

Zbigscam: U.S. Foreign Policy, 1976-80

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Like movie goers who saw last summer's thriller, *Alien*, observers of the Carter Administration's foreign policy have been presented with a creature whose inexorable and seemingly inexplicable transmogrifications both amuse and terrify. If those ill-fated astronauts of the film in the year 2039 and some top officials, such as Cyrus Vance, always had the option of abandoning ship, the U.S. public did not. Poll data found in the American mood only a resignation to the worst. The Cold War, so fervently exorcised by part of the Carter foreign policy apparatus for nearly three years, yet so feverishly conjured by others, has resurfaced.

One by one, the means by which the Carter Administration had, at first, wished to turn aside from the Cold War proved vulnerable to the apparent immutability of the Soviet-American contest and the doctrines and commitments which have surrounded that conflict. By the beginning of 1980, the Soviet Union, once placed in an equivalent station with other "global issues," reemerged as the pivotal focus of the Carter Administration. In the wake of the Afghan crisis, an even more expansive series of undertakings was contemplated. Formal overtures were tendered to an embarrassingly coquettish constellation of would-be satrapies. It could not be argued that Oman, Yeman, or Somalia were outposts of liberal values. But the quandary of the Cold War, of aligning with regimes of low repute and military advantage, had, after all, been customary to just about everyone but Carter and some of his younger State Department advisors. Perhaps, after Afghanistan, the reintroduction of personal animus in Soviet-American relations made it easier to yield scruple to necessity. Moreover, tired critics of an undifferentiated definition of American interests seemed to have spent their energies, as classic policy routines, shaped in an era when American power had been little contested, reappeared.

II

At the onset, the Carter Administration seemed to accept the end of the Cold War, pronounced by Nixon in 1969 and baptized in Helsinki as the great given of policy. The problem in formulating policy in a “post-Cold War environment,” as Leslie Gelb, then at the State Department’s Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, explained in 1977, was that “fewer and fewer things had to do with the Soviet-American connection.” The question of how to proceed with Soviet-American relations, since outstanding issues were either settled or irrelevant to the larger course of history (a history which did not include an especially bright prospect for the Russians), was uncertain. Since Carter had little background in foreign policy save the Trilateral Commission, and because his Secretary of State was usually heralded as more of a technician in negotiations than a “conceptualizer,” whatever coherent view of the world that could be found in the Carter Administration came from Zbigniew Brzezinski. He was, after all, as Carter explained, “the eyes through which I view the world.”

But Brzezinski had taken great pains to distinguish his outlook and methods from those of the previous eight years. On the eve of the signing of the Helsinki Accords, when Carter was but a distant gleam in his eye, Brzezinski gave a remarkably candid assessment of his differences with the “Ford/Kissinger approach” to detente “which seeks to perpetuate the status quo” in Europe “with all that entails.” For Brzezinski, the whole purpose of Helsinki and the latter years of Kissinger’s tenure were ill-conceived and ahistorical:

... the anachronistic division of Europe . . . is the source of instability. If we contribute to its legitimation in the form of some security declaration, we are not contributing to European security but to its opposite.

Brzezinski’s plan for the future of the Soviet Union was as fissionary as it was for Eastern Europe. As he confessed to a Radio Free Europe interrogator:

[A]fter the disappearance of the Communist state, a combination of residual socialism and internationalism would mitigate the power-oriented ambitions of extreme Russian nationalism. . . .

For President Carter's soon-to-be-appointed National Security Advisor, the Soviets could be treated in a fundamentally different fashion from that status finally just accorded to them by Kissinger and President Ford. To Brzezinski, the Soviets' internal regime could be publically questioned and loudly proclaimed illegitimate, irrelevant and even pernicious to the tide of progress sweeping the globe. To Brzezinski, a "truly *comprehensive* [emphasis his] detente" would be "a challenge to [the Soviet Union's] legitimacy and thus . . . their very existence, and I must say their fears [would be] justified."

All this abraded the Soviets at their most irritable spots. When Carter visited Poland early in his administration, Brzezinski was not unaware of the implications, "[I]t was," he explained, "a gesture which underlines our interests in pluralism in Eastern Europe." It was not widely noticed, but in his first budget request, Carter asked for a doubling of broadcast capability of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty. VOA broadcasts to the Soviet Union were increased by 25 percent.

To treat the Soviets as morally or politically unequal and, at the same time, to attempt to deny the legitimacy of the Soviet bloc hit at what former Secretary Kissinger has recently labeled the "quintessentially Russian" sensitivities. Yet, while the legitimacy of the Soviet position in Eastern Europe was once again under symbolic attack and Russian insufficiencies undiplomatically addressed, the Soviets were still held "responsible" by the Carter Administration for their "proxies"— Vietnam in Cambodia and their Cuban "marauders" in Africa. On the one hand, the Soviets were denied even the verbal [as Kissinger had phrased it in his memoirs] "condescension" of being accorded great power status, much less a duopolistic management of world affairs. On the other, they were held liable for their associates. The early hope of the Carter Administration was that the Soviets were so uncertain domestically and abroad that they would eventually yield to the logic of modernization (an idiom the United States

was deemed to master but whose rudimentary grammar the Soviets were not believed to have grasped). Hence, if the Soviets proved to be out of step with world events, there was less need to attend to the overtly “condominial” aspects of detente husbanded by Nixon and Kissinger in the early 1970’s. This strategy was not universal, in the beginning. There was, in the Middle East, an attempt to draw the Soviets into the negotiating process of the central dispute of the region between Israel and its neighbors. The Carter Administration reasoned that no settlement would be lasting if the Soviets could always act the role of spoiler. The explicit tone of Kissinger’s policy, which was designed to “expel” the Soviets from the Middle East, would be reshaped. The melody that the Carter Administration now whistled beckoned the Soviets back into the region in an effort to make their would-be proxies more susceptible to an accord. But the lyrics of the song did not speak of any rewards to the Soviets apart from those of the psyche: mere acknowledgement by the Americans, who held most of the cards, of some residual Russian influence. In sum, the Soviets were once again called to be of assistance in their own containment.

The astonishing trip of President Anwar Sadat to Jerusalem in November 1977 scuttled the long-planned Geneva Conference. It was to be a meeting where the Soviets would be implicated in a new, peaceful status quo. But Sadat’s defection from the Arab camp pushed the Soviets not only away from center stage but almost out of the theater. Sadat was perilously poised, extending himself like some over-aged trapeze artist to an indifferent American assistant. The American grip was breathtakingly late. But once in hand, a new “island of stability”—at a cost of up to ten billion dollars—was embraced.

The Camp David improvisation was as masterful as it was expensive, courageous, and fraught with dangers. For by excluding the Russians yet again in an area of traditional concern to them, it pinned the most radical Middle-Eastern groups and states closer than ever to the Soviets. The Russian reaction was summarized by Dr. Shulman in October 1979.

They bear this very resentfully and have spoken of it quite sharply many times . . . It clearly is the situation that the Soviet position in the Middle East has deteriorated compared to what it was. That has been the outcome of diplomatic efforts on our part.

III

The profound sentiment that Carter located in the American public mood with his pronouncements concerning human rights is difficult to exaggerate and easy to underestimate. But, among some Europeans and the Soviets, there was incomprehension and even hostility to the Carter concern for those who suffered abridgment of liberty or dignity. To the Germans especially, there were fears that open letters to dissidents in the Soviet Union and reception of Soviet exiles in the White House would jeopardize a decade of detente, including the 1975 Helsinki Agreements. For his part, the president found it “surprising” that the Soviets should have an “adverse reaction.” His policy had, he confessed, “provided a greater obstacle to . . . common goals, like SALT, than I had anticipated.”

The initial human rights emphasis of the Carter Administration lingered until it finally was submerged by the renascent climate of Cold War. By 1980, from Grenada and El Salvador to Persian sheikdoms, security considerations overrode the seemingly vestigial voices of State Department reformers. But even if they had gone on, the human rights policies of the Carter Administration would have faced great obstacles. At a minimum, since humans are everywhere, the policy reinforced years of undifferentiated globalism. Any tailoring of our policy response according to “pragmatic” considerations of cultural affinity or alliance opened the Carter Administration to charges of bigotry or cynicism.

In theory, at least, security interests might be ranked from the most important to the least important, and a nation might trade the lesser interests in order to safeguard the more serious interests. But how can one rank the importance of great principles? And if one sacrifices some segment of a principle, has not one crippled it altogether? Mr. Carter’s ethical diplomacy at least logically foreclosed the traditional statesman’s

opportunities for negotiations and moderation. One can compromise competing interests. But compromise with immorality is a sin. By cloaking the banner of Woodrow Wilson around the still central elements of containment, the early Carter Administration attempted to mute the harsh realities of a 35-year old militarized posture designed to deal with the Soviet challenge. In the end, the human rights policy became a kind of embarrassing encumbrance: like a once stylish maiden aunt, still invited to the party but seldom asked to dance. One reason that the Carter Administration turned away from human rights towards a re-emphasis of security policy was the fear that the visible presence of American firepower was fast becoming about as welcome and as valuable as a Susan B. Anthony dollar: a discounted coin of uncertain value would have to be either withdrawn from circulation or given special emphasis. This was clearly the case in the wake of the long Iranian ordeal, when American arms seemed irrelevant and when American-promoted reform seemed a proximate (but certainly, in fact, not the only) cause of the Shah's collapse. As the one who once warmed the Peacock throne flew off to exile, a pivotal assumption of at least the Kissinger years was challenged. It was now clear: American clients, no matter how well stocked militarily, could not be counted to remain semi-autonomous agents of American interests. They could even become a foreign policy nemesis.

The defining characteristic of the Iranian crisis was the hesitance of American policymakers to use force or even to broach the subject openly. The gestures of support that were offered seemed out of a comic opera. A carrier force was ordered to the Persian Gulf from Subic Bay in the Philippines and then, after barely reaching the Straits of Malacca, directed to steam around in a desultory fashion. Equally frustrating was the fact that some of our most dependable European clients refused to allow their NATO air bases to be used as staging areas for even a rescue squadron for the evacuation of American personnel.

The most reasonable explanation for American restrained, albeit clumsy, behavior was that, quite simply, nobody in the Carter Administration could see what bearing force had to political, religious, and social questions tearing at the Pahlavi regime. And with the end of the Pahlavi monarchy, the Carter Administration's human rights policy no longer could be argued to be easily squared with vital security concerns. And yet unquestioned vital interests seemed impervious to American military

determination. For months no one could offer a reasonable scenario of what a “quick strike team” might accomplish once they had arrived. Finally, in April 1980, a “Blue Light” strike force rescue team attempted to extract the American hostages then held in the Iranian Foreign Ministry building and in the massive American Embassy compound—an area the size of the Washington, D.C. Mall. The effort, according to Washington sources, would have involved six Egyptian-based “Black Watch” C130 gunships (according to pilots, these planes were actually to be over Tehran the night of the abortive mission). “Puff-the-Magic-Dragon” helicopter gunships F14 and A-6 fighter planes were also part of the plan to lay down awesome sheets of suppressive fire. Iranian casualties were figured to be substantial; and perhaps, it was hoped, the Khomeini government would fall. What a “successful effort” would have then portended in view of the American pledge to our European associates not to use force only two weeks before or in the possible backwash of an Iran wracked by civil war and even an Iraqi invasion is a fearsome spectre to contemplate. Secretary Brown’s early 1978 despondent rumination seemed, ironically, more relevant than ever: “We are as yet unsure,” he had then complained, “of the utility of U.S. military power in Persian Gulf contingencies.”

IV

The Carter Administration’s foreign policy was hammered out in high-level meetings without the president in attendance. Carter would be forwarded the minutes; and at the margins of the case most convincingly presented in committee, there would be delivered a presidential directive. In the Carter Administration, there was no hint of separate courses of action argued tenaciously through the bureaucracy—even if the pros and cons had been carefully, even diabolically, weighed and rigged—as was the usual procedure in Kissinger’s time. There was merely a top-level free-for-all guided mostly by instinct and wit. To prevail, counsel was offered not within any known intellectual framework but only on the “merits” of the day’s crisis. The epistemology of policy-making was never murkier.

In a sense, this ad hoc policy-making style and conduct was in the mainstream of American ethics. Perhaps John Dewey and William James would have been pleased by Anthony Lake’s explanation. The Carter Administration was:

managing complexities when they may come into conflict— striking a balance among competing objectives . . .our approach is to make constant pragmatic, case by case decisions, seeking the most constructive balance among our interests and adjusting] our tactics as circumstances change.

Philosophically and logically, such a description of policy can stand one of two interpretations. It can be said that policy is chosen by no standard except success. Yet, without a definition of success beyond, as James once put it, “what pays,” or any obvious set of criteria of “correct” foreign policy except “what works,” efforts to judge policy fall back necessarily on either some pre-existing judgment as to what is valuable and what is not in international relations, or one is left—by asserting the impossibility of ultimate standards—with a policy that rests on expediency. In the end, of course, the Cold War consensus has seemed to occupy both these logical poles at the same time. For it has gathered up an *a priori* rationale for the underlying continuities of policy otherwise befogged by either rhetoric or events. In part, in response to the obvious uncertainty concerning the relevance of military responses and the unmanageable elements of its human rights campaigns, the Carter Administration turned to economic coercion. Perhaps, it was felt, economic preponderance could do what armies and threats could not. Ironically, however, this use, or misuse, of economic power came at the nadir of America’s relative economic strength in this century. In truth, economic warfare was an existential act: more a symbol of pique and a sop to domestic critics on the right than a realistic instrument to affect events.

If a convincing argument could be made that the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe had reached a point of strategic vulnerability vis-à-vis technological imports from the West, it still remained unclear how or whether such a vulnerability could be manipulated. Restraining credits would, at best, reduce the subsidy Western governments give their businesses to export to the Soviet Union. Tighter COCOM controls—if obtainable—would only increase the cost to the Russians of their own modernization. And attempts to restrict exports of some oil and gas equipment and technology would, at best, reduce the energy-generating capacity of the Soviet Union, perhaps giving a kind of ironic incentive to any Russian urge to increase their stake in the Middle East. Further, a cutback on United States or European oil-related technology might leave Eastern Europe without Russian oil supplies and would force bloc countries to import more oil from OPEC, thereby further undermining Eastern Europe’s hard currency-credit reserves as well as drawing down scarce financial resources necessary to purchase Western technology.

V

In the Iranian case, as well, there are important questions concerning the American use of economic leverage unanswered by an administration attempting to substitute economic warfare for military coercion. Clearly the boycott of Iranian oil was an effort to prevent Iran from blackmailing the United States over the hostages. But the application of financial pressure on Iran, begun with the asset freeze, could not be effective unless the rest of the industrialized world was enlisted in the American designed and led economic warfare. At the onset of the crisis with Iran over hostages, reports circulated that the Europeans might participate in limited measures, including even a slowing of trade with the Iranians. But they were reluctant to go much further. The Japanese were accused by American officials of moving with “unseemingly haste” to buy up Iranian oil on the spot market previously intended for the United States. The Ohira government, having narrowly survived a parliamentary crisis during the fall of 1979, was resisting having the almost totally import-dependent Japanese economy drafted into the American economic war against Iran. With about 15 percent of Japanese daily imports coming from Iran (in early 1980), Japanese sensitivity was or should have been predictable. Since the Japanese had been the primary target of the Ford and Carter Administrations’ attempts to get the rest of the industrialized world to relent in its export pressure on the American market, one suspects that there were not all that many American “credits” left in Tokyo. Moreover, disruption of the overall United States-Japanese economic relations hardly seems worth the gains of economic warfare. Indeed, one wonders whether at some point American pressures on the Japanese to act against their economic self-interests, presaged by the Nixon “shocks” of the early 1970’s, do not risk setting off a syndrome of Japanese hostility reminiscent of the interwar period.

Caution in extrapolating from the Iranian crisis seems in order even if coercive economic statecraft is deemed to have worked. In the first place, with the concentration of its assets primarily in dollars and in American and British banks, the Iranians were extraordinarily exposed to the United States asset freeze, which was applied extraterritorially. Moreover, the initial retaliation was facilitated by the conservative coloration of the American and British governments of the moment. These ideological factors were at least partially reflected on the Continent and certainly congruent with the European financial and multinational corporate

establishment. The willingness of the latter to cooperate at the outset may also have been conditioned not only by a sense that the Khomeini regime was uniquely vulnerable financially and domestically, but also by the perceived need to ward off a radical Iranian attack on the world's financial institutions. To many international bankers, *The Crash of 79*—a novel detailing a Middle East assault on the Western monetary system—seemed to have an eerie congruence with events. It could not be blandly countenanced.

To the extent that the U. S. economic sanctions may be ultimately seen as useful in the Iranian crisis, its success might make replication of economic coercion difficult. Future potential targets will likely learn from the Iranian experience and seek to reduce the international exposure of their domestic economies. A diversification of reserve currencies, investment placements, or moves by oil-exporters towards requiring payments in currencies other than the dollar would be evidence of such a response. Furthermore, if American economic warfare proves devastatingly effective on Iran, it may lead to considerable difficulty for succeeding government[s] in Tehran. If, for example, the Iranian economy is now, at the end of the hostage crisis, found to be in ruins, or its assets seem interminably tied up in jurisdictional proceedings, the Iranians may well become a ward of the United States or the international financial establishment—a situation not likely to enhance any government's authority within Iran or, for that matter, will it be auspicious for stability in the region.

VI

The Carter Administration had almost tragically attempted to escape the dilemma of far-flung commitments, for it was always, they knew, the weakest which would be tested and found wanting, and these, in turn, would be the most uncertain of commanding a domestic consensus. It remains, in the law of averages, that there will be challenges. And the same piper that called us to the mud and jungle of Southeast Asia will be heard again.

In military policy, Carter emphasized a NATO strategy for his “one war,” and left a “half-war”—“most probably” in the Middle East. But there were never the logistics to support such an effort. It all seemed like a cheap trick to get a handle on military

expenditures without being seen at home as having backed down from international pre-eminence and without appearing to disavow commitments abroad—indeed, commitments were incessantly reaffirmed. Carter’s early military policy appeared to be a great jury-rigged apparatus held together with wire and tape. Commitments were reiterated in Asia, (where domestic opinion was known to be intolerant of any effort requiring men on the ground for at least another generation) while weapons were foisted on the reluctant Europeans for the most improbable scenarios. All the while, the most likely and most expensive contingency was filled by a paper “rapid deployment force.” As the mist was lifted by Afghanistan, it was shown that a credible “RDF” could not be realized until well after 1985.

In the meantime, “massive retaliation” was resuscitated, as the nuclear threat ascended unfettered with the “Carter doctrine.” Vague lines were drawn, and when they were “crossed”—one did not know if Soviet soldiers or Soviet-backed Baluchi tribesmen had to do the marching—then the Soviets were threatened with war. And since the means for conventional war were conspicuously absent, it would be nuclear war at that. It might have given even the “realists” in the Carter administration pause when hard-line critics such as Senators Henry Jackson and Barry Goldwater and SALT II opponent Paul Nitze urged caution.

The 1980’s became, as the Committee on Present Danger had forecast—borrowing the language of NSC 68—“a time of maximum danger.” Not so much that the Soviets would be emboldened by a counterforce capability that they might, arguably, soon possess, but that the Soviets had moved their frontier of socialism to a region which has many of the characteristics of the Balkans at the turn of the century. The Carter “doctrine” seemed an open-ended pledge to a region filled with uncertainties. The Pakistanis and the Indians both have—or soon can have—nuclear capabilities. Moreover, some can recall that when the first test of the new Sino-American “quasi-alliance” in Afghanistan came into view, the Chinese clearly wanted a more cautious profile. Although probably not imminent, the prospect of a Sino-Soviet “Rapallo” patiently stands offstage like the murky apparition of an Elizabethan drama.

In Eastern Europe, the thought of “provoking uprisings” was adjudged by Mr. Brzezinski in 1975 to be “reprehensible and politically short-sighted.” But in Northeast Asia, the United States was rather forthright in siphoning AK-47 rifles to Afghan rebels. “You are not alone,” Brzezinski told refugees at the Kybur pass. Facing Soviet-occupied Afghanistan with an automatic weapon in hand, he exhorted, “You will go back to your villages and your mosques. Your cause is just. God is on your side.” The Almighty, the Americans, and the disaffected Afghan mountain people might form a league against atheistic South Asian communism. But neither the “petro-powers” nor the middle-range powers of Europe or even Pakistan were eager to be enlisted in the new crusade. All the more reason to be grimly steadfast. As a stern Brzezinski told a television interviewer: there could be no possible easing of Soviet-American relations “for a long time to come. . . .” How long might that be, he was queried. “As long as the Soviets are in Afghanistan,” he stipulated. If the Russians remained in Afghanistan as long as they have positioned themselves in Europe, then the Cold War’s horizon stretched beyond vision. And if Brzezinski’s rhetoric on the Afghan border is translated into policy, then “roll-back” and liberation have been conjoined with the newly invigorated nuclear threat. President Carter had found John Foster Dulles 300 miles from the Indian Ocean.

VII

Mr. Brzezinski’s grand vision of policy, drawn in August 1979, could have come from McNamara, Rusk, or Truman without a hesitation over anything but syntax: “We recognize the growing danger that internal conflicts could escalate into international confrontation . . .we resolutely oppose the direct and indirect exploitation of such conflicts and our own respect for the sensitivities of other parties will be influenced by their respect for *our concern*” (emphasis supplied). Similarly, when Brzezinski, Mondale, Vance, and then, Muskie publicly polished old commitments lest any hint of tarnished doubt remain and added new commitments in the Middle East, there was always a sense that, whatever understandings there might have been that “new global political and economic arrangements . . .reflect new realities,” the American response was fundamentally unchanged. American commitments remain extended like one of those financial empires of Billy Sol Estes or Bernard Cornfeld—offering ever new and shiny prospectuses, and living in the dread

of the auditors. The alternative of reexamining the structure of assumptions and techniques used to buttress the enterprise went untried, lest the attention seem to lead to a panic which neither we nor our associates could withstand. The first question, like the one you would ask a man on a ladder, juggling six grenades while standing on one foot, is not, “why are you doing this?” but “how can we get you safely down?”

There was a pathos to the Carter administration, torn so many ways from itself. It had great opportunities. It could have used a moral appeal to ask Americans to contribute generously to a soothing of North/South issues instead of letting the issue become a battering ram for the left and the right. It could have used the Kissinger legacy of a resurgence of diplomacy. The Carter administration could have begun to treat as juridical/diplomatic equivalents the Soviets, the Chinese, and the Vietnamese, the Cambodians—even the Rhodesians—instead of measuring them in terms of their moral validity. It could have attempted to open a sensible dialogue about the nature of American commitments and interests instead of insisting that all were equivalent and beyond reexamination.

With military policy ascendant once again, any contemplated bold diplomatic overtures to the Third World would be necessarily eclipsed, subject to the question of the 1950's: “Which side are you on?” But if global politics had assured a new rigidity and coercion a new centrality, it did not mean that force had found a new utility. Force and diplomacy are two different tracks; sometimes they parallel one another, sometimes one leads into the other. But they are analytically and, in practice, distant. Averill Harriman once said, “Nobody negotiates while being beaten on the head.” The act of giving such a thrashing may serve an interest, but it involves costs which successful diplomatic relations might have avoided. Force is diplomacy's nemesis, its failure. It serves best when it stands behind a negotiator, mute and ill-defined.

Yet in American military thought, strategic studies, and in much current political discussion, coercion and diplomacy have become synonymous. Force, it is widely held, is an instrument capable of a kind of choreography; the manipulation of threats of violence and the use of violence itself in dealing with crisis have been defined as a kind of statecraft. Nonetheless, a “diplomacy of violence” was tested and, in Vietnam,

found wanting. Americans became aware of the difficulties in rearranging domestic institutions to meet the needs of a diplomacy of force, or, for that matter, imposing democratic institutions on others by dint of firepower. The drum of a liberal world order has been beaten even more forcefully in recent years. But how force could be made relevant to this task has not yet been explained. Force could, to be sure, serve to inhibit the Soviets from embarking on a course of precipitous military action against states with whom Americans have associated themselves by reason of treaty, trade, or sentiment. Beyond that, however, military power has not seemed to be able to stave off revolutionary change. The spread of collectivist ideologies antithetical to liberal values has proceeded. Nor has military power seemed very relevant to a policy designed to promote human rights. And, finally, military power has seemed only tangentially, and perhaps even harmfully, to touch upon the increasing salience of international and economic issues.

The relevance of military power is most apparent if the world is portrayed as a zero-sum, bipolar relationship. As Brzezinski told Elizabeth Drew:

it gets down to a simple proposition: They would like to become number one, like we did. It's better to become number one from the number two position than to be toppled from number one .., there's no way of knowing where you will stop once you get going downhill.

Years ago, with another colleague at Harvard, Brzezinski put it more chillingly:

... peaceful coexistence of the nations peopling the world presupposes the destruction of totalitarian dictatorships. Since, according to their own loudly proclaimed professions, their system must be made world-wide, those who reject the system have no alternative but to strive for its destruction.

That was an unabashed call for the refutation of compromise. And with abandonment of the diplomatic enterprise, only force remains. In a sense this is in keeping with a fashionable view of the diplomatic profession. Today, diplomacy is widely seen as but a glittering remnant of another era. As Brzezinski explained in 1970:

... to be a diplomat is to be part of a sociological category ... they occupy anachronistic jobs. ... The Secretary of State [heads] an increasingly irrelevant bureaucracy.

But if the irrelevance of diplomacy is coupled with generalized conditions inhospitable to American power, then the United States will realize its worst fears: armed with inappropriate instruments to face the world and yet still victim to careening events.

* For an early gesture in this direction, see Warren Christopher's speech at Occidental College, "Normalization of Diplomatic relations", June 11, 1977.

* This is the way it was actually put by the U. S. Ambassador to France when speaking to the French Foreign Minister about sanctions in the wake of Afghanistan.

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