

Re-Examining American Cold War Foreign Policy Between 1976 and 1980 Using Select
Newspaper Editorials

A Senior Honors Thesis

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by

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*To
Mildred and My Parents*

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INTRODUCTION

Cold War foreign policy underwent a dramatic shift between 1976 and 1980. Before 1970, the United States Cold War foreign policy was based on George Kennan's containment policy. Specifically, Kennan argued, "the United States should pursue a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies."¹ To do so, Kennan suggested the United States "apply a counter-force at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points."² In 1970, with the help of National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, President Nixon revised and updated George Kennan's containment policy. In doing so, Nixon and Kissinger introduced détente to the United States and its containment-based Cold War foreign policy. Détente sought to "release containment from its moralistic underpinnings and to inaugurate a power-oriented *Realpolitik*. The Soviet Union would be given incentives, largely economic, to moderate its expansion. It would thus practice a kind of self-containment."³ Until 1976, the United States Cold War foreign policy was firmly grounded in both containment and détente. However, in 1976, with the election of Jimmy Carter, everything changed. The newly elected President Carter sought to base his Cold War foreign policy on human rights. Specifically, Jimmy Carter hoped to use both human rights and economic negotiations to work with and not against the Soviet Union. By 1980, it was clear that President Carter's human rights based Cold War foreign policy had failed. Consequently,

¹ John Dumbrell, *American Foreign Policy: Carter to Clinton* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 2.

² Dumbrell, *American Foreign Policy*, 2.

³ Dumbrell, *American Foreign Policy*, 3.

in the fall of 1980, President Carter was denied a second term and Ronald Reagan was elected. President Reagan's Cold War foreign policy was simple: only a massive military build-up could contain the Soviet Union.

Why, for a period of four years between 1976 and 1980, did the United States Cold War foreign policy shift from one focused on containing the Soviet Union to one focused on human rights and finally to one that again (although by different means) focused on containing (and ultimately destroying) the Soviet Union? Like most politicians, the President of the United States acts strategically. Consequently, the policy choices the President makes are based on strategic decisions, which rely on information. For a policy to be successful, it must be based on a diverse array of accurate information. During the Cold War, the United States Cold War foreign policy was strategic and relied on information for success. Between 1947 and 1980, each president utilized various types of information to make his Cold War foreign policy successful. The many Cold War related international events that took place in real time certainly provided each Cold War president with crucial information, as did information provided by various presidential advisors and experts. As publicly elected officials, the presidents of the Cold War sought information from the public. Specifically, because each president desired re-election, he sought public approval of his policies. Although unpredictable international events and changing presidential advisors both are credible explanations for the shift in Cold War foreign policy that took place between 1976 and 1980, changing public opinion also undoubtedly played a role in the shifts that occurred between 1976 and 1980.

In general, the president can get information on public opinion in one of three ways. He may check his approval rating, look at nationally conducted polls (on specific

issues), or look for some other measure to gauge public opinion. One method of gauging public opinion is to look at the opinions of elite media members. Although elite media members do not necessarily represent the general public, they provide the general public with the information and analysis necessary for opinion formation. Although most respectable news media sources provide the general public with accurate information, not all news media outlets provide the public with the type of analysis that is necessary for opinion formation. Consequently, the opinions of the elite members of the news media who do offer the general public information analysis are of great importance to politicians, especially those who seek re-election (i.e. the president). This thesis suggests that a shift in the opinions of elite members of the media between 1976 and 1980 played a significant role in the change in Cold War foreign policy that took place between 1976 and 1980.

Before 1980,⁴ the ways in which the general public received information and analysis from members of the elite news media were very different than the ways in which the general public receives information today. Today, the term elite news media could be used to describe a variety of diverse news media outlets that cover current events at local, state, federal, and international levels. Newspapers, magazines, scholarly journals, radio, television, and, increasingly, the internet all play critical roles in the coverage of foreign policy events in today's society. Although newspapers, scholarly journals, news magazines, radio, and basic broadcast television have been providing foreign policy coverage for nearly a century,⁵ both cable television and the internet are

⁴ CNN a twenty-four hour cable news network was founded by Ted Turner in 1980.

⁵ Newspapers, scholarly journals, news magazines, and radio have all been around for well over a century. Broadcast television (ABC, CBS, and NBC) was not available in the United States until the 1950's.

relatively recent inventions.⁶ Consequently, before 1980, the American general public received its foreign policy information and analysis from television broadcast, the radio, newspaper coverage, nationally syndicated magazines, or from scholarly journals. Until the 1980's and the introduction of CNN, television news broadcasts did not engage in the type of foreign policy analysis found in newspaper editorial sections, certain magazines, and in some scholarly journals. While the general public had access to newspapers, magazines, radio, and some scholarly journals, this thesis focuses on the analysis offered by nationally syndicated newspaper editorialists in order to better understand how and why the United States Cold War foreign policy shifted between 1976 and 1980.

Newspaper editorials were chosen because between 1976 and 1980 they had a large audience. "Daily circulation of American newspapers peaked in 1984 and had fallen nearly 13% to 55.2 million copies in 2003, according to the Newspaper Association of America."⁷ By understanding the debate being waged in national newspaper editorials (regarding the United States Cold War foreign policy), it is possible to better understand the shifts that occurred in Cold War foreign policy between 1976 and 1980.

The large number of newspaper articles, magazine stories, and scholarly manuscripts published on American Cold War foreign policy between 1976 and 1980 makes it clear that the Cold War foreign policy of the United States was on the minds of most American citizens between 1976 and 1980. As a result, the editorial sections of many influential American newspapers were filled with interpretations and analyses of Cold War foreign policy related events on a daily basis. This thesis seeks to understand

⁶ Ted Turner's CNN revolutionized cable television news coverage in 1980. The Internet was not widely available until the 1990's.

⁷ Newspaper Association of America, Facts about Newspapers: A Statistical Study of the Newspaper Industry (Arlington, VA, 2004).

how and why different American newspaper editorial sections reached different conclusions about the direction of America's Cold War foreign policy. Were the opinions, analyses, and conclusions offered by newspaper editorialists across the country based on political beliefs or were they based on unbiased information alone? Did the conclusions reached in newspaper editorials affect the Cold War foreign policies of various presidents?

Unlike the front page of the newspaper, the editorial sections of most major American newspapers are filled with politically biased information. "The editorial section of an elite paper, like any other, represents a paper's stand and position on the issues discussed in the paper."⁸ Some American newspapers are said to be liberal, others are said to be conservative. Without a concrete method of identifying a newspaper's ideology it is impossible to prove whether or not a paper's editorials simply reflect its political ideology or if they serve a different purpose. For the purpose of this thesis, the political ideologies of nine different prominent United States newspapers have been identified using political endorsements.

Specifically, *The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, *The New York Post*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Daily Oklahoman* all made presidential endorsements in 1972, 1976, and 1980. By identifying which candidate each paper endorsed in each election, it is possible to place each newspaper along a political spectrum. *The New York Times* and *The Boston Globe* endorsed the liberal (Democratic) presidential candidate in all three elections. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, both

⁸ Abbas Malek, *News Media & Foreign Relations* (Norwood, N.J.: Albex Publishing Corporation, 1997), 105.

newspapers will be placed on the far left (liberal) side of the political spectrum. *The Washington Post* endorsed the liberal (Democratic) candidate in two presidential elections (1976 and 1980) and endorsed no candidate during the 1972 presidential election. Thus, *The Washington Post* will be placed slightly to the right of both *The New York Times* and *The Boston Globe*. *The New York Post* endorsed the liberal (Democratic) presidential candidate in 1972 and 1976 but endorsed the Republican candidate in 1980. Consequently, for this study, *The New York Post* has been placed slightly to the right of *The Washington Post*. *The Los Angeles Times* has a long-standing policy of not endorsing candidates during presidential elections. For this study, *The Los Angeles Times* has been placed in the middle of the political spectrum. *The Philadelphia Inquirer* endorsed the conservative (Republican) candidate for president in two elections (1972 and 1976) and endorsed the liberal (Democratic) candidate in one election 1980. Therefore, for this study, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* has been placed to the right of *The Los Angeles Times*. *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Daily Oklahoman* all were determined to be strong supporters of the Republican Party as all three endorsed the conservative (Republican) presidential candidate in each of the three elections studied. Consequently, all three were placed on the far right of the political spectrum.

Far Right	Center				Far Left
<i>Chicago Tribune</i>	<i>Philadelphia Inquirer</i>	<i>Los Angeles Times</i>	<i>New York Post</i>	<i>Washington Post</i>	<i>New York Times</i>
<i>Daily Oklahoman</i>					<i>Boston Globe</i>
<i>Wall Street Journal</i>					

Most of the Cold War foreign policy editorials published between 1976 and 1980 in the nine above-mentioned newspapers fell along political ideological lines. That is, editorials published in *The New York Times*, *Boston Globe*, *Washington Post*, and *New York Post* favored the Cold War foreign policies of President Carter (the liberal president). Consequently, most of the Cold War foreign policy related editorials published in conservative newspaper editorial sections criticized the foreign policies of President Carter. However, not all published editorials followed the political ideology pattern. Specifically, during the 1976 presidential election, some liberal newspapers supported Cold War foreign policies they had previously never supported. Once the 1976 Presidential election was over and President Carter's human rights based Cold War foreign policies began to falter, his support in liberal newspapers began to fade. As President Carter altered his Cold War foreign policies by shifting them to the right, conservative newspaper editorialists shifted their own Cold War foreign policy opinions even further right and began to endorse Cold War foreign policies they had never previously endorsed. In both elections, the presidential candidates responded to the opinions put forth by members of the elite media. When liberal newspaper editorialists called for an end to détente, Jimmy Carter obliged. When conservative newspaper editorial sections asked for a Cold War foreign policy that was more conservative than containment or détente, Ronald Reagan introduced an extremely conservative Cold War foreign policy that would ultimately lead to an arms race. By examining five events, the 1976 presidential election, the 1978/1979 SALT II negotiations, the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (and the United States response), the 1980 Olympic boycott, and the 1980 presidential election, it is possible to see that newspaper editorial sections did not always

follow ideological lines. Furthermore, when newspaper editorialists called for a change in Cold War foreign policy, both Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan listened.

SECTION I

Cold War Foreign Policy and the 1976 Presidential Election

The 1976 presidential election was highly competitive⁹ and consequently received a significant amount of newspaper editorial coverage. Although many important policy issues were discussed in editorial pages across the United States, American foreign policy was a topic of particular importance. In 1976, many newspapers devoted a significant portion of their election coverage to foreign policy. For example, *The Los Angeles Times* devoted 43.1%¹⁰ of its 1976 presidential election coverage to American foreign policy. American foreign policy is a broad subject, but in 1976 many newspapers narrowed their focus to how both candidates would address American foreign policy as it related to the Cold War. Some newspapers saw little difference between the Cold War foreign policy proposals of President Ford (Republican) and Governor Carter (Democrat). However, several important American newspapers saw significant differences between the proposals of President Ford and Governor Carter. Consequently, such newspapers spent a significant amount of newspaper editorial space lauding the foreign policy proposals of one candidate and criticizing the foreign policy proposals of the other candidate. Specifically, the liberal newspaper editorial sections (*The Boston Globe*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The New York Post*) favored Governor Carter while the conservative newspaper editorial sections (*The Daily Oklahoman*, *The Wall Street*

⁹ Governor Carter received 297 electoral votes (50.1% of the popular vote) while President Ford received 240 electoral votes (48.0% of the popular vote).

¹⁰ David S. Myers, "Editorials and Foreign Affairs in the 1976 Presidential Campaign," *Journalism Quarterly*, Vol. 55, No. 1. (Autumn 1978) 92-99.

Journal, *The Chicago Tribune*, and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*) favored President Ford. Many of the liberal newspapers that supported Governor Carter did so not only because he was the Democratic candidate, but also because he offered the new type of Cold War foreign policy they sought.

President Ford was the Republican candidate in 1976. He had not been elected, but had been appointed to the position after the resignation of Richard Nixon in August of 1974. Like his predecessor, Ford supported the détente policy developed by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. In broad terms, détente “rested on the perception that the United States was finding it increasingly difficult to sustain the demands of containment. Détente sought to release containment from its underpinnings and to inaugurate a power-oriented *Realpolitik*.”¹¹ Détente sought to ease tensions with the USSR by establishing dialogue. President Ford also supported the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty Agreement (SALT), which was agreed upon in 1972.

In contrast, Governor Carter believed that détente and containment had resulted in an over-exposed, morally questionable United States. Although Governor Carter did not oppose the SALT Treaty that was signed in 1972, he promised a Cold War foreign policy that focused on a global community and human rights. During his campaign, Governor Carter flatly disagreed with the foreign policies of Kissinger and Ford arguing that American foreign policy required both realism and idealism. Early in his campaign, Jimmy Carter realized that a foreign policy platform based on human rights gave him the potential to build a non-partisan base. “For liberals, a human rights foreign policy

¹¹ John Dumbrell, *American Foreign Policy: Carter to Clinton* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 3.

promised a crusade against right-wing dictators, for conservatives, human rights offered a lever against communism and its abuses.”¹²

Throughout the 1976 Presidential election, the three most conservative newspapers, (*The Wall Street Journal*, *The Daily Oklahoman*, and *The Chicago Tribune*) supported President Ford’s détente and containment based foreign policy. Although their support of Ford was partially based on their political ideology, each newspaper editorial section supported President Ford’s Cold War foreign policy explicitly. Furthermore, the editorial sections of each conservative newspaper also harshly criticized the human rights based Cold War foreign policy proposed by Governor Carter. On October 14, *The Wall Street Journal* wrote “the more [Carter] talks about curing the problem of foreign policy by making it more open, the more one concludes he simply doesn’t understand the issues, that he hasn’t the foggiest notion of the decisions he would be called upon to make as President.”¹³ On October 8, by way of contrast, *The Wall Street Journal* lauded the Nuclear Proliferation policy of President Ford as a “major step forward.”¹⁴ On October 31, *The Daily Oklahoman* called Governor Carter’s foreign policy radical: “Americans are rejecting [Carter’s] new-found radicalism, as his nationwide exposure has revealed a disturbing tendency to say whatever he believes to be popular.”¹⁵ In the same editorial, *The Daily Oklahoman* applauded President Ford’s ability to “stabilize”¹⁶ American foreign policy.

¹² John Dumbrell, *American Foreign Policy: Carter to Clinton* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 17.

¹³ Editorial, *Wall Street Journal*, October 14, 1976.

¹⁴ Editorial, *Wall Street Journal*, October 8, 1976.

¹⁵ Editorial, *The Daily Oklahoman*, October 31, 1976.

¹⁶ Editorial, *The Daily Oklahoman*, October 31, 1976.

The Chicago Tribune also published editorials that supported President Ford's conservative Cold War foreign policy. On April 6, *The Chicago Tribune* called the debate on foreign policy a non-debate, "[The democratic position on foreign policy] is mainly campaign rhetoric from a candidate (Carter) who has no chance of replacing President Ford in the White House."¹⁷ As the election progressed and the parties both chose their candidates, *The Chicago Tribune* continued to support President Ford: "If Carter continues to promise solutions to foreign policy ills without presenting some tentative ways and means, he may discover the American public is more discerning and intelligent than he believes."¹⁸ Finally, on October 14, *The Chicago Tribune* called Governor Carter naive when it came to American foreign policy. Once both parties had chosen their candidates, only one instance could be found in which any of the extremely conservative papers were complimentary to the foreign policy proposals of Governor Carter. On October 8, *The Wall Street Journal* noted that both candidates' strategic arms limitations proposals were of good quality.

Compared to *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Daily Oklahoman*, and *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* provided its readers with significantly less coverage of the foreign policy debate in its editorial section between January 1, 1976 and December 31, 1976. The Cold War foreign policy coverage that *The Philadelphia Inquirer* did provide was much different than the coverage found in the three most conservative newspapers. For example, in its endorsement of President Ford on October 31, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* lauded President Ford's decision to continue the foreign policies of President Nixon. However, in the same editorial, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*

¹⁷ Editorial, *The Chicago Tribune*, April 6, 1976.

¹⁸ Editorial, *The Chicago Tribune*, October 13, 1976.

praised Governor Carter's ability to capture the imagination of the American people with his honest policies (including his foreign policy which focused on human rights). Unlike *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Daily Oklahoman*, and *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* chose to focus the majority of its 1976 presidential coverage (in the editorial section) on domestic policies. Consequently, while the few instances in which *The Philadelphia Inquirer* editorial section mentioned foreign policy were conservative in nature, it is difficult to reach a conclusion about the paper's overall view of American Cold War foreign policy during the 1976 Presidential election.

The Los Angeles Times editorial section has been labeled neutral because the paper has a longstanding policy of not endorsing presidential candidates. In terms of its coverage of Cold War foreign policy issues during the 1976 election, its neutral label rings true. Although *The Los Angeles Times* had a slight liberal leaning (17.3% of its editorials favored Governor Carter), the overwhelming majority of its foreign policy editorials, (82.7%¹⁹), endorsed neither candidate. For example, on October 8, *The Los Angeles Times* wrote, "although there were differences between the candidates, their television debate did not [reveal] a consensus on the fundamentals of foreign policy."²⁰ While some newspaper editorials showed unwavering support of their preferred candidates' Cold War foreign policy proposals, *The Los Angeles Times* chose to criticize both candidates throughout the 1976 presidential election campaign.

Like *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The New York Post* chose not to devote a significant portion of its editorial section to Cold War foreign policy coverage during the

¹⁹ David S. Myers, "Editorials and Foreign Affairs in the 1976 Presidential Campaign," *Journalism Quarterly*, Vol. 55, No. 1. (Autumn 1978) 92-99.

²⁰ Editorial, *The Los Angeles Times*, October 8, 1976.

1976 presidential election. Consequently, it is difficult to reach a conclusion about the paper's ideological coverage of Cold War foreign policy during this time. However, in one of the few times foreign policy is mentioned in their 1976 editorial sections, *The New York Post* was steadfast in its support of Governor Carter: "A Ford victory would surely diminish any chance for an early breakthrough toward military sanity."²¹

The Washington Post's editorial coverage of Cold War foreign policy was liberal but more balanced than the coverage provided by the two most liberal newspapers, *The Boston Globe* and *The New York Times*. For example, while both *The Boston Globe* and *The New York Times* were often quick to criticize President Ford and his Cold War foreign policies, *The Washington Post* was not. Although *The Washington Post* clearly supported the Cold War foreign policy proposals of Governor Carter during the 1976 presidential election, its criticisms of President Ford often were muted. On October 8, after the second presidential debate (which focused on American foreign policy), *The Washington Post* published an editorial that while clearly in support of Governor Carter was not critical of President Ford. For example, the editorial praised President Ford for his ability "to work out a stable strategic equation with the Soviet Union."²² However, in the same editorial, *The Washington Post* praised President Carter's pledge to "conduct a foreign policy springing from the true values of the American people."²³

The New York Times and *The Boston Globe* offered Governor Carter their complete support in terms of Cold War foreign policy. In general, both *The New York Times* and *The Boston Globe* devoted large portions of their respective editorial sections

²¹ Editorial, *The New York Times*, October 25, 1976.

²² Editorial, *The Washington Post*, October 8, 1976.

²³ Editorial, *The Washington Post*, October 8, 1976.

to supporting the Cold War foreign policy positions of Governor Carter while criticizing those of President Ford. On September 9, *The New York Times* applauded Governor Carter's "comprehensive"²⁴ foreign policy plan, while criticizing President Ford's foreign policy as "uninspiring, unimaginative, and intellectually clumsy."²⁵ Throughout the 1976 presidential election, *The New York Times* published numerous foreign policy related editorials, 50.2% were liberal whereas 49.8% were neutral.²⁶ During the 1976 presidential election, *The New York Times* did not publish one editorial in support of President Ford's foreign policy. *The Boston Globe* editorial section was equally supportive of Governor Carter and critical of President Ford (in terms of their Cold War foreign policies). It is clear from the above results that, for the newspapers studied, political ideology accurately predicted how each newspaper's editorial section covered Cold War foreign policy during the 1976 presidential election. These results are not surprising because a clear link exists between candidate endorsement and political ideology. However, although a clear link exists between political ideology and candidate support, the large amount of coverage that each newspaper editorial section gave to the Cold War foreign policies of both candidates suggests that each newspaper had strong views on Cold War foreign policy.

²⁴ Editorial, *The New York Times*, September 9, 1976.

²⁵ Editorial, *The New York Times*, September 9, 1976.

²⁶ David S. Myers, "Editorials and Foreign Affairs in the 1976 Presidential Campaign," *Journalism Quarterly*, Vol. 55, No. 1. (Autumn 1978) 92-99.

SECTION II

The New Cold War Foreign Policy and the Carter Administration

“Being confident of our own future, we are now free of that inordinate fear of communism which once led us to embrace any dictator who joined us in that fear. For too many years, we have been willing to adopt the flawed and erroneous principles and tactics of our adversaries, sometimes abandoning our own values for theirs. We have fought fire with fire, never thinking that fire is better quenched with water. This approach failed, with Vietnam the best example of its intellectual and moral poverty. But through failure, we have now found our way back to our own principles and values and we have regained our lost confidence.”²⁷

In 1976, the United States was still recovering from the embarrassment of Watergate and the horrors of the Vietnam War. As a result, American citizens chose not to re-elect President Ford. Instead, in the fall of 1976, the American public elected Jimmy Carter, the previously unknown democratic Governor of Georgia. During his presidential campaign, Carter used anonymity to his advantage. While President Ford focused on his White House accomplishments, Governor Carter promised the American people that he would “never tell a lie.”²⁸ As President, Gerald Ford had already made his Cold War foreign policy clear: he would continue the policies put in place by President Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. As a governor, Jimmy Carter had little foreign policy experience, and he often refused to take a clear stance on the Cold War. When Carter did discuss American foreign policy and the Cold War, his answers were broad and emphasized the importance of human rights. Governor Carter however quickly seized on the liberal elite media’s cry for change in American Cold War foreign policy. Once elected, it quickly became evident to Jimmy Carter (and to those around him) that

²⁷ Robert L. Pfaltzgraff Jr., “The Superpower Relationship and U. S. National Security Policy in the 1980s,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 457, (Sep. 1981): 190.

²⁸ Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-2006* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2008), 302.

his Cold War foreign policy would need to be more complex than a simple promise to focus on human rights. Consequently, President Carter turned to two men, Zbigniew Brzezinski and Cy Vance, for advice on how he could create a Cold War foreign policy that focused on human rights. The contrasting styles and beliefs of National Security Advisor Brzezinski and Secretary of State Vance became evident during United States negotiations with the Soviet Union about a second Strategic Arms Limitations Agreement. Eager to understand the new Cold War foreign policy of President Carter, many American newspapers devoted significant editorial space to SALT II.

Zbigniew Brzezinski was a polish-born expert on international relations. He had published several articles and books condemning the détente Cold War foreign policies of former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger including, *The Permanent Purge: Politics in Soviet Totalitarianism*.²⁹ Unlike Kissinger, Brzezinski steadfastly believed the Soviet Union to be untrustworthy and a constant threat to American security. Brzezinski was extremely critical of the original SALT treaty between the United States and the Soviet Union. He believed that both the United States and the Soviet Union “were still governed by the strategic doctrine of mutually assured destruction.”³⁰ Furthermore, Brzezinski was highly skeptical of the Soviet Union’s promise to “behave itself in Africa and the Middle East.”³¹ Brzezinski saw the Soviet Union’s aggressive tactics in the Middle East as a far more important area of Cold War foreign policy than the SALT II treaty. Ultimately, Brzezinski believed that the Soviet Union was solely responsible for international

²⁹ Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *The Permanent Purge: Politics in Soviet Totalitarianism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1956).

³⁰ Strobe Talbott, *Endgame: The Inside Story of Salt II* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 52.

³¹ Strobe Talbott, *Endgame*, 52.

instability. Consequently, his “view of arms control and Soviet-American relations was quite different from the one underlying Kissinger’s theory of détente. Kissinger believed arms control was an integral part of Soviet-American relations. . . Brzezinski saw SALT II as a way to enhance the stability of an essentially competitive relationship with the Soviet Union.”³² Unsurprisingly, National Security Advisor Brzezinski preferred to put SALT II negotiations aside and instead focus on issues such as the United States’ relationship with countries such as China, a tactic he believed would enrage the Soviet Union and offer the United States some form of protection.

Vance, on the other hand, viewed the United States’ relationship with the Soviet Union in a more positive light. While Brzezinski believed that “any crisis in the world was a Soviet challenge,”³³ Vance believed that any relationship of the United States’ with the Soviet Union should be rooted in straightforward negotiations and economic ties between the two countries. Consequently, Vance believed the SALT II treaty to be the most important part of President Carter’s initial Cold War foreign policy. Vance “saw SALT II as the central diplomatic issue and believed that no problem, even Russian aggressiveness in the Middle East, should be allowed to endanger arms talks.”³⁴ Furthermore, Vance believed he could use the promise of economic help to convince the Soviet Union to accept and implement Carter’s human rights agenda in their own foreign policies.

³² Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-2006* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2008), 302.

³³ Strobe Talbott, *Endgame: The Inside Story of Salt II* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 3.

³⁴ Dan Caldwell, *The Dynamics of Domestic Politics and Arms Control: The Salt II Treaty Ratification Debate* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 14.

Ultimately, the decision about how the United States would implement a new Cold War foreign policy came down to President Carter. Ultimately, his decision would be based on whether he chose to adhere to the pessimistic view of the Soviet Union promoted by Brzezinski or the optimistic view promoted by Vance. “Carter was not worried about conflicts, and relished their (i.e. Brzezinski’s and Vance’s) different ideas and lively debate. The roles were clear to Carter: Zbig would be the thinker, Cy would be the doer, and Jimmy Carter would be the decider.”³⁵ Unfortunately, President Carter initially chose neither view and instead took the middle road. His new Cold War foreign policy managed to take both a pessimistic view of the Soviet Union as well as an optimistic one. “As I have often said, our relationship with the Soviet Union is a mixture of cooperation and competition.”³⁶ Throughout the SALT II negotiations, President Carter attempted to find the middle ground in the drastically different proposals given to him by Brzezinski and Vance. Brzezinski insisted that any SALT II negotiations should be linked to other Soviet behavior (i.e. if the Soviets acted aggressively in the Middle East, Africa, or China, SALT II negotiations should be halted). Vance believed the SALT II negotiations were too important to be halted for any reason. President Carter’s conflicted new Cold War foreign policy received heavy criticism in several newspaper editorial sections across the country.

As soon as President Carter took office, negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union on SALT II began. President Carter’s initial proposal to the Soviet Union was quickly rejected. In his proposal (March, 1977) Carter included a

³⁵ Dan Caldwell, *The Dynamics of Domestic Politics and Arms Control: The Salt II Treaty Ratification Debate* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 14.

³⁶ Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-2006* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2008), 84.

comprehensive arms reduction plan (most of the reductions fell to the Soviet Union) and reaffirmed his commitment to human rights. The extremely liberal newspapers (*The New York Times* and *The Boston Globe*) that had enthusiastically supported Carter during his presidential campaign were again eager to endorse his new Cold War foreign policy. Both newspapers had gotten their way, and the country had a new President with a new Cold War foreign policy. They applauded both his hard line and his adherence to human rights. In March of 1977, *The Boston Globe* exclaimed, “President Carter has succeeded in establishing that American participation in accords, when they do come in the area of arms control, does not imply acceptance of Soviet mistreatment of her citizens.”³⁷ In May of 1977, *The New York Times* praised President Carter’s approach to the SALT II negotiations as “realistic and plausible.”³⁸

Both *The Washington Post* and *The New York Post* also initially supported President Carter’s new Cold War foreign policy (i.e. his first round of SALT II negotiations). On April 5, 1977, *The Washington Post* editorial section reported, “President Carter posed the Russians with some tough choices. They chose not to respond.”³⁹ Furthermore, on April 9, 1977, *The Washington Post* again endorsed President Carter’s initial SALT II tactics. “President Carter can hardly be blamed for wanting to establish a reputation for toughness in dealing with the Russians, considering how previous presidents have suffered politically from charges of giving Moscow all the best of it in negotiating various agreements.”⁴⁰

³⁷ Editorial, *The Boston Globe*, March 22, 1977.

³⁸ Editorial, *The New York Times*, May 31, 1977.

³⁹ Editorial, *The Washington Post*, April 5, 1977.

⁴⁰ Editorial, *The Washington Post*, April 9, 1977.

The Los Angeles Times, initially chose to support the SALT II negotiation policies of Jimmy Carter. On April 6, 1977, *The Los Angeles Times* editorial section remarked, “the American proposals represent a reasonable basis for good faith negotiations if that is what Moscow wants.”⁴¹ Later, in June, *The Los Angeles Times* commented, “the Carter policy represents a good-faith American effort to establish a positive negotiating atmosphere, which strikes us as intelligent.”⁴²

While many newspaper editorials supported President Carter’s initial SALT II proposals, some criticized President Carter and his ideas. The conservative newspapers that initially promoted a Cold War foreign policy based on détente and containment (as articulated by Gerald Ford) were against the new Cold War foreign policies of President Carter. However, the criticism in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* was muted. In fact, other than criticizing some of the comments President Carter made (regarding SALT II) while visiting with members of Congress, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* chose not to use their editorial section to cover President Carter’s initial SALT II proposals. The criticism in *The Chicago Tribune* however was harsh and unrelenting. For example, on April 2, 1977, *The Chicago Tribune* commented that the foreign policy of the United States was, “morally and intellectually bankrupt.”⁴³ Furthermore, on April 6, 1977, *The Chicago Tribune* criticized President Carter’s initial, failed SALT II proposal. “President Carter is standing in the shambles of his SALT II [proposal], vowing he will never surrender on human rights.”⁴⁴

⁴¹ Editorial, *The Los Angeles Times*, April 6, 1977.

⁴² Editorial, *The Los Angeles Times*, June 7, 1977.

⁴³ Editorial, *The Chicago Tribune*, April 2, 1977.

⁴⁴ Editorial, *The Chicago Tribune*, April 6, 1977.

Two extremely conservative newspapers, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Daily Oklahoman* offered continued criticism of President Carter's initial SALT II negotiations. Both *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Daily Oklahoman* sought a return to détente and containment. On May 25, 1977, *The Daily Oklahoman* sharply criticized both President Carter's SALT II proposals and his overall Cold War foreign policy. *The Daily Oklahoman* devoted a significant amount of the editorial section that day to praising the "continuity of American foreign policy which has been one of the remarkable features of our government."⁴⁵ The paper concluded that both President Nixon and President Ford had adhered to the Cold War foreign policy of the past. However, the paper feared that the radical Cold War foreign policies of President Carter were a departure from those of the past and put the United States in significant danger. In June of 1977, *The Daily Oklahoman* called President Carter's commitment to human rights laughable, "for all his championing of human rights elsewhere, President Carter has been markedly quiet about the 20,000 or more political prisoners rotting in Cuban jails."⁴⁶

By 1979, President Carter had seen debacles in Africa, the Middle East, China, and in the Panama Canal threaten his SALT II proposal. The events called into question his initial belief that the Soviet Union could be trusted. President Carter was also receiving heavy criticism from both conservative and liberal newspaper editorial sections over his new Cold War foreign policy. As a result of the heavy criticism he was receiving, President Carter began to alter his Cold War foreign policy, shifting it to the right. Consequently, President Carter's 1979 SALT II proposal was at odds with his evolving Cold War foreign policy. Like Secretary of State Cy Vance, President Carter

⁴⁵ Editorial, *The Daily Oklahoman*, May 25, 1977.

⁴⁶ Editorial, *The Daily Oklahoman*, May 1, 1977.

initially had believed that the SALT II negotiations were the most important part of his new Cold War foreign policy. However, the Soviet Union's aggressive behavior in both Africa and the Middle East had opened his eyes. Carter's Cold War foreign policy adopted a more comprehensive approach as National Security Advisor Brzezinski had envisioned. It also began moving more towards the right. No longer could President Carter reconcile arms reduction negotiations with the aggressive behavior of the Soviet Union. Consequently, by 1979, President Carter was forced to increase defense spending. As a result, President Carter's SALT II proposal began to look nothing like his Cold War foreign policy. Many people, including the elite news media (i.e., newspaper editorial writers) became confused and disenchanted with President Carter's SALT II proposals as a result. By 1979, almost no newspaper editorial section, including those of extremely liberal newspapers (*The New York Times* and *The Boston Globe*) supported President Carter's SALT II proposal.

In a March 25, 1979 editorial, *The New York Times* indicated that Carter's latest SALT II proposal would require the United States to give up on important missile technology. *The New York Times* editorial section was stunned that President Carter would concede such an important part of the United States' defense to the Soviet Union. "If SALT II prevents our exploiting an important technical advantage, can we afford it?"⁴⁷ Carter initially believed SALT II to be so important that he ignored Brzezinski's mistrust of the Soviet Union. In April, *The New York Times* indicated that even if President Carter was able to get a SALT II Treaty signed, it did not believe the President would even have the support of his own party in the Senate (needed for the Treaty to be

⁴⁷ Editorial, *The New York Times*, March 25, 1979.

ratified)⁴⁸. Meanwhile, *The Boston Globe* was equally unsupportive of President Carter's SALT II proposal by 1979. In January of 1979, President Carter gave a State of the Union Address in which he discussed his SALT II proposal. The next morning, *The Boston Globe* criticized the President's remarks on the SALT II ratification efforts: "On foreign policy, President Carter chose to skirt the crisis in Iran and made only a brief pass through the Mideast situation. His strongest remarks were on the need for SALT ratification. Yet even here he failed to seize upon the nation's undoubted thirst for arms control."⁴⁹ On September 25, 1979, *The Boston Globe* called President Carter's SALT II proposal inadequate and urged the Senate not to accept the proposal.⁵⁰

By 1979, both *The New York Post* and *The Washington Post* had given up supporting President Carter's SALT II proposal. In fact, in August, *The New York Post* was calling for a return to détente and applauding former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's testimony on the SALT II Treaty that had been recently signed by President Carter and was awaiting ratification by the Senate. Both Kissinger and the *New York Post* were appalled with the terms President Carter had agreed to in the SALT II Treaty. "Rarely in history has a nation so passively accepted so radical a change in the military balance."⁵¹ *The Washington Post's* editorial section was equally critical of President Carter's SALT II proposal: "In our darkest fantasies, we sometimes support Carter's

⁴⁸ Editorial, *The New York Times*, April 11, 1979.

⁴⁹ Editorial, *The Boston Globe*, March 14, 1979.

⁵⁰ Editorial, *The Boston Globe*, September 25, 1979.

⁵¹ Editorial, *The New York Post*, August 1, 1979.

SALT II proposal.”⁵² Even the neutral *Los Angeles Times* was critical of President Carter’s SALT II Treaty by 1979.

However, in 1979, the harshest criticism of President Carter’s SALT II Treaty came from the conservative newspaper editorial sections (*The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Daily Oklahoman*). On February 22, 1979, *The Daily Oklahoman* called President Carter’s SALT II proposal “a tangle of contradictions that will only add to the global perception of the United States as a bumbling, impotent giant.”⁵³ In May, *The Chicago Tribune* applauded the efforts of former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger (as well as President Carter’s opponents) for their decision to oppose President Carter’s SALT II Treaty. “We can thank the people who now oppose SALT II for awakening the country to the seriousness of the Soviet threat and the possibility of U.S. weakness.”⁵⁴

The shifting of support away from President Carter’s SALT II proposal (and subsequent SALT II Treaty) was an early indication that newspaper editorial sections across the country were beginning to lose faith in President Carter’s overall Cold War foreign policy. Newspaper editorial sections were no longer willing to accept President Carter’s initial decision to treat the Soviet Union as both friend and foe. Like many American citizens, newspaper editorial writers were beginning to fear the Soviet Union in a way reminiscent of earlier Cold War times. Consequently, the liberal newspapers began to question President Carter’s SALT II proposals. Meanwhile, conservative newspaper editorial sections were openly critical of President Carter’s SALT II proposals

⁵² Editorial, *The Washington Post*, May 10, 1979.

⁵³ Editorial, *The Daily Oklahoman*, February 22, 1979.

⁵⁴ Editorial, *The Chicago Tribune*, May 17, 1979.

and by 1979 were calling for a return to the Cold War foreign policies of past presidents (Nixon and Ford). Due to national unrest over his Cold War foreign policy, President Carter was forced to make a choice (between the policies of Secretary of State Vance and those of National Security Advisor Brzezinski). The Soviet Union's behavior in Africa (and later in Afghanistan) forced President Carter to side with National Security Advisor Brzezinski, and Carter's Cold War foreign policy shifted to one that focused primarily on the threats posed by the Soviet Union. As a result, President Carter had no choice but to begin a competition with the Soviet Union. President Carter's new Cold War foreign policy set the stage for Ronald Reagan and the 1980's.

SECTION III

President Carter's Cold War Foreign Policy Response to the Soviet Union's 1979 Invasion of Afghanistan

Unfortunately, the late 1970's were one of the worst times in American history for a President to have an ambiguous foreign policy. By 1979, President Carter's attempt to make human rights an integral part of his Cold War foreign policy had failed miserably. Meanwhile, his decision to appoint two high-ranking foreign policy officials (National Defense Advisor Brzezinski and Secretary of State Vance) with contrasting Cold War perspectives had caused his Cold War foreign policy to slip into disarray. By the end of President Carter's first term in office, not even liberal newspaper editorial sections supported his Cold War foreign policy: "Rather than serving as a rallying point for the administration, SALT II became a lightning rod that attracted attacks on the administration, on détente, and on SALT [in general]."⁵⁵ The criticism already being heaped upon President Carter's Cold War foreign policy (by both liberals and conservatives) exploded with the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. If the tense, often nonsensical, SALT II negotiations were bad for President Carter's human rights based Cold War foreign policy, the 1979 Soviet invasion was even worse. After the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan, President Carter had no choice but to alter his Cold War foreign policy.

On January 4, 1980, President Carter responded to the Soviet Union's December 27, 1979 invasion of Afghanistan. In a nationwide address, President Carter stated, "a

⁵⁵ R.L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington D.C.: Brookings, 1985), 742.

Soviet-occupied Afghanistan threatens both Iran and Pakistan and is a stepping stone to possible control over much of the world's oil supply.”⁵⁶ President Carter followed his January 4th address with a harsh and direct message to the Soviet Union during his 1980 State of the Union Address during which he unveiled the Carter Doctrine. “Any attempt by an outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.”⁵⁷ President Carter's State of the Union Address sent a clear message to Americans and Soviets alike -- the Cold War foreign policies of the Carter Administration had changed drastically. President Carter's new Cold War foreign policy would include containment and military force, two components the President had previously promised his Cold War foreign policy would never feature prominently.

The Carter Administration's altered Cold War foreign policy called for a quick and harsh response to the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan. After news of the invasion, President Carter halted domestic grain sale to the Soviet Union, withdrew his SALT II Treaty from the Senate, suspended the sale of technology to the Soviet Union, curtailed Soviet fishing privileges, and asked Congress to drastically increase the defense budget of the United States. President Carter also created a “Rapid Defense Force”⁵⁸ and re-mandated draft registration. By 1980, President Carter had introduced Presidential Directive 59, “which authorized American strategic forces to switch to a counterforce strategy, targeting nuclear weapons in their silos, indicating a dangerous shift in nuclear

⁵⁶ President Carter, Speech, January 4, 1980.

⁵⁷ President Carter, State of the Union Address, January 23, 1980.

⁵⁸ Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-2006* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2008), 315.

policy from deterrence to one of a first-strike.”⁵⁹ In August of 1980, President Carter declared the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan “the greatest threat to world peace [since World War II.]”⁶⁰

President Carter faced heavy criticism from both Democrats and Republicans as his Cold War foreign policy shifted from human rights to containment and military build-up after the Soviet Union’s Afghanistan invasion. Republicans criticized the President’s new Cold War foreign policy as being “too little, too late.”⁶¹ Many Republicans, including Presidential candidate Ronald Reagan, believed the age of détente was dead. Meanwhile, many prominent Democrats (including Senator Edward Kennedy -- one of the President’s democratic rivals) wondered if President Carter’s reaction to the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan was an overreaction. Although politicians from both political parties were quick to criticize the Carter Administration’s new Cold War foreign policy, newspaper editorialists were even quicker to do so. Conservative newspaper editorials criticized President Carter’s new Cold War foreign policy as not drastic enough and as being long overdue. Some conservative newspaper editorialists even criticized President Carter’s new Cold War foreign policy as one that was already outdated. Specifically, they argued that détente, a Cold War foreign policy principle they had strongly supported only four years earlier (when supporting the Cold War foreign policies of Presidents Nixon and Ford), was now insufficient. Such newspaper editorials supported Ronald Reagan and promoted the idea of an arms race. The support President Carter had received from liberal newspaper editorial sections in 1976 had evaporated by

⁵⁹ Stephen Zunes, “Carter’s Less-Known Legacy,” *Commondreams.org* (October, 2002).

⁶⁰ President Carter, Speech, August, 1979.

⁶¹ John Dumbrell, *American Foreign Policy: Carter to Clinton* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 50.

late 1979. Universally, liberal newspaper editorialists condemned President Carter's vacillating Cold War foreign policy. Some liberal newspaper editorialists even agreed with their conservative counterparts, calling détente dead.

During the 1976 presidential election, two of the nation's most liberal newspapers, *The New York Times* and *The Boston Globe*, had offered President Carter's human rights based Cold War foreign policy their strong support. As human rights faded from President Carter's Cold War foreign policy as a consequence of the Soviet Union's behavior in the Middle East, Africa, and China, both *The New York Times* and *The Boston Globe* kept their criticism of the President to a minimum. However, by the time President Carter's SALT II Treaty was ready for Senate approval in 1979, neither *The New York Times* nor *The Boston Globe* could contain their criticism of President Carter's Cold War foreign policy. Both newspapers' editorial sections reacted to the United States' response to the Soviet Union in a similar way. Both saw President Carter's Cold War foreign policy as one in disarray. Consequently, neither was surprised when the Soviet Union chose to invade Afghanistan.

On December 29, 1979, *The Boston Globe* openly questioned President Carter's Cold War foreign policy. Many members of *The Boston Globe's* editorial staff believed that the United States' inept Cold War foreign policy made the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan possible: "The Soviet Union, for all its deserved reputation for heavy-handedness, does not toss troops around the world just for the sake of [it]. . . The United States is in no position to respond immediately, other than to protest."⁶² On January 4, 1980, *The New York Times* responded to the Soviet Union's decision to invade

⁶² Editorial, *The Boston Globe*, December 29, 1979.

Afghanistan by writing, “the United States is so weak that the Russians have no fear of an American response to any move they make. . . The Soviets are following a master plan toward world conquest.”⁶³ On January 6, 1980, *the New York Times* continued to criticize the Carter Administration’s Cold War foreign policy: “The Carter Administration has made just about every mistake it could [with the Soviet Union], it has defied all the lessons we have learned about the Soviets since the last world war.”⁶⁴ Both papers believed President Carter’s ambiguous Cold War foreign policy played a role in the Soviet Union’s initial decision to invade Afghanistan. On January 23, 1980, President Carter presented his altered Cold War foreign policy to the world during his 1980 State of the Union Address. During his speech, President Carter introduced the Carter Doctrine, which specifically responded to his liberal critics. However, neither *The New York Times* nor *The Boston Globe* was satisfied with President Carter’s new Cold War foreign policy. By mid-year, both papers were calling the Carter Administration’s new Cold War foreign policy (and its response to the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan) an overreaction. Both papers pushed for a return to containment, a conservative strategy popular during the time of Nixon and Ford. However, both were against an arms race.

Not surprisingly, less liberal newspapers (*The Washington Post* and *The New York Post*) were equally unimpressed with President Carter’s altered Cold War foreign policy. However, they disagreed with their liberal counterparts (*The New York Times* and *The Boston Globe*). They argued that détente was over, and so was containment. Both *The Washington Post* and *The New York Post* favored a military build-up, an idea popular

⁶³ Editorial, *The New York Times*, January 4, 1980.

⁶⁴ Editorial, *The New York Times*, January 6, 1980.

with both conservative politicians and conservative newspaper editorialists. However, neither *The Washington Post* nor *The New York Post* favored a military build-up as extreme as that favored by some of the more conservative newspapers. For example, a *Washington Post* editorial written December 30, 1979, just three days after the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, was entitled, “Détente Is Dead.”⁶⁵ Throughout 1980, *The Washington Post* continued to publish editorials that contained similar ideology, and *The New York Post* published similar editorials. These editorials accused President Carter’s new Cold War foreign policy, which included containment, of being outdated. Like many other newspaper editorial sections across the country, *The New York Post* saw the writing on the wall: détente between the United States and the Soviet Union was over. When commenting on President Carter’s Cold War foreign policy before the 1980 Presidential election, *The New York Post* suggested that the policy of deterrence was no longer working. “Afghanistan and quite possibly soon the entire Persian Gulf – shows the opposite is happening. Nobody is being deterred. . . The lack of readiness of our armed forces is scandalous.”⁶⁶ Throughout 1980, *The Los Angeles Times* sided with most liberal newspapers. That is, they criticized President Carter’s new Cold War foreign policy, but not to the extent seen in many conservative newspapers. For example, when commenting on the Carter Doctrine, *The Los Angeles Times* suggested that President Carter was being “much too tentative.”⁶⁷

Not only did the conservative newspaper editorial sections (*The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Daily Oklahoman*)

⁶⁵ Editorial, *The Washington Post*, December 30, 1979.

⁶⁶ Editorial, *The New York Post*, October 17, 1980.

⁶⁷ Editorial, *The Los Angeles Times*, January 27, 1980.

reject President Carter's altered Cold War foreign policy, they promoted an arms race with the Soviet Union. Only four years earlier, all four papers had criticized President Carter for his decision to move away from détente. By 1980, all four newspapers were rejecting détente in favor of a military build-up. On January 7, 1980, *The Wall Street Journal* criticized President Carter's decision to punish the Soviet Union only by economic sanctions: "If the proverbial man from Mars had arrived just in time to listen to the sanctions President Carter outlines Friday night, we wonder if he ever would have guessed that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was a *military* [emphasis in the original text] operation. . . The American reaction should be military."⁶⁸ On January 24, 1980, *The Chicago Tribune* responded to President Carter's new Cold War foreign policy with disdain. The editorial writers at *The Chicago Tribune* did not believe that President Carter's altered Cold War foreign policy went far enough. They believed the United States needed to engage in, "an extensive buildup of conventional [military] forces."⁶⁹ Furthermore, on August 14, 1980, *The Chicago Tribune* continued their assault of President Carter's altered Cold War foreign policy. "This sort of harebrained blundering has already damaged international confidence in American foreign policy so badly that another example of it will not make matters worse. But when will President Carter learn that his foreign policy apparatus is a shambles, and that it must be corrected?"⁷⁰

On January 6, 1980, *The Daily Oklahoman* called for the United States to "strive to regain the advantage it frittered away [during the Carter administration] in a one-sided

⁶⁸ Editorial, *Wall Street Journal*, January 7, 1980.

⁶⁹ Editorial, *The Chicago Tribune*, January 24, 1980.

⁷⁰ Editorial, *The Chicago Tribune*, August 14, 1980.

pursuit of ‘détente.’”⁷¹ *The Daily Oklahoman* claimed the Soviet Union had never really believed in détente, they had simply said they did, and the Carter Administration had been duped. As a result, *The Daily Oklahoman* believed the Soviet Union was already well ahead in an arms race in which they believed the United States must participate. Meanwhile, in August *The Philadelphia Inquirer* chastised President Carter’s new Cold War foreign policy saying, “it is time for firmness.”⁷²

President Carter’s reaction to the Soviet Union’s 1979 invasion of Afghanistan was somewhat unexpected. When he took office in 1976, President Carter was intent on including human rights in his Cold War foreign policy. Even as events unfolded in Africa, China, and the Middle East, President Carter was reluctant to change his Cold War foreign policy. He saw negotiation with the Soviet Union as the key to success. Consequently, he spent a large amount of his Cold War foreign policy efforts engaging in SALT II negotiations with the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union’s 1979 invasion of Afghanistan finally changed President Carter’s mind. Due to the invasion, President Carter came to believe that a successful Cold War foreign policy must include containment and a military build-up. The Soviet invasion also triggered an interesting reaction in newspaper editorial sections across the country. It caused liberal newspapers to completely turn against President Carter and to support a policy (i.e. détente) they had universally lobbied against only 4 years earlier. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union’s military action in Afghanistan also caused an interesting reaction in conservative newspaper editorial sections across the country in that they abandoned their support of détente in favor of a large military build-up.

⁷¹ Editorial, *The Daily Oklahoman*, January 6, 1980.

⁷² Editorial, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 8, 1980.

SECTION IV

The 1980 Olympic Boycott

President Carter's new, tough Cold War foreign policy was introduced in January 1980 in the form of the Carter Doctrine. In the Carter Doctrine, President Carter made it clear that he was willing to use both economic and military measures to punish the Soviet Union for invading Afghanistan. Although President Carter's new hard line on the Soviet Union solicited many responses from newspaper editorialists across the country, it was his threat to boycott the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow that received the most newspaper editorial coverage. With his approval rating already slipping, President Carter decided to issue a threat to boycott the 1980 Summer Olympics. Most newspaper editorials had already heavily criticized President Carter's new Cold War foreign policy as being either too late and not extreme enough (conservative newspaper editorials) or an overreaction (liberal newspaper editorials). Consequently, it is somewhat surprising that, in the wake of such heavy criticism, President Carter chose to threaten a boycott of the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow. However, once the decision was made, it was met with a surprising amount of support. The same newspapers that had questioned President Carter's grain sanctions (many newspaper editorials believed grain sanctions hurt American farmers) and return to détente now praised his decision to threaten a boycott of the 1980 Summer Olympics. To understand why many newspaper editorials renounced President Carter's altered Cold War foreign policy but supported his Olympic boycott threat, it is necessary to examine the relationship between sports (specifically the Olympics) and politics.

Until 1923, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) sought to “avoid all interference in the political sphere.”⁷³ The IOC was well aware that the same international appeal that made the Olympics so popular also made them an easy political target. “In an imperfect world, if participation in sport is to be stopped every time the politicians violate the laws of humanity, there will never be any international contests.”⁷⁴ Before to 1923, the IOC encountered few problems with its policy. However, as coverage of the Olympics grew across the globe, countries began to use the Olympics as a political tool. Specifically, the Olympic Games became a tool many countries used as a form of political protest throughout the Cold War. In 1952, in Helsinki, the East Germans were denied the opportunity to participate in the Olympics. In 1956, three international events led to an Olympic boycott by several countries. Egypt, Lebanon, and Iraq boycotted the 1956 games to protest British and French involvement in the Suez Crisis. The Soviet Union’s mismanagement of the Hungarian Revolution produced a boycott by Spain, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. Finally, China boycotted the 1956 Summer Games because the Republic of China was allowed to participate. In 1972, the Munich Games continued even after the death of eleven Israeli athletes. Twenty-six countries boycotted the 1976 Winter Olympics after New Zealand was allowed to participate (New Zealand had recently played a rugby match in South Africa, a violation of Olympic rules).

Thus, President Carter did not introduce political protest to the Olympic games. He did however bring political protest (in terms of the Cold War) to the forefront of

⁷³ Derek L. Hulme, Jr., *The Political Olympics: Moscow, Afghanistan, and the 1980 U.S. Boycott* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1990), 10.

⁷⁴ Hulme, *The Political Olympics*, 11.

American athletics during the Spring of 1980. President Carter's decision to threaten a boycott of the 1980 Summer Olympics was primarily based on his new Cold War foreign policy. Primarily, President Carter hoped to use a United States boycott of the Moscow Summer Olympics, as a way of punishing the Soviet Union for its 1979 invasion of Afghanistan. President Carter also believed that a United States boycott of a Soviet held event would show the rest of the world that his Cold War foreign policy was strong. However, President Carter's main battle was at home. The success or failure of his proposed Olympic boycott was in the hands of the American people. Realizing that many Americans (including most newspaper editorialists) did not support his new Cold War foreign policy, President Carter sought to connect his proposed Olympic boycott to domestic policy. To do so, President Carter turned to history. He asked Americans to view the proposed boycott like past American protests, specifically like the Olympic protests during World War II. In doing so, President Carter sought to fuel his proposed boycott with American pride. A January 1980 Gallup poll proved that President Carter's campaign to connect domestic American spirit to his boycott threat was successful: "The poll found that 75 percent of those surveyed favored a shift in sites, and, should that fail, 56 percent supported a boycott."⁷⁵ Once President Carter realized he had successfully transformed his foreign policy by using a domestic policy (the threat of an Olympic boycott), he moved forward aggressively and with substantial support.

Carter quickly solicited and received the support of the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) in late January of 1980. With the backing of both the American public and the USOC in place, President Carter set a February deadline for a Soviet troop

⁷⁵ Derek L. Hulme, Jr., *The Political Olympics: Moscow, Afghanistan, and the 1980 U.S. Boycott* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1990), 10.

pullout from Afghanistan. If the Soviet Union did not remove its troops from Afghanistan by late February, the United States would not participate in the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow. When the Soviet Union did not remove its troops from Afghanistan by President Carter's deadline, the President instituted his boycott with broad public support. By the time March 1980 arrived, President Carter's Olympic boycott had received a large amount of newspaper editorial support. By making the boycott a domestic issue, President Carter was able not only to bring his threatened Olympic boycott to fruition in March of 1980, but was able to do so with widespread support. In fact, of the newspaper editorial sections surveyed, only *The Daily Oklahoman* disagreed with President Carter's Olympic boycott.

Although both *The New York Times* and *The Boston Globe* disagreed with President Carter's altered Cold War foreign policy (i.e. a return to containment and an increase in defense spending), both supported his 1980 Olympic boycott. By making the Olympic boycott a national pride issue, President Carter was able to isolate it from his unpopular new Cold War foreign policy. For example, on January 16, 1980, a *New York Times* editorial urged President Carter to boycott the 1980 Summer Olympics regardless of what transpired in Afghanistan. "We should pull out now, ending uncertainty among American athletes and serving notice on the Russians that, no matter what happens in Afghanistan, their offense against international law will not be quickly forgotten."⁷⁶ Meanwhile, *The Boston Globe* first supported President Carter's proposal to shift the 1980 Summer Olympics from Moscow to a neutral site. When it became apparent that such a move was unlikely, *The Boston Globe* also supported an Olympic boycott. Later in January, *The New York Times* continued to support the Olympic boycott citing both

⁷⁶ Editorial, *The New York Times*, January 16, 1980.

American national pride as well as the negative effect a United States boycott would have on the Soviet economy: “The biggest loser from an American boycott might be the Soviet Union itself. Without Americans among them to help defray the costs, the Russians could be hard pressed to run the games in the black.”⁷⁷

Both *The Washington Post* and *The New York Post* also condemned President Carter’s new Cold War foreign policy but supported his proposed Olympic boycott. On January 6, 1980, *The Washington Post* wrote, “to hold the 1980 Games in Moscow would be an honor for the Soviets. To have the United States team there and competing would be a dishonor to America.”⁷⁸ Furthermore, later in January, *The Washington Post* published another editorial supporting President Carter’s proposed Summer Olympic boycott. In the editorial, *The Washington Post* cites the same historical examples that President Carter used when trying to persuade the general public that an Olympic boycott was necessary: “A successful Olympiad would persuade the Soviet leadership that it has little to fear from the outside world, no matter what it has done in Afghanistan (Hitler reoccupied the Rhineland a few months before the 1936 Olympics). Western Olympic committees may declare that by going to Moscow they are not endorsing the Soviets, but the Russians will surely see it differently.”⁷⁹ Finally, after President Carter outlined his proposed Olympic boycott during his State of the Union Address, *The New York Post* called it an American duty to boycott the 1980 Summer Games.

The Los Angeles Times also was a strong supporter of President Carter’s proposed Olympic boycott. On January 18, 1980, the *Los Angeles Times* carried an editorial that

⁷⁷ Editorial, *The New York Times*, January 16, 1980.

⁷⁸ Editorial, *The Washington Post*, January 6, 1980.

⁷⁹ Editorial, *The Washington Post*, January 10, 1980.

stated, “the United States should withdraw from the 1980 summer Olympic Games in Moscow in further protest against the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan. It should withdraw as added proof of the seriousness with which it views this aggression.”⁸⁰ In April, *The Los Angeles Times* continued to support President Carter’s proposed Olympic boycott, calling the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan, “an affront to decency.”⁸¹ In the same editorial, *The Los Angeles Times* argued that a boycott “is well worth pursuing.”⁸²

While most conservative newspaper editorial columns (*The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Chicago Tribune*, and *The Wall Street Journal*) strenuously disagreed with President Carter’s new Cold War foreign policy, most supported his decision to boycott the 1980 Summer Olympics. On January 28, 1980, *The Chicago Tribune* published an editorial in which it supported the proposed boycott: “Perhaps it is true that by boycotting the games we would be injecting politics into the Olympics. But it is just as true that if the games proceed normally, they will serve the much worse political purposes of the Soviet Union.”⁸³ A day later, on January 29, 1980, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* showed its support for President Carter’s proposed Olympic boycott in its editorial section by writing, “boycotting the Moscow Olympics is one of the least painful choices the American people face if Soviet aggressiveness is not met with skill and firmness.”⁸⁴ Finally, on January 7, 1980, *The Wall Street Journal* offered its support for

⁸⁰ Editorial, *The Los Angeles Times*, January 18, 1980.

⁸¹ Editorial, *The Los Angeles Times*, April 15, 1980.

⁸² Editorial, *The Los Angeles Times*, April 15, 1980.

⁸³ Editorial, *The Chicago Tribune*, January 28, 1980.

⁸⁴ Editorial, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 29, 1980.

an Olympic boycott: “Afghanistan shows how brutally [the Soviet Union] is willing to use its growing power to accomplish its ambition. [An Olympic boycott] would provide a clear opportunity to rally the Western people.”⁸⁵ By making his Olympic boycott a domestic issue, President Carter was able to avoid much of the criticism he normally received from conservative newspaper editorial columns.

President Carter’s proposed Olympic boycott was supported by many conservative newspapers, but it was not supported by all of them. Specifically, *The Daily Oklahoman* criticized both President Carter’s altered Cold War foreign policy and his proposal to boycott the 1980 Summer Olympic Games in Moscow. On January 17, 1980, in response to President Carter’s proposed Olympic boycott, *The Daily Oklahoman* published an editorial that stated, “A unilateral U.S. boycott of the Olympics would be more a placebo for American anger than an effective foreign policy tool.”⁸⁶ *The Daily Oklahoman* clearly saw President Carter’s proposed Olympic boycott as foreign rather than domestic policy.

President Carter garnered a large amount of newspaper editorial support for his proposed Olympic boycott because he successfully made it a domestic rather than a foreign policy issue. He did so by connecting the Olympic boycott to national pride using history. By invoking the sacrifices athletes like Ted Williams and Joe Lewis made during World War II, President Carter was able to gain the support of the American people. As the public began to support President Carter’s proposed Olympic boycott, so did many newspaper editorials. Although most newspaper editorial sections disagreed

⁸⁵ Editorial, *Wall Street Journal*, January 7, 1980.

⁸⁶ Editorial, *The Daily Oklahoman*, January 17, 1980.

with the altered Cold War foreign policy that President Carter unveiled during his January 23, 1980 State of the Union Address, most did not connect his proposed Olympic ban to the new foreign policy. As a result President Carter's strong push for a boycott of the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow was successful. The failure of President Carter's altered Cold War foreign policy (in the form of the Carter Doctrine) and the success of his Olympic boycott shows the division that existed in American newspaper editorials. While some of President Carter's domestic policies were still supported by newspaper editorialists, his Cold War foreign policy was not. Newspaper editorial sections across the country were clearly ready for a change in Cold War foreign policy. Liberal newspaper editorial sections were calling for a return to détente, a policy they had fought against during the 1976 presidential election. Meanwhile, conservative newspaper editorial sections were eager to end containment. Furthermore, by 1980, conservative newspaper editorials were calling détente, a policy they had wholeheartedly supported during the 1976 Presidential election, dead. Conservative newspaper editorial sections wanted the United States to start a second Cold War and engage the Soviet Union in a military arms race.

SECTION V

Cold War Foreign Policy and the 1980 Presidential Election

The 1980 Presidential election came at a time in American history when Cold War foreign policy was extremely important. Consequently, the Cold War foreign policies of both candidates, Jimmy Carter (D) and Ronald Reagan (R), received a significant amount of newspaper editorial coverage. As in 1976, Cold War foreign policy discussions dominated the editorial sections of many newspapers during coverage of the presidential election. President Carter spent most of 1980 trying to move his Cold War foreign policy from the left to the right side of the political spectrum. Ronald Reagan, President Carter's Republican challenger, spent much of his energy attempting to convince the American public that his Cold War foreign policy was already on the conservative side and therefore better suited to protect America. Newspaper editorial sections across the country had strong opinions. Like most American citizens, newspaper editorialists had seen President Carter's human rights based Cold War foreign policy fail. As a result, an almost universal disdain existed among newspaper editorial sections regarding President Carter's Cold War foreign policy. Liberal newspaper editorials began to promote a Cold War foreign policy that included a return to containment, a policy they had strenuously opposed to during the 1976 presidential campaign. Meanwhile, conservative newspaper editorial writers promoted a Cold War foreign policy that was founded on an aggressive military build-up. Although most liberal newspapers condemned President Carter's ambiguous Cold War foreign policy, only *The New York Post* was ready to embrace Ronald Reagan's Cold War foreign policy, which

included a massive military build-up. Consequently, liberal newspapers again endorsed President Carter although some refused to endorse his Cold War foreign policy. Even a conservative newspaper, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, was so concerned about the military based foreign policy of Ronald Reagan that they chose to support President Carter in 1980. By 1979, most conservative newspapers had shifted their view on Cold War foreign policy from that of containment to one of military build-up, in stark contrast to their views during the 1976 presidential election. For the most part, conservative newspapers endorsed the Cold War foreign policies of Ronald Reagan.

President Carter entered the White House in 1976 intent on implementing a Cold War foreign policy “that focused on global North-South issues, nuclear arms control, and promoted human rights.”⁸⁷ By 1980, it was evident that President Carter had failed. The Soviet Union showed little respect for President Carter’s Cold War foreign policy between 1976 and 1980. In 1979, the Soviet Union signed President Carter’s SALT II Treaty and then proceeded to invade Afghanistan. By late 1979, even President Carter was ready to admit defeat: “The action of the Soviets has made a more dramatic change in my opinion of what the Soviets’ ultimate goals are than anything they’ve done in the previous time I’ve been in office.”⁸⁸ With the introduction of the Carter doctrine in January of 1980, President Carter began his quick transition (in terms of Cold War foreign policy) from left to right. By re-implementing containment, asking Congress to increase defense spending, creating a Rapid Deployment Force, signing Presidential Decision Directive 59 (limited nuclear war fighting), and asking for an Olympic boycott

⁸⁷ John Dumbrell, *American Foreign Policy: Carter to Clinton* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 50.

⁸⁸ Andrew E. Busch, *Reagan’s Victory: The Presidential Election of 1980 and the Rise of the Right* (Topeka, University of Kansas Press, 2005), 23.

President Carter had quickly shifted his Cold War foreign policy from peace and negotiation to one reminiscent of earlier Cold Warriors. President Carter was attempting to shift his Cold War foreign policy right, a position already occupied by Republican challenger Ronald Reagan.

Governor Reagan's Cold War foreign policy was relatively simple. Ronald Reagan believed the only way to contain the Soviet Union was to prevent them from expanding. To do so, Reagan proposed a massive increase in defense spending that would lead to an arms race with the Soviet Union. Furthermore, Reagan disagreed with the détente strategies used by Presidents Nixon and Ford. Reagan steadfastly believed that the Soviet Union was using détente to hoodwink the United States. Consequently, Governor Reagan did not believe the SALT negotiations being conducted by President Carter were worthwhile.

Although both *The New York Times* and *The Boston Globe* believed President Carter had mishandled the United States' Cold War foreign policy during his first term as President, neither wanted the United States Cold War foreign policy to look like the one being proposed by Ronald Reagan. Instead, as early as 1979, both *The New Times* and *The Boston Globe* urged President Carter to change his Cold War foreign policy. In early 1980, President Carter did so, introducing the Carter Doctrine. Although both papers still chastised President Carter's mishandling of America's Cold War foreign policy, both were pleased with his decision to change his Cold War foreign policy and consequently supported his re-election. On October 30, 1980, *The Boston Globe* published an editorial supporting the re-election of President Carter: "When the pluses and minuses of Carter's

foreign policy are weighed, they hardly seem a disaster.”⁸⁹ Meanwhile, *The Washington Post* continued its support of President Carter and his changing Cold War foreign policy. However on October 30, 1980, *The Washington Post* noted that it only supported President Carter’s changing Cold War foreign policy because they viewed Governor Reagan’s alternative to be dangerous.⁹⁰

Although Governor Reagan had lost the support of *The Philadelphia Inquirer* as a result of his “militaristic”⁹¹ Cold War foreign policy, he received the support of *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Daily Oklahoman*, and, the usually liberal *New York Post*. On October 19, 1980, *The Daily Oklahoman* published an editorial in favor of both Ronald Reagan and his Cold War foreign policies. In the editorial, *The Daily Oklahoman* called President Carter’s Cold War foreign policy a “military disaster”⁹² and labeled Ronald Reagan’s proposed policies “firm”⁹³. On October 26, *The Chicago Tribune* endorsed Reagan, calling President Carter’s Cold War foreign policy, “a source of confusion to our allies and a source of amusement for the Soviet Union.”⁹⁴

The newspaper editorials published between 1976 and 1980 relating to Cold War foreign policy clearly had an effect on the Cold War foreign policies proposed by both President Carter and Governor Reagan during the 1980 presidential race. President Carter realized both from international events and from liberal and conservative elite

⁸⁹ Editorial, *The Boston Globe*, October 30, 1980.

⁹⁰ Editorial, *The Washington Post*, October 30, 1980.

⁹¹ Editorial, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 26, 1980.

⁹² Editorial, *The Daily Oklahoman*, October 19, 1980.

⁹³ Editorial, *The Daily Oklahoman*, October 19, 1980.

⁹⁴ Editorial, *The Chicago Tribune*, October 26, 1980.

media criticism that his human rights based Cold War foreign policy was not working. Consequently, President Carter shifted his Cold War foreign policy to the right, where many newspaper editorials claimed the United States' Cold War foreign policy belonged. Governor Reagan also was influenced by the opinions of the elite media during the 1980 presidential elections. Like President Carter, Governor Reagan realized that any successful Cold War foreign policy would now have to lie to the right of both President Carter's human rights based foreign policy as well as former President Nixon's détente based Cold War foreign policy. Consequently, Ronald Reagan refused to allow President Carter to move his policy to the right. Instead, Governor Reagan argued that his Cold War foreign policy should be implemented because it was the first one that went far enough to the right of détente.

CONCLUSION

The Cold War foreign policy of the United States made two dramatic shifts between 1976 and 1980. President Carter's election in 1976 caused America's Cold War foreign policy to shift from containment to human rights. The failure of President Carter's human rights based foreign policy caused the Cold War foreign policy of the United States to shift to a policy that favored a military build-up. The international events that took place between 1976 and 1980 played a large role in the shifting Cold War foreign policies of the United States. The shifting views of national security advisors and secretaries of state also played an important role in the changes made to the United States Cold War foreign policy during the late 1970's. The newspaper editorials reviewed for this thesis show that elite public opinion also affected Cold War foreign policy between 1976 and 1980. Specifically, although liberal newspaper editorialists supported Jimmy Carter during the 1976 presidential election because of his political affiliation, they also did so because he offered a new Cold War foreign policy. *The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Washington Post*, and *The New York Post* all made it clear that not only did they support Jimmy Carter because he was a democrat they also supported him because of his new Cold War foreign policy. Carter's decision to make his Cold War foreign policy transparent (i.e. more accountable to the public and the elite media) was the result of pressure from elite newspaper editorialists. Meanwhile, conservative newspaper editorial sections were firm in their support of détente throughout the 1976 presidential election. As time passed, President Carter's Cold War foreign policy began to change. The change arose from international events taking place

in Africa, China, and the Middle East during the late 1970's. However, President Carter also changed his Cold War foreign policy in an attempt to get re-elected. When President Carter changed his Cold War foreign policy, he did so by listening both to his advisors and to the elite media that had once supported him. Liberal newspaper editorial sections had seen the events of 1976 as a wake-up call. They urged President Carter to return to containment, and he did. However, in promoting containment, the liberal elite mass media supported a Cold War policy it had previously rejected. Meanwhile, conservative newspaper editorialists secured the attention of presidential candidate Ronald Reagan in 1980 by shifting their Cold War foreign policy views from those that favored détente to those that favored a military build-up. By abandoning détente, conservative newspaper editorial sections abandoned a policy they had once universally supported.

The shift in Cold War foreign policy between 1976 and 1980 was not solely the result of changing newspaper editorial views on America's Cold War foreign policy, but the effect influential newspaper editorials have on foreign policy is substantial. Although most newspaper editorialists supported the policies of the political party their newspaper endorsed, all newspapers studied for this thesis changed their Cold War foreign policy perspectives between 1976 and 1980. The liberal position on the United States Cold War foreign policy went from one that was against containment to one that was for containment and against a military build-up. The shift in liberal Cold War foreign policy is evident in the opinions of the elite media. The conservative position on the Cold War foreign policy of the United States went from one that favored détente to one that abandoned détente in favor of an arms race. The change in conservative Cold War foreign policy also is evident in the opinions of members of the conservative elite media.

Using the analysis and opinions of the elite media (in both liberal and conservative newspaper editorial sections) provides students of many subjects another way to understand the dramatic shift that took place in Cold War foreign policy between 1976 and 1980.

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