Both of their administrations were characterized with strong foreign policy teams and both advisors are from Europe and were deeply entrenched in Cold War politics. The two administrations recreated the strength of the national security advisor, but it was Zbigniew Brzezinski who utilized this power far greater than ever intended. Historian Betty Glad described Brzezinski's role in the White House by saying, "Carter came to rely inordinately on an advisor who had his own political agenda and extraordinary skill in creating a political milieu that would lead the president in the direction the advisor desired."<sup>248</sup>

#### Brzezinski's Failure as National Security Advisor

The National Security Council, following the Carter White House, was sterile with little to no power, and no voice.<sup>249</sup> Brzezinski illustrated his opinions about the importance of the national security advisor by stating, "But with the key decisions being made within the White House, with information flowing directly into the NSC's Situation Room, and with the assistant located on the spot, any arrangement for crisis management that does not vest primary managerial responsibility with the assistant for national security affairs is very likely to be gravely flawed."<sup>250</sup> This belief seems to be an excuse outlining why Brzezinski did things the way he did. In his memoirs, Brzezinski did not explain why his system was more efficient than the past "flawed" systems that did not give this responsibility to the national security advisors. It appears that he

---

<sup>248</sup>Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, 279.

<sup>249</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 89.

<sup>250</sup>Brzezinski, "The NSC's Midlife Crisis," 96.

needed to add this aside to give support for his actions, and to further state that how he structured the NSC was the correct way to do so.

President Carter received much blame for failed US policy toward Iran and the destruction of Iranian-American relations, but much of the blame should rest with the National Security Adviser. Putting pressure on the president to face and formulate difficult decisions was Zbigniew Brzezinski's job. Regarding Iran, Brzezinski failed. He succeeded only in changing the role of the national security advisor by making decisions that someone in his position should not make. Further, he chaired committees that never changed leadership. Brzezinski received daily access to the president, became a buffer of crucial diplomatic communication, and an editor of meeting agendas and decisions, all of which never characterized the role of the national security advisors that preceded him.

One historian remarked, "But in the foreign policy realm, he [Carter] gave Zbigniew Brzezinski a triple role as gatekeeper, policy advisor, and teacher on the nature of world politics and the practices of earlier presidents."<sup>251</sup> From this study, I conclude that one man should not be afforded this role that encompasses so many different functions. Because of this, the president put his faith in an advisor who took advantage of the relationship and began acting outside the intended parameters of adviser.

### Brzezinski Today

Today, Brzezinski still plays a great role in foreign policy. This highlights one of the key reasons this study is so important to American history. "Brzezinski has

---

<sup>251</sup> Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, 279.

established himself as an influential post-White House foreign policy adviser, working with Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, and Barack Obama officials on several issues.”<sup>252</sup> Under Reagan, Brzezinski was on the National Security Council Defense Department Commission on Integrated Long-Term Strategy and was co-chairman of the George H. W. Bush national security advisor Task Force in 1988. Under his son, George W. Bush, Brzezinski served as the co-chairman of a Council on Foreign Relations Task Force in 2004.<sup>253</sup>

In 2007, Brzezinski came out and publicly supported presidential-hopeful, Barack Obama at a time when Obama was being characterized as too young and too inexperienced to handle the presidency.<sup>254</sup> During President Obama’s administration, there has been much debate about Brzezinski being one of his policy advisors, but at the beginning of the administration in 2008, Brzezinski was sent to Damascus apparently at the behest of the president. One of Syria’s news agency’s remarked that this was an “important sign that the end of the official dialogue between Washington and Damascus has not prevented dialogue with important American intellectuals and politicians.”<sup>255</sup>

---

<sup>252</sup>Paul Bedard, “Zbigniew Brzezinski Still a Foreign Policy Force,” *U.S. News*, March 1, 2011, <http://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/washington-whispers/2011/03/01/zbigniew-brzezinski-still-a-foreign-policy-force> (accessed January 3, 2011).

<sup>253</sup>“Zbigniew Brzezinski.” *Bloomberg Businessweek*, <http://investing.businessweek.com/research/stocks/private/person.asp?personId=6960284&privcapId=4534280&previousCapId=436146&previousTitle=Hunt%20Consolidated,%20Inc> (accessed May 29, 2011).

<sup>254</sup>Alec MacGillis, “Brzezinski Backs Obama,” *Washington Post*, August 25, 2007, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/08/24/AR2007082402127.html> (accessed January 3, 2011).

<sup>255</sup>“Obama Adviser Leads Delegation to Damascus,” *New York Sun*, *Huffpost Politics*, February 12, 2008, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/02/12/obama-adviser-leads-deleg\\_n\\_86186.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/02/12/obama-adviser-leads-deleg_n_86186.html) (accessed May 29, 2011).

In conjunction with being the president of Z.B. Inc. which is a firm that advises corporations and financial institutions on international issues, Brzezinski is on numerous committees, including the Board of Directors of the National Endowment for democracy. He is an honorary chair of the AmeriCares Foundation, a member of the Board of Trustees of Freedom House, and still is a member of the Trilateral Commission.<sup>256</sup> Overall, Brzezinski is still very active in the political arena, illustrating a potential problem for current President Obama and other presidential-hopefuls. Brzezinski has engaged himself in the foreign policy arena of every presidential administration since his position as the national security advisor to Jimmy Carter. He utilized Carter as his puppet to implementing his agenda, and even with the current administration have articles been written describing Obama as another puppet to Brzezinski's antiquated Cold War rhetoric.

Many Americans cite the Carter presidency as a failure on a number of levels. However, this study shows that the President made certain decisions that allowed people in his cabinet a great amount of room to assert their own agenda, and this is what Brzezinski did. In his memoirs, Brzezinski discussed the notion that the Carter White House failed by stating, "In my opinion, a more accurate indictment of the Carter administration's foreign policy performance is that we were overly ambitious and that we failed in our efforts to project effectively to the public the degree to which we were motivated by coherent and well-thought-out viewpoint."<sup>257</sup>

---

<sup>256</sup>MacGillis, "Brzezinski Backs Obama."

<sup>257</sup>Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 57.

Unfortunately, for Brzezinski, he played a large role in the lack of coherent communication between advisors, but never really admits this to the public. I argue that he was the failure of the Carter administration, not Carter himself. Brzezinski was able to intercept cables of communication between the White House and other nations. He further insured that major presidential speeches were to be prepared under NSC supervision, and the NSC was to approve foreign travel.<sup>258</sup>

Brzezinski's initiatives created the powerbase he needed to infiltrate the White House agenda with his own. What is so interesting about Brzezinski and President Carter is their lifestyle change after leaving the White House. "Whatever problems Carter had in balancing U.S. interests with his moral goals, he also undertook major efforts to promote world peace, arms limitation, and a new moral order."<sup>259</sup> Following the White House, President Carter has devoted his life to human rights, while Brzezinski forced himself in the political arena desiring the power and position to control foreign policy.

This work highlighted important reasons why one man should not have the power held by Brzezinski. He took advantage not only of his position, but of his president. This is still apparent today with the Obama administration. The current president continues to seek the advice of Brzezinski, which was illustrated by his trip to Damascus. Through some of Obama's foreign policy decisions and press releases illustrate examples of Brzezinski's ideology at work. Although he is not a cabinet member as he once was,

---

<sup>258</sup> Brzezinski, *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, 72 – 73.

<sup>259</sup> Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, 285.



Brzezinski is still in a position to assert his agenda on many of the decisions being made today. This is troublesome, particularly when the United States is confronting Iran about their nuclear capabilities. His reactive tendencies and hard line policies are the last thing the United States need.

The implications of his actions illustrate another reason why this work is important to American history. One man assuming all that power illustrates the vulnerable character of the United States. There is no oversight of cabinet members, and unfortunately Brzezinski needed a babysitter. In such an unstable atmosphere, there is no room for one man to assert his own agenda; particularly over the president's agenda. His policy convictions took priority over the best interests of the United States. Zbigniew Brzezinski created a puppet out of President Jimmy Carter which allowed himself to act in ways not envisaged in the creation of the role as National Security Adviser.

One must question how different the 1970's would have been without his participation in the Carter administration. No doubt, there would have been greater communication between all of the president's advisors as well as more efficient action on all the pressing issues that plagued that Carter presidency. Brzezinski used his hard-line ideology to make and implement policy and still continues to do so today.

## WORKS REFERENCED

- Ansari, Ali. *Confronting Iran*. New York, New York: Basic Books, 2006.
- Birnbaum, Norman. "Failure of Intelligence," *The Nation*, January 20, 1979, <http://www.thenation.com/archive/failure-intelligence> (accessed June 10, 2010).
- Bedard, Paul. "Zbigniew Brzezinski Still a Foreign Policy Force," *U.S. News*, March 1, 2011, <http://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/washington-whispers/2011/03/01/zbigniew-brzezinski-still-a-foreign-policy-force> (accessed January 3, 2011).
- Bowden, Mark. *Guests of the Ayatollah: The First Battle in America's War with Militant Islam*. New York, New York: Grove Press, 2006.
- Brzezinski, Zbigniew. *Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*. New York, New York: Collins Publishers Inc, 1985.
- Brzezinski, Zbigniew. "The NSC's Midlife Crisis," *Foreign Policy*, no. 69 (1987-1988), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1148589> (accessed January 3, 2011).
- Claffey, Charles E. "The Hostage Crisis and Its Legacy," *Boston Globe*, November 4, 1984, [http://libproxy.library.unt.edu:3068/iw-search/we/InfoWeb?p\\_product=AWNB&p\\_theme=...](http://libproxy.library.unt.edu:3068/iw-search/we/InfoWeb?p_product=AWNB&p_theme=...) (accessed March 14, 2011).
- Cottam, Richard. "Goodbye to America's Shah." *Foreign Policy*, no. 34 (1979), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1148512> (accessed June 10, 2010).
- Falk, Richard. "Brzezinski: Looking Out for #1," *The Nation*, September 27, 1980, <http://www.thenation.com/archive/brzezinski-looking-out-1> (accessed June 10, 2010).
- Falk, Richard A. "Khomeini's Promise," *Foreign Policy*, no. 34 (1979), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1148516> (accessed June 10, 2010).
- Farber, David. *Taken Hostage*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Glad, Betty. "Personality, Political and Group Process Variables in Foreign Policy Decision Making: Jimmy Carter's Handling of the Iranian Hostage," *International Political Science Review* 10, no. 1 (1989), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1600729> (accessed June 10, 2010).
- Glad, Betty. *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, 2009.

- "Iran: The Crescent of Crisis." *Time Magazine*, January 15, 1979, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,919995,00.html> (accessed June 10, 2010).
- Keddie, Nikki. *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2003.
- Kinzer, Stephen. *All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror*. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons Inc., 2003.
- MacGillis, Alec, "Brzezinski Backs Obama," *Washington Post*, August 25, 2007, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/08/24/AR2007082402127.html> (accessed January 3, 2011).
- McDermott, Rose. "Prospect Theory in International Relations: The Iranian Hostage Rescue Mission," *Political Psychology* 13, no. 2 (June 1992): 237 – 263, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3791680> (accessed March 11, 2011).
- Moens, Alexander. "President Carter's Advisers and the Fall of the Shah," *The Academy of Political Science* 106, no. 2 (1991), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2152227> (accessed 10 June, 2010).
- "National Iranian Oil Company," *Funding Universe*, <http://www.fundinguniverse.com/company-histories/National-Iranian-Oil-Company-Company-History.html>.
- "Obama Adviser Leads Delegation to Damascus," *New York Sun*, *Huffpost Politics*. February 12, 2008. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/02/12/obama-adviser-leads-deleg\\_n\\_86186.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/02/12/obama-adviser-leads-deleg_n_86186.html) (accessed May 29, 2011).
- Peterzell, Jay. "The Trilateral Commission and the Carter Administration," *Economic and Political Weekly* 12, no. 51 (1977), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4366204> (accessed January 3, 2011).
- Rosati, Jeral A. "Continuity and Change in the Foreign Policy Beliefs of Political Leaders: Addressing the Controversy over the Carter Administration," *Political Psychology* 9, no. 3 (1988), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3791726> (accessed 10 June, 2010).
- Rubin, Barry. "American Relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, 1979-1981," *Iranian Studies* 13, no. ¼ (1980): 307-326, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4310345> (accessed March 14, 2011).
- Serfaty, Simon. "Brzezinski: Play It Again, Zbig." *Foreign Policy*, no. 32 (1978), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1148392> (accessed January 3, 2011).

Trofimenko, Henry. "Struggle for the Turf," Review of *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Advisor 1977 – 1981*, by Zbigniew Brzezinski, *World Politics*, 1985, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2010249> (accessed March 11, 2011).

"Zbig's Optimism in a Hostile World." *Time Magazine*, August, 8, 1977, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,915198,00.html> (accessed June 10, 2010).

"Zbigniew Brzezinski," *Bloomberg Businessweek*, <http://investing.businessweek.com/research/stocks/private/person.asp?personId=6960284&privcapId=4534280&previousCapId=436146&previousTitle=Hunt%20Consolidated,%20Inc> (accessed May 29, 2011).

"Zbigniew Brzezinski: 'Tactician for the Establishment,'" *MERIP Reports*, no. 54 (February, 1977): 18 – 19, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3011264> (accessed January 3, 2011).